The Journal of the Nova Woodturners' Guild

Volume 30 Issue 9
May 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
Monday, May 11, 2026 at 6:15 PM

At the May meeting:
The demo that is so sensitive that we can't talk about it here!
Show and tell

The President's Report

Now that May is here, it can only mean one thing: the turning competition is rapidly approaching. So I hope we have a stellar turn out this year, especially since we will be celebrating the Guild's 30th anniversary.

With the annual turning challenge nearing, an important date to remember is May 23. This is the date set aside to drop off your entries. This can be done at Lee Valley and judging will take place on May 29th.

Due to a workshop slated for last Sunday the May meeting had to be rescheduled. Usually we would have it the following Sunday but that would mean holding it on Mother's Day, which didn't seem to be a good decision. Lee Valley is letting us use the Seminar room on Monday evening after the store is closed.

See you Monday.

Bob Earle – President

Notes from the April Meeting

The meeting called to order by President **Bob Earle** at 2:06 PM with 11 members present in person and 4 participating online.

Announcements:

- The annual Turning competition is coming up in May. The deadline for entry drop off is May 23rd at the Seminar Room at Lee Valley in Halifax. All entry forms, Guidelines and Competition Rules are available on the Guild website in the Documents section.

- Life member, **Don Moore**, recently pointed out that April 22 of this year is the 30th anniversary of the Guild meeting as an organization.

- The recent online tool auction resulted in $475 in sales, less $25 owed to one contributor and a small "thank you" commission to the Atlantic Woodworkers Association for hosting the auction on their website.

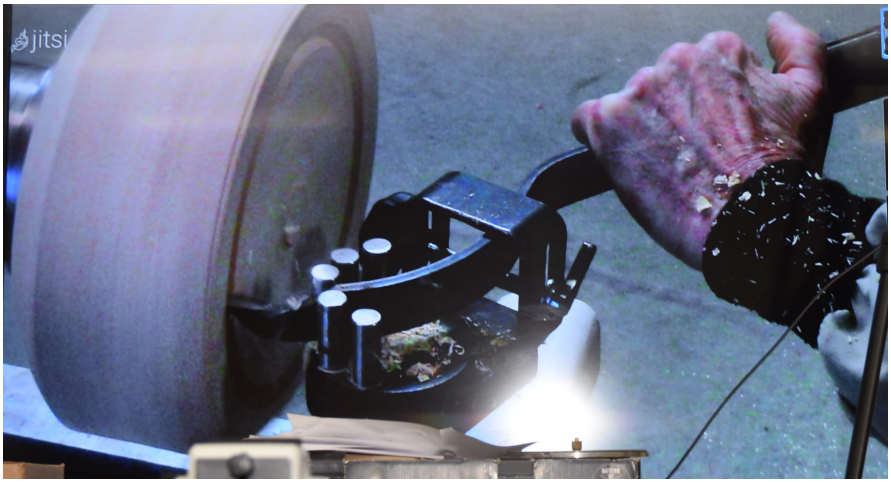
- **Claphams Beeswax Products**™ has offered the Guild their products at wholesale prices. One full box of product must be purchased to activate the special pricing. A group purchase may work well to minimize shipping costs.

- **Stephen Roy** dropped by the meeting to donate a number of burls that he recently inherited and has no use for. He would like to see them used by someone who will appreciate what they are.

Main Presentation:

The format of this month's presentation is a bit different from usual. Various members provided demonstrations and "how to"s of using different tools that are less commonly used. Attendees were encouraged to try out the various tools being shown. Many of these tools are part of the Guild Tool Library, available for members to borrow when needed.

Kelton™ Bowl Saver — Mark Hazen:



- The Kelton Bowl Saver, like other similar tools on the market, is used to cut "cores" out of the centre of large bowl blanks. This reduces the amount of wood turned to waste when hollowing and preserves another (or several depending on the size of the original blank) smaller blank(s) to be used for another bowl.
- A curved tool with a sharpened cutter on the tip is mounted in a pivoting holder mounted in the lathe banjo. The curvature of the cutter will determine the resulting shape of the core cut out.
- The lathe must do a lot of work to cut out the core so a few helpful tips include:
  - run the lathe at a slow speed (400–500rpm) to avoid overloading the lathe motor;
  - make sure the cutter is sharpened to a fine edge (some models have carbide cutters) as a sharp cutter makes less demand of the lathe; and
  - mounting the original blank on a faceplate may work better than in a chuck as the coring operation will place very high forces on a tenon in the chuck.
- Proceed slowly making the coring cut, removing the cutter tool frequently to allow chips to clear.
- Be ready for the core to drop out when you get close to the centre, as it can be a heavy blank coming free from the lathe as the cut is completed.

