

Thameside Woodturners

Club night Thursday 11 July 2024

Charles Ash demonstrating the Pole Lathe

Charles took us on a journey back in time to the earliest beginnings of woodturning and explained the vital role of coppicing trees to sustain the forest whilst providing us with a supply of timber. He tries to coppice an area in the winter time as there is less sap as he uses “green” wood on the pole lathe.

He showed how quickly he could split a log using a splitting axe and mallet the size of a bucket!. With just a few strokes the log was cut into small sections along the grain.



He then trimmed up the section with a right handed axe (who knew you could get right and left handed axes - one side of the blade has a bevel and other side is flat, flat side to your body).

He then sat at the shave horse to make the blank as round as possible using a spoke shave. The pole lathe makes hard work of knocking off corners like we do with a power lathe so that is why the shave horse is used. The shave horse is in the foreground.



Charles then showed how the blank is set up with the cord wound the blank. He uses just four basic tools, three like chisels and one like a gouge. He showed how he cuts only on the downstroke of the foot treadle and therefore an even rhythm is essential. Charles made a baby rattle with three captive rings using some very fine cuts.

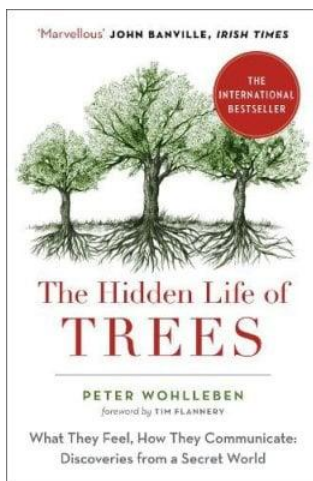
I am putting a short video clip taken by Tony Fuller onto the club Google Drive page as it is too large to easily send out as an email. You will also find the table items in the 2024 Gallery page.



Bowl turning is also possible on a pole lathe but traditionally it was used for making simple bowls to eat from so they were fairly crude in finish. The bowl blank is mounted on a wooden mandrel for the cord to be wrapped around. Charles used a very long handled tool with a hook like shaped blade which is held very high.



Charles is very passionate about our forests and told us about a very good book called the Hidden Life of Trees by Peter Wohlleben which is available in paperback for £9.99.



This is a sample of Charles' work and is typical of the 'bodgers' art of pole turning. He also runs workshops at his base in Oxfordshire and the make a chair course is a three day event.



Ted Higgs – July 2024