

# The CNEW Skew

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## Editorial

As I was not at the last meeting, I'll take this opportunity to talk about the tools I intended to bring in. These are the Rolly Monro hollower and the BCT VersaTool. Both tools use the increasingly popular circular "cup" style of cutter and are primarily used for hollowing the inside of bowls and hollow forms.

The Monro tool, on the left in the photo (on page 2), has a shield over the cutter which limits the depth of cut and prevents the worst catches. The shield can also cover different areas of the cutter, for example if you want to cut only with the front area and not the side. The articulated mount allows the cutter to be presented at different angles to the wood while keeping it in line with the shaft. The tool also comes with a longer curved mount which gives more flexibility in the angle of presentation, useful for undercutting but with the disadvantage of taking the cutter out of line with the shaft and making catches a lot more vicious.

The VersaTool is a variation of the BCT SuperCut tool sold in the U.S. by Packard Woodworks. As far as I know, the VersaTool is only available in the U.K. – I got mine from the ToolPost (toolpost.co.uk). This tool has a square shaft with the cutter set at an angle, giving more of a shear cut and making the tool a little less aggressive than if the cutter were pointed straight up. The single pivot point on the shaft allows the cutter to swing out to 90°, which takes it out of line with the shaft and makes for some really nasty catches. The tool does come with a stabilizer bar that bolts into the shaft to counteract torque but I find even this doesn't help much if you get a bad catch.

To use the Monro tool, start with the cutter pointed down and rotate the handle clockwise to bring the cutter up until it starts cutting. You can cut in either direction, from the top towards the bottom or the other way. This is a distinct advantage on end-grain bowls where working from the bottom towards the rim gives

ctd. on P. 3

## President's Message

Are We Having Fun? I hope this finds everybody OK. I had a good time at the meeting and trust that everyone who attended did also, I learned a lot. It is a shame that nobody took advantage of the open turning before the meeting. I would like to thank our own Andy Motter who runs Butternut Tools for his donation to the club. This year the Annual Picnic will be held at Ray & Lisa Boutotte's House in Lancaster. Starting time is 1:00 Sat. August 4<sup>th</sup> in case of rain it will be held the following week on the 11<sup>th</sup>. I will supply the hot dogs and hamburgers and soda, plates, napkins and cups etc. You should bring a dish to share. We will try to have the club mini lathes to turn something. Ray said he had some wood to turn and possibly we could get him to donate some of his wood that he struggled to get in Vermont for a wood swap. Please call if you have any questions 978-534-3683 and I will try to answer them. I think the video library will be pretty much under control by the September meeting.

AL

## Contents

President's Message	1
Editorial	1
Club Officers	2
Minutes of Last Meeting	2
Home-made Tools	3
Using Hook Tools	4
Show & Tell	6
Directions to Picnic	8

## Club Officers and Contact Info for 2007

President, Al Faul  
 VP, Internal, Reid Gilmore  
 VP, External, Mary Maguire  
 Secretary, Tim Elliott  
 Treasurer, Norma Hogan  
 Newsletter, Graeme Young  
 Video Librarian, Al Faul  
 Book Librarian, Ray Boutotte  
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### Minutes of July Meeting Tim Elliott

New member: Roger Boisvert

Treasurer Norma Hogan was not present, but sent a summary to Al Faul:

Beginning balance: \$1941

Ending balance: \$2079

Nobody showed up for open turning this month.

Four members attended the wood harvest at Alan Gilburg's land in Vermont. They cut down one cherry tree, and carried the wood too far out to the cars. We may have another opportunity to do this in the Fall, if there is sufficient interest. Thanks to Alan for offering the opportunity.

Phil Bowman gave a report on the AAW national symposium in Portland Oregon. As usual, there were demonstrator rotations, a trade show, and Instant Gallery. Phil found the Instant Gallery a bit overwhelming this year, with over 4000 pieces in total. He passed around a few snapshots of pieces notable for being connected with CNEW, inspirational, or hideous. The Banquet took in over \$100K. The highest single sale was for a collaboration between Bin Pho and Frank Sudol. The second highest sale was for a collaboration between Jacques Vesery and Betty Scarpino. Next year's symposium will be in Richmond, VA. The following year will be in Albuquerque, NM.

Dick Vose spoke about the "Spirit of Wood" show organised by the local woodcarving community. CNEW again plans to have a booth. The date is Sun, Oct 21.

Reid Gilmore is still seeking demonstrators for Fall meetings. Steve Reznek signed up for November. There

is some interest in having a panel discussion on design or other topics for September or October. Contact Reid if you would like to demo or have some ideas.

CNEW is signed up for a booth at the craft fair held by the Worcester Center for Crafts in November (weekend of Thanksgiving).