[] Tools for Hollowing Boxes – David McLachlan:

Box Rest

- A "Box" tool rest is a flat plate that is mounted on a post held in the banjo. It allows a flat surface to support hollowers, scrapers or other tools when hollowing out box interiors.
- The box rest is oriented so that it is inserted well into the box interior as hollowing progresses. This allows positive support for tools very close to the cutting edge deep in the box and avoids the difficult leverage on a tool that is extended well over a conventional tool rest mounted outside the box.
- Dave used both a Hunter hollower with a circular carbide cutter and a scraper with a square carbide cutter to hollow and smooth the interior of a narrow box he was working on. A square-tipped tool allows you to get a nice crisp corner in the bottom of the box interior.

Box Scraper

- A "box" scraper is essentially a flat scraper with a slightly angled side, instead of two parallel sides. The left side and end are sharpened.
- Being able to cut with the angled side of the scraper allows you to get nice straight and smooth sides on the interior of a box.
- Many box scrapers have a small radius ground at the corner between the angled side and the end to give the bottom corner of the interior a small radius.

Tools for Texturing – David McLachlan:

Elf™ Tool

- Dave demonstrated an "Elf"-type tool that he had made for use as a texturing tool.
- The tool consisted of a large ball-shaped carving burr, with its shaft mounted in a set of bearings. The burr/bearing assembly was then mounted in a handle.
- In use, the burr head is placed in contact with spinning wood and the teeth of the burr will cut texture into the wood surface. The burr is driven by the rotation of the wood. This will work on both side grain and end grain of a piece.

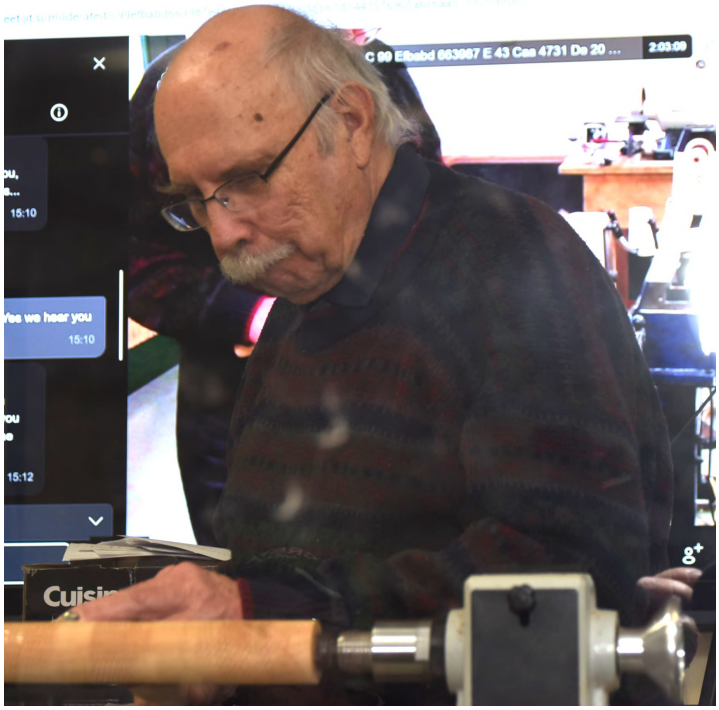
Chatter Tool

- A "Chatter" tool consists of a strong shaft with a thin, flexible piece of metal set in the end.
- It is used with the tool rest set fairly high and far back from the blank.
- For best results, a firm steady grip and good tool control are needed. The tool is presented with the thin, flat cutter sitting horizontally. When the cutting end of the tool comes in contact with spinning wood, the wood causes the thin tip to flex downward. It then snaps back up as contact with the wood is lost and the tip cuts a small "divot" out of the wood and the process repeats. This is happening many times per second and results in a rough textured finish.
- Chatter tools work best on end grain — like the lids of boxes.
- Varying the lathe speed and tool pressure will vary the resulting texture depth and pattern. With experience, you can tell the type of texturing cut you are getting from the buzzing sound the tool makes when it is cutting rapidly.

Sorby™ Spiraling Tool – Mark Hazen & Bob Earle:

- The Sorby Spiraling Tool is used to cut spiral patterns on the surface of spindles. It consists of a heavy straight shaft with a toothed, rotating cutter in the end. The cutter looks much like a heavy gear with fine teeth. There is also a flat support plate mounted on the shaft that can be set at various angles (both to the left and right).
- The tool rest must be set far enough back so that the support plate on the tool shaft is riding firmly on the tool rest.
- There are multiple cutter heads with different tooth sizes and spacing for different spiral effects.
- The spiraling tool works well on straight (cylindrical) sections of spindles, but can also be used to create spiral patterns on the exterior of bowls or boxes.
- The tool is used at 500 rpm or less lathe speed.
- There are two approaches that work well:
  - Start the cut by bringing the cutting edge into contact with the spinning wood in a fairly aggressive manner, then move along the spindle section to be spiraled, making the cuts.
  - Start the cut with a light touch until the cutter teeth have engaged and are starting to cut. Then raise the end of the tool handle to more fully engage the teeth deepening the cuts. Then move along the spindle to cut the spiraled section.
- Again, the sound of the cutter working will be your guide to how well it is cutting.

