

AWSA Symposium – 22nd to 24th September 2018 – Wilderness Hotel, Wilderness, Western Cape.

Trevor Pope - September 2018

In 2018, the AWSA symposium took place at the Wilderness Hotel in the small town of Wilderness just outside George in the Western Cape. At 63 registered delegates, we recorded the best turnout for some time. The hotel offered a one-stop location for all the needs of the symposium, including catering, conference and exhibition venues, security and accommodation, which simplified the organiser's task

considerably.

The action was mostly indoors in the exhibition hall and the seminar rooms except for a bandsaw mill that was demonstrated outside. A skilled camera operator and large screen gave a close-up view of the action on the lathe.

The program was spread out over three days, two full days on Saturday and Sunday, with the final events on Monday morning. There was a full program and sometimes it was difficult to choose which option to attend. As in previous years, there were generous breaks to allow delegates to visit the exhibition hall. A parallel track of short demos also took place in the hall.

John Wessels was the featured turner. If you have attended previous AWSA congresses, you may be familiar with John's work, particularly his signature pewter inlaid vessels (from www.awsa.org.za). John shared many techniques he has picked up from around the world. These pictures give an example of some of John's signature work.



Most featured demonstrators make a signature piece or two, but John chose another approach. John is very well travelled and has met many of the well-known turners that most of us have just read about. So he is able to show us a large number of techniques used by these turners for their signature pieces. The pictures below show some of the pieces that John shared secrets for the making of.



The piece on the right is similar to Hayley Smith's signature bowl with the raised bumps – John showed how to make these with a high speed tool and a specially made ball socket cutter.

The other headline turner was Chris Pouncy who represents Robert Sorby in the UK. This was Chris' fourth visit to South Africa. The visit was sponsored by Strand Hardware so Chris did a tour of the country, visiting various clubs. Even if you were not able attend the symposium, you may have been fortunate see Chris on his tour. With his dry humour, related in a Somerset accent, Chris is a polished demonstrator of Robert Sorby products. ▶

Chris, on the right, is talking to Jan Richter, the incoming chairman for the AWSA in 2019. The Powermatic lathe shown in the foreground was supplied by Strand Hardware.



◀ Chris used a Robert Sorby texturing tool and some felt tip markers to make the lid for this turned box.



Dave Johnson showed us how he did the inlay on this exquisite bowl in resin tree burl with a malachite inlay. ▶



◀ John showed us some of the pyrography techniques used to create the incredible detail on this Kibashi doll by Cynthia Carden Gibson



Dave Stephenson ▶ showed us how to turn a small urn by hollowing out the base and reattaching a new foot.





◀ If you ever wondered what Lichtenberg fractal wood burning is, Richard Muller and Lisakhanya Ndovela demonstrated how it works. This particular example was done at 12kV on a piece of MDF with two probes and salt water to help the tracking.

These bowls ▶ are by Benoit Averling – John showed us how to

do the random embellishments using pyrography and an air tool. ▼



Some of the pictures do not do the pieces justice. It is not possible to reproduce all the techniques that John shared with us – you really needed to be there. There were so many possibilities to take away to incorporate into your own pieces!

I have only included a small part of all that was on show. Some exceptional pieces and demos are not shown here - one camera and one pair of eyes can take in only so much!

Although the symposium has traditionally been organised around the September Heritage day long-weekend, it is apparent that most of the delegates would prefer a normal weekend, as they are not tied to school holidays. A normal weekend will reduce pressure on travel and accommodation bookings and costs, so the new AWSA committee will look into this for 2019.

Well done to Roy and Dee Marcus, Carey Johnson and the AWSA organising committee. Roy is standing down as AWSA chair for 2019. Jan Richter who has served as deputy was elected as chair for 2019.

◀ Bowl by Peter Nicolle entitled “Under the sea” on the instant gallery.