Steve Reznek pointed out that the current issue of Fine Woodworking has a very interesting review of glue products. They liked Titebond 3. Gorilla glue was last.

We will hold our annual picnic on August 4 at Ray Boutotte's house in Lancaster. Directions are on the back page. The club will provide meat and drinks. Members should bring a side dish or other complement.

Several members noted that the CNEW library has not been available for a few months - the cabinet has not been accessible during our meeting time. We are looking into it.



Rolly Monro and VersaTool hollers

## Home-made Tools

### Reid Gilmore

Notes from Reid Gilmore on the two home-made tools he brought to last month's meeting.

The first tool was a one inch wide, ¼ inch thick square scraper that was sharpened across the front face and also on the left-hand edge for the first ½ inch. The front face and left edge are perpendicular. This tool is particularly good for cutting the flanges of wooden boxes to obtain a good friction-fit between the lid and the base of the box. The scraper was made of M2 high speed steel obtained from MSC Industrial. The steel blank is sold as a metal lathe bit, and is already hardened. The rectangular tool bit (6" x 1" x ¼") had to be ground on both ends using a 60 grit wheel for relatively rapid removal of the steel. The tool was plunged into water to prevent overheating. A 1" x 1/2" tongue was ground on one end, and this was inserted into a wooden handle made of purpleheart. A 1" long, 1" diameter piece of copper pipe was used as a ferrule. The working end of the tool was then carefully ground.

The Vortex tool was my attempt to duplicate a tool that Stewart Batty used in a demonstration at Albany several years ago. The Vortex tool is made from a 3/8" diameter 6" long cylinder of M2 steel (also from MSC). The Vortex tool resembles a spindle gouge without a flute. Instead of a flute, the topside of the point is ground at about a 15° angle so that a 1" long diamond shape is produced. The bottom edge of the tool is ground like a very pointed spindle gouge, with sides swept back roughly 3/4". The tool is useful for making the type of cuts one might make with the pointed edge of the skew chisel. I'm not sure I have been able to duplicate the shape used by Stewart Batty. So far, I have not been able to locate a photo of this tool on the Internet. I haven't made a wooden handle for the Vortex gouge yet, but instead have used Trent Bosch "Super Tool Handle". These handles have a red plastic outside and take a 3/8" diameter tool, which is held in place with a pair of setscrews.

### Editorial, etd.

a cleaner cut but is impossible with a gouge. I find this tool impossible to use on really wet wood: it clogs almost immediately. On drier wood it works well and with the cutter closed up to take only fine shavings it can produce a good finish cut. Adjusting the shield to get the right amount of cutter exposed can be fiddly and you have to keep adjusting it to work in different areas of the bowl or hollow form. The two main bolts for the head articulation are a particular problem: because they are inserted from opposite sides, tightening one can loosen the other.

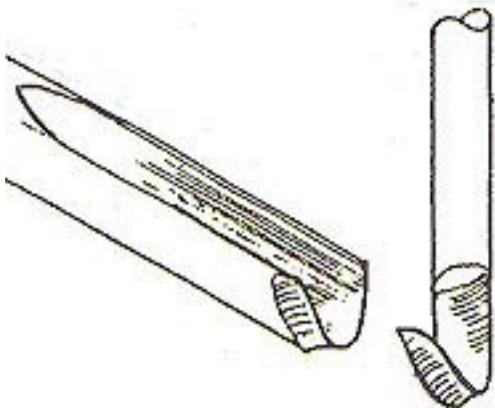
The VersaTool is usually started at the bottom centre of the bowl, not at the rim. Again, a great advantage on end-grain bowls. The tool is always kept horizontal, at centre height. Assuming the bowl is already partly hollowed, push the tool straight in to the centre. Because of the way the cutter is angled, it won't cut. Pull the handle towards you, pivoting the cutter until the low part of the cutting edge makes contact and it begins to cut. Now pull the entire tool towards you and cut across the (fairly flat) bottom of the bowl. This works great until you reach the point where the wood curves up into the side of the bowl. If you just keep going, the curvature of the wood has the same effect as pivoting the cutter further into the wood, resulting in an arm-wrenching catch. This is, in my experience, the big problem with this tool – you have to maintain the angle of presentation between the cutter and the wood or it will become violently aggressive very quickly. For working the sides of a vessel, swiveling the tip will move the cutter angle towards the safe zone. Also, working from top to bottom is safer because the changing angles towards the bottom will disengage the cutter. The VersaTool is a better roughing tool than the Monro because it does not clog, while the Monro is a better finishing tool. One very useful thing you can do with the VersaTool is turn the whole tool 90° clockwise, start it near the centre and cut to the centre, removing that nub that's so difficult to remove otherwise. Even if I never used it for anything else, I'd keep the tool for that purpose.