- Setting the angle of the support plate, which rides on the tool rest, will determine how close together and deep the spiral cuts are.
- When the cut is finished with the support plate at a specific angle, you will have a nice band of evenly spaced spiral cuts around the surface. If the support plate is set to the same angle on the opposite side and the spiraling repeated, new spiral cuts will be made in the opposite orientation, resulting in a cross-hatched or "knurled" pattern.



Two brave volunteers try out tools under the careful scrutiny of the attending Guild members.

Show & Tell:

Dave McLachlan

In keeping with the "Uncommon Tools" theme of the meeting, Dave presented several tools that he has recently acquired or made:

- A screw chuck that he made by mounting a $^1/_4''$ GRK construction screw in a maple block that can be held in his chuck jaws.
- A Hunter™ swan-necked Hollowing tool. It has a round, cup-shaped carbide cutter that cuts best with the cutter just a little below centre. When the cutting edge becomes dull, the cutter can be rotated so that a fresh section of the edge is being used.

- A set of "micro" tools that he made from tool steel blanks set in handles to make a gouge, a skew and a tri-point tool. These are small tools for use one-handed when making fine finials, so that the free hand can be used to support the wood during the cuts.

- New Nova™ chuck jaws:
  - ⋆ A set for green wood. These jaws have much larger serrations or teeth and are coated to prevent corrosion from the wet wood in use.
  - ⋆ New jaws with dovetail profiles at the top edge and serrations lower down on the inside, making a very versatile set of jaws with multiple methods of holding stock in the same jaws.
- New items from Woodturners Specialties™ in BC:
  - ⋆ A handle for square-shanked tools. It has two sets of set screws in the end, set at 90 degrees to each other, so you can centre and secure the square shaft of the tool.
  - ⋆ A large, heavy square-ended scraper.
  - ⋆ A large gouge in M2 steel.
  - ⋆ A small skew chisel.

Bill Maes Presented a nice pepper mill in walnut and birch with a segmented ring set in the body. It uses the CrushGrind™ mechanism, which requires precise cutting of the recess so that it will fit properly.

He also showed off a special 3 bit cutter for making the correct sized recess for the CrushGrind mechanism. This cutter is manufactured in Australia.
Bill also presented a custom, side-cutting scraper used to accurately cut the retaining groove for the CrushGrind mechanism. This scraper was made by life member **Stephen Zwerling**.

Bob Earle Showed off a nice bowl in Maple with a decorated band near the rim using the techniques covered in the recent demo by Emma Cook, aka The Tiny Turner. Also pictured is a turning from a mystery burl from a raffle prize. Note: you can view the recording of Emma's demo for the Guild at:
https://youtu.be/C8I0BX_vKbM.

The meeting wrapped up at 4:25 PM. The next meeting is **Monday, May 11 at 7:00**.

Calum Ewing — Secretary

DaveM's Fireside Chat

Spring is finally here in the Maritimes; I want to take this opportunity to remind members that the Annual NWG Turning Competition is coming up quickly . . . now is the time for getting those competition pieces on the go. The competition pieces will need to be submitted by the third week in May. Remember you can enter two pieces in each of three categories (spindle, faceplate and mandrel). As always, it would be great if you could enter several pieces. And don't forget the prizes are awarded based on participation. Let's try to make this one of our best annual turning competitions as it is our 30th anniversary for the Guild.

I want to mention that Woodworkers Specialties is offering up to 15% off their products to Guild members; use the code *Guild10* for all items on the website and an additional 5% off for RGWood products with the code *Guild5+* when ordering online.

. . . . . .

On the technical side, I just want to share another way a pin mandrel can be used in some circumstances . . . A typical pin mandrel can be seen in Figure 1.

