

The History of Hamilton Woodturners Club

The club has its roots back to late 1993, with the first classes held at The Waikato Polytechnic building on the Central Hamilton Campus (originally TWP subsequently becoming *Wintec*). Class members during these early years were aged 14-86 years and were taught good basics for wood turning which allowed many to make woodturning their long term hobby and expand their knowledge, skills and techniques. One huge benefit that the club had during this time was access to the adjoining carpentry workshop fitted with really good woodworking machinery.

The Government made changes to the provision of Adult Education, and indicated that the woodturning courses would probably cease. A plan was developed to form a separate club in order to lease the workshop and its equipment from *Wintec*, with the longer term option to buy the lathes and associated tools. In June 2013 the original club was given notice by *Wintec* that we needed to vacate the workshop by 31 August. The committee considered that there was enough support to justify exercising our option to buy the lathes and associated equipment, and setting up a new club in a different location. A new chapter in the clubs history was about to begin.

Firstly we needed to find new premises, and fortunately one of the committee members was aware of a portion of a vacant building on a lifestyle block on the outskirts of Dinsdale. Negotiations were held and a lease put in place for part of a vacant building that had been part of a small apple pack house. Along with this, clarity was made with *Wintec* as to what was 'associated with the lathes' within the workshop. What transpired was everything, but lights fittings and heaters. The club had built up some funds, but this was insufficient to pay the agreed amount. Members were approached and several provided interest free loans to the club, to be paid back as and when the clubs coffers would allow. These were paid back within the first 12 months of relocating. Others purchased or loaned the club necessary equipment - some of which was subsequently bought by the club, while other items remained with a loan tag. So along with the 13 lathes, associated equipment including Bench grinders, band saw, 13 sets of chisels, chucks and tool rests, cupboards, wood storage racking, work benches, steel cabinets, brush and pans, leads, etc etc, and a lot of timber were all moved to the new workshop. Part one completed. Part two was to install all this gear into the new workshop. This was a pretty big undertaking and included: installing the wood rack; locating and bolting down the lathes; positioning the band saws, workbenches, grinders, racks and all the tools. This proved to be the quick bit. What took the time was installing all the required electrical and lighting. Some existing lighting has been retained but all relocated, along with a lot of new fittings. Finding space for all the gear continued through this time.

It took nearly two months before the workshop was in a position to hold courses again. It was decided to run courses with more senior members mentoring new or newer members. After a period of time Clive Wilson, our most experienced turner, having started some 14 years earlier, was giving guidance to members of the Thursday evening sessions. This role was then put

on a more formal footing with Clive becoming the club's tutor. Following Clive's retirement his tutoring responsibilities have grown to encompass the Tuesday day-time sessions as well as newly introduced Wednesday evening sessions.

It is now several years since the club relocated from *Wintec*. During this period the club has steadily grown in membership. The club has successfully secured a number of grants, which over time has allowed the replacement of an old band saw, the purchase of a second larger band saw, a new dust extraction system, the replacement of an old model belt sander with a superior disc and belt sander. Other items that we have installed include a new grinder, two air filtration units, and a compressor. A program is in place to replace the ageing, heavily used TL3000 lathes with new DVR's.

The club, under the guidance of Clive, has devised a sequential skills program to teach new turners good basics, and higher challenges for the more advanced turner. All members are encouraged to use the NEAGE (Near Enough Ain't Good Enough) approach to turning and finishing. Clive's weekly Tutors Tidings (TT) keep all our present and past members informed of members projects and progress, as well as providing general knowledge to all us woodies. As all clubs know you have a turnover of members which means teaching many, but not always retaining, as well as having many that are well entrenched in the hobby. Some members have inherited or bought their own lathe and associated tools, and have subsequently left the club once they have gained a level of knowledge and competence that allows them to continue woodturning at home. We now (2019) have a small waiting list as our sessions are limited by the number of available lathes; so we are doing okay and keeping the hobby, pastime and skills of woodturning alive and well. Courses are either 5 weeks x 6.0 hours on a Tuesday, or 10 weeks x 3.0 hours on Wednesday and Thursday evenings. The club also provides members with access to the workshop for 3.0 hours on Saturday mornings. The club's membership comprises men and women of all ages (from students to retirees), backgrounds and ethnicities.

In the future, we want to our own premises in order to give us more space and facilities, and greater autonomy, so watch this space. If the drive and determination of previous members and committees that have seen this club morph as it has had to, over the many years it is definitely possible.

We have a well-founded past, and have earned ourselves a good reputation with other woodturning clubs and woodturners throughout NZ. We are however not complacent, and have big expectations going forward.

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