These are both useful tools but they work in ways that are very different from a gouge. Both take practice and perseverance to use effectively but if you do a lot of end-grain work they are certainly worth considering.

## Hook Tool Usage

Dave Eaton

“Hook” tools are a wonderful woodturning tool, or tool bit, intended primarily for use in the removal of end-grain stock. In fact it excels at removing end grain, for boxes, vases, hollow forms or even bowls, though we tend to shy away from larger end grain projects since the issue of retaining a pith in the object can lead to problems. It’s unique design provides for easily reaching deep into stock to create an open or hollow form while typically leaving a superior, very smooth finish that other tools such as scrapers cannot do. It can also be an excellent and highly efficient substitute for a traditional bowl gouge when performing side-grain turning especially where a traditional shaped bowl gouge becomes unsafe to use because of depth or other factors. In fact the edge and shape of the hook tool is essentially a gouge’s cutting edge on its side.



A major issue for many turners is beginning to understand how to use the hook tool. Since this is a specialized tool, not easily made and sharpened, there seems to be a lack of information on it – but it’s been around many years.

Del Stubbs, Mitch Wolok and Alan Lacer are reported to have helped this tool emerge to become more popular as of late. Mitch Wolok and Andre Martel each sell a version of the hook tool bit made of hardened steel while Alan Lacer advocates and teaches how to fabricate one yourself using rudimentary metalworking skills.

Home-made tools don’t cost the \$30-75 that the hardened commercially manufactured bits cost but do wear fast and needs sharpening often. Another alternative is

the Termite tool from Oneway Manufacturing. It’s more a “ring” tool as the tip is closed. This may aid in some difficult tool tip placement issues but may also clog up with chips more as it does not allow an easy escape for the freshly cut ribbons.

Before using the hook tool, typically the outside of the object will have already been turned to a final shape, at least in the area you desire to be hollowed. This gives an approximate shape target and wall thickness to hollow to and alleviates stressing the wood beyond it’s structural rigidity limits that may cause fractures in thinner walled turnings. To turn the interior, there are a few important things to remember:

- 1) You’ll likely need to raise your tool rest to engage the sharp edge and aid the tool in getting a good “bevel rub”.
- 2) You may need to back the tool rest away from the work a few inches when working right near the “front” allowing the supporting handle or rod to maintain good contact with the tool rest.
- 3) Though you can start the hook tool cut by swinging the handle well toward the front of the lathe and rotating to about 45 degrees, drilling a depth hole is highly suggested for not only setting your vessel depth, but also greatly aids to the ease in which the hook tool bit can “grab” a new cut. The best size diameter to pre-dill is that about equal to, or greater than, the diameter of the bit curve or outside diameter. For instance  $\frac{5}{8}$ ” dia. is ideal in most work using a Wolok bit.
- 4) The optimum position for the tool to be placed within the vessel will be from the 6 o’clock to 9 o’clock position. This is the area inside the diameter of the vessel with 6 o’clock being closest to the bed ways and 9 o’clock being closest to the front of the lathe, where you would usually stand for spindle turning.
- 5) When reaching far into a turning, the tool rest should be brought closer to the work and possibly raised again to aid the cut. Longer reaches or deeper cuts may even require a more robust holder rod. Usually a  $\frac{5}{8}$ ” dia. rod will surface but Mitch Wolok noted that he uses a 1” or 1½” rod for hollow works as deep as three feet with a modified, downward bent tip.
- 6) For smoothing the interior sides pull the rod close to the vessel wall with the tool almost vertical (safe) to perform a shear scrape. Practice and good tool technique here will leave a finished cut without tear-out.

- 7) When cutting the last material in the bottom of the work, starting a cut may become progressively difficult. A scraper may help to clean up.
- 8) NEVER allow the tool to be rotated to where the entire sharp edge will engage the work. The cut will be extremely aggressive and potentially uncontrollable, likely winding up in a catch or blown up piece.

Use Caution: The Hook Tool should be presented to the wood surface in a vertical position, like a tire is on a car, with the bit end of handle tilted slightly downward. Slight rotation will then initiate a cut.

Never try to engage the tip fully rotated to a horizontal position, like a basketball hoop! You will lose all possibility of the bevel rubbing and it will present like a knife edge to the spinning wood. This is way too aggressive of a cut and you will find a heart wrenching catch results every time.

Remember also, that although hook tools are extremely efficient for most end-grain work, in some situations, if you expect to encounter hard knots or where you may wish to create tightly undercut or rolled edges on closed forms, with sharp angles of departure from the entrance of the vessel where the shape of the tool may not allow the cutting edge to reach well, to protect your hook tool from damage in extreme conditions and maintaining good control over the cut being produced, it is suggested you switch to use of a machinist tool bit tool like a Two Flute Ball End Mill or a heavier, stouter bent tool like Andre Martel's extra large bit.