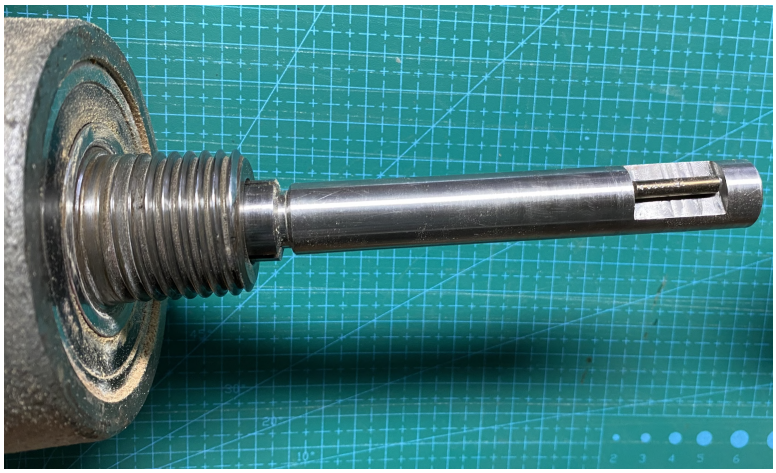


Figure 1. A $^{5}/_{8}''$ diameter pin mandrel, mounted in the lathe headstock using a MT2 collet chuck. Normally the pin in the flat recess is used to engage a $^{5}/_{8}''$ bored blank for turning.

If members who attended the last meeting's demonstration will remember, I was doing a brief demo of a Hunter small ornament hollowing tool: hollowing out a small globe (40 mm diameter) that was held in a collet chuck by a short 16 mm diameter tenon. I couldn't complete the globe down to the tenon at the meeting as the blank was up against the face of the collet chuck. Afterwards, when I was back in my workshop, I thought it was a shame to just throw out that incomplete hollowed out globe; but the question was, how to hold it to turn down that remaining $^{1}/_{4}''$ shoulder? A normally-used pin mandrel wouldn't work as the globe was hollowed out and there was no $^{5}/_{8}''$ bore left to engage the pin.

There was still about $^{1}/_{16}''$ remaining of the initial $^{5}/_{8}''$ bore at the tenon end, so if I slipped the globe over the 5/8" pin mandrel (less the pin) I could use the end of the pin mandrel as a friction drive using a live center in the tailstock to apply pressure against the tenon forcing the end of the globe against the mandrel . . .

As you can see in Figure 2 this is the setup I used to complete the globe shape, right down to the tenon diameter, without the risk of hitting the collet chuck with the gouge as would have been the problem at the demonstration.

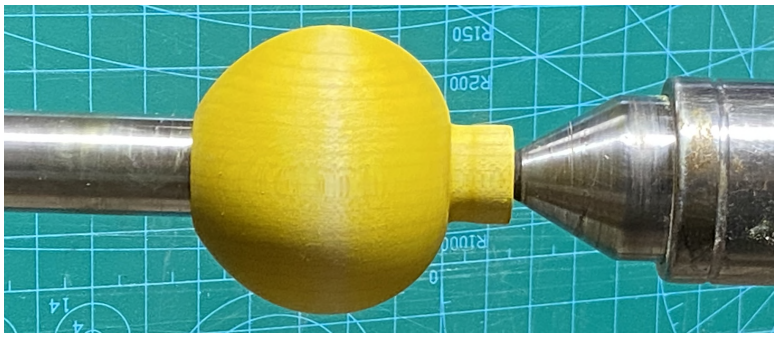


Figure 2. Hollow globe placed over $^{5}/_{8}''$ diameter pin mandrel, with pressure applied by the live center. making the pin mandrel a friction drive.

Once I complete the addition of a contrasting dye and apply a final protective friction polish I will remount the tenon in an ER25 collet holder in the headstock and continue to bore all the way through the end of the globe to the tenon. (A thin $^{1}/_{8}''$ wooden washer will be placed between the globe body and the collet holder to prevent the $^{5}/_{8}''$ Forstner bit from contacting the collet holder). With the tenon removed, then finials will be added to complete the ornament.

Dave McLachlan

Member Contributions

This month my plaintive request for newsletter content was rewarded with (aside from the articles from the usual suspects) the following photos. — Editor

On the left we see two mills from Bill Maes, made from oak, using the Crushgrind™ mechanism. *(These are not the only salt and pepper mills we've see from Bill lately; does this mean Bill lives a spicy life? Or is he trying to spice up his life?)*

On the right we see a more detailed photo of Bob Earle's turning which was seen in the the "Show & Tell" portion of the newsletter. Bob says it is 4″ high about the base is 2.5″ across.

Cover Photo

Bill Maes sent in a picture of not some alien's flying saucer, but rather a terrestrial bowl of ebonized red oak. He tells us that it is about 2.5″ high by about 8″ in diameter. Kudos to Bill for creating a nice turning out of red oak, a species not high on every woodworker's "favourite wood" list. You may have seen this video, and where red oak ends up: **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHP42llBVyk**.

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. Except for the photo of Chris, which is pretty sure to have been taken by someone else.

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.