

The Changing World of UK Woodturning – Personal Thoughts and Feelings by Martin Saban-Smith

There can be no doubt in my mind that the lockdown of people during the Covid-19 pandemic will have world changing consequences. In this article, I think about the changes, both good and perhaps bad, the situation will have on woodturning in the UK.

I forget the date in March this year when I took the decision to postpone demonstrations and lessons indefinitely as our Government considered locking the country down to restrict the spread of the terrible Covid-19 virus. I dare say woodturners, clubs and event organisers all over the country began to feel sick to the stomach as they saw their meetings, events and income evaporating into the air.

Although many of these events have been rescheduled, the income from attending them may eventually arrive. But as many turners are self employed, demonstrations are a major source of income for them and to have it indefinitely delayed, or even completely cancelled is incredibly worrying. I am fearful that some woodturning businesses may not make it through this.

Thinking Outside the Box, and Inside the Internet

The internet has become the lifeline for people in lockdown. They have turned to the internet for everything from communicating with their friends and family through online comms companies (Amazon hasn't had a decent webcam available since March), online ordering (at the start, I saw people screen-grabbing their position in on-line ordering queues being in the thousands) to entertainment. It has been bonkers, to say the least.

Many business owners that have taken a step back, had a good look at what they do and thought outside their comfortable business box have managed to come up with ingenious ways of keeping going – keeping themselves in touch with their customers, attracting new ones and keeping themselves largely afloat. Let's look at a couple of examples I've seen in the media.

Aerobics Instructor: One lady is saw an interview with has moved her aerobics sessions to online meeting companies, enabling her customers to continue having their weekly lessons. She was also doing free lessons on her Facebook page.

Kids Entertainer: A nursery worker in Hampshire has a free online service for parents at home with kids to keep them occupied for an hour or so a day via her Facebook page (I seem to remember).

What does this have to do with woodturning? Well, nothing as far as the content goes, but look at what this could be doing for their businesses. It is putting them in front of loads of people every time they do something 'Live' – the content will be shared and seen by new many new people, that's for sure. And anyone in their locality when this is all over is arguably more likely to book that aerobic instructor or try to send their kids to that lady's establishment. There are undoubtedly countless business all over the world that have come up with ideas to keep themselves engaged with their existing customers and attract new ones with their ideas.

On the woodturning front, proactive turners have been creating more content for their friends, followers and audiences to engage with them whilst they are unable to go out. There is now a huge amount of content for people to choose from both on Facebook and YouTube as more of us step up our engagement online. There are listings available of turners presenting live demonstrations on YouTube with the Blind Woodturner Chris Fisher and his wife Nicola publishing a list of scheduled Live demonstrations in the country – check it out here: <https://christopherfisher.co.uk/calendar/>. The AWGB are also compiling a list of woodturners making live demonstrations available [HERE](#). The AWGB are also hosting meetings on Tuesday evenings via Zoom as a way they can engage with their membership. See

their website for details.

(Please note I am not responsible for the content on sites I link to)

Although I was planning on doing some live demonstrations myself, I was nowhere near being able to offer them until after my first live YouTube demo on 17th March. Since then, I have learned a vast amount about streaming, the equipment needed and presenting a live show for potentially hundreds of people. The investment in the stuff required has been considerable, and the amount of time spent, has been extensive. But! The viewers of these live shows have seen the difference a few short weeks in lockdown and a fanatical focus on production value has had on the standard of the demonstration with each successive show.

Martin Saban-Smith, www.msabansmith.com