If you wish to experiment with vessel shapes you also may choose to try different shapes of hook profiles, which may accommodate your need quite well. The cutting characteristics of one shape might be useful and could offer areas of performance where another shape may fall short.

Generally the tool, when presented to the wood in a proper manner will cut very well, generating long thin ribbons of waste. It will tend to pull itself backwards into the vessel once the cut begins as well. If it seems not to be cutting quite as nice as you hope then it is likely dull.

Sharpening the outside of the bit can usually be done easily and quickly by making a few strokes flat across the outer diameter or bevel edge of the bit using a fine flat honing stone. For more aggressive sharpening needs, a Dremel tool with a sanding drum works great.

The sanding drum is not very aggressive and therefore allows the turner a little more leeway in "grinding" than other, way too aggressive methods like a grinding wheel, which would certainly make quick work of sharpening the bit... and reduce its life many fold if any sharpening errors occur. As you may perceive, what we look for in re-sharpening is not removal of material but rather a fine dressing of the cutting edge. As the tool bevel becomes narrower it will become more aggressive.

To sharpen the inside, it is best to use a fine round or cone shaped diamond dressing stone or a "slip-stone" with a round or conical shaped edge. Stroke along the inside edge of the tool maintaining a flat contact at all times. Once a sharp edge is developed, typically the interior of the tool bit will take many light dressings before the outside of the tool will need any touch up as well. If you maintain your edges with a fine hone rather than more aggressive methods, your tool bit will last for a very long time.

The bottom line with this tool is:

### **Keep it sharp**

There are really no rigid rules on tool position except that it is not designed to operate in a horizontal position.

## **Things to Learn from Trees**

- It's important to have roots.
- In today's complex world, it pays to branch out.
- Don't pine away over old flames.
- If you really believe in something, don't be afraid to go out on a limb.
- Be flexible so you don't break when a harsh wind blows.
- Sometimes you have to shed your old bark in order to grow.
- Grow where you're planted.
- It's perfectly OK to be a late bloomer.
- Avoid people who would like to cut you down.
- You can't hide your true colours as you approach the autumn of your life.



Top: **Tim Elliott**, maple bowl with chip-carved rim  
**Steve Reznek**, mahogany and maple bowls in maple stand  
Left: **Mike Peters**, vase in mystery wood (elm?)  
Right: **Emma Peters**, cherry bowl – her first ever!



Show and Tell  
 Photographs by Henry Fairlie



**Alan Gilburg**, footed bowl in ash & walnut  
**Reid Gilmore**, square bowl in ambrosia maple  
**Mary Maguire**, pens and letter opener (made some for her sister, some for Freedom Pen project)



Top: **Al Faul**, segmented bowl in maple & walnut.  
**Paul Charbonneau**, maple bowl with extensive texturing  
Centre: **Alan Gilburg**, box with colored top and peppermill in red maple. Segmented bowl by **Will Hunt**.  
Bottom: **Dominic Leroux & Buzz Hawes**, collaborative bowl with router-modified-segment method.  
**Steve Reznek**, bowl in cherry crotch.



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*Central New England Woodturners*

*A Chapter of the American Association of Woodturners*



*On the web: [www.cnew.org](http://www.cnew.org)*

**Annual Picnic Saturday August 4th**

Travel Instructions to Ray Boutotte's  
73 Carter St. Lancaster, MA  
978-368-0004

From Southern/Eastern MA: Take the Mass Pike west to Exit 11A, the exit for Rte. 495. Proceed north on Rte. 495 to exit 27, the exit for Rte. 117. Take right off the exit ramp and follow Rte. 117 west thru Bolton center until you get to Rte. 110. Take a left onto Rte. 110 south. Go straight thru a 5-way intersection staying on Rte 110, and take your first right onto Mill Steet. Take your second left onto Carter Street. If you reach Rte. 70 you missed it.

From Western MA: Take Rte. 2 east to exit 35 for Rte. 70. Take a right off the exit ramp and then a left onto Rte. 70 south. Follow Rte. 70 thru center of Lancaster. Continue till you drive under a train bridge. Immediately after the bridge take a left onto Carter Street. If you enter Clinton you have gone too far.

From Worcester MA: Take Rte. 290 to Rte. 190 north. At the end of Rte. 190 take Rte. 2 east. Follow directions for 'Western MA'

From Northern MA (North of Rte. 2): Drive south on Rte. 495 until you get to Exit 27. Follow the directions for 'Southern/Eastern MA'.