



◀ Five spatulas turned by Richard Raffan

Crosscut

Journal of the Wits Woodworking Association

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Next meetings – Woodturners – Monday, 4th August 2025 from 18h00 at **Made in Workshop** – Function and use of various skew chisel profiles: rectangular versus oval versus round. There will be the opportunity to try the round skew on a spindle blank in the lathe. Herman.

Main Club meeting – Wednesday, 13th August 2025 from 18h00 at **Made in Workshop** – Flattening a slab of wood with a router using a spoil-board router sled. Graham.

News

Woodturners – Monday, 7th July 2025
from 18h00 at **Made in Workshop** –
Turning a spatula.

Herman was away in Mauritius, so Pierre showed the video entitled *Richard Raffan turns a run of five spatulas* that can be found on YouTube here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RQSz0VTtn0>

Raffan uses a skew chisel, but a large spindle gouge or a roughing gouge will do just as well for those not comfortable with a skew chisel. He showed how to select and trim the blanks using the bandsaw. He showed how he holds them in the lathe using chuck jaws. Finishing was done using the bandsaw and a sanding disc in the lathe.



Club meeting – Wednesday, 9th July 2025 from 18h00 at **Made in Workshop** – Bandsaw set-up and blade selection.

Graham showed how to set up a new, out-of-the-box, metabo BAS 261 bandsaw. This was followed by some pointers on blade selection.

Roger Matthews wrote some notes on bandsaw blade selection that appear at the end of this newsletter.





Bobby showed how he assembles a segmented vessel using square and rectangular blocks. The picture on the right shows the jig he used for assembling the blocks in stages and a finished candle holder.



Lucky draw prize winners at the July 2025 meetings – Graham, Pano and Pete – with prizes valued at over R1500- each.



Hardware Centre Winter Woodworking Expo – Saturday, 26 July 2025 – Hardware Centre Randburg. This was well attended with many suppliers setting up their gazebos in the parking area. Bunny Croucamp was MC for the day and shepherded the demos and prize draws like a pro.

Calendar of Events for the remainder of 2025

AWSA Symposium 2025 – The Association of Woodturners of South Africa Annual Symposium will be held from the 3-6 October 2025, with international presenter Helen Bailey. You can view her work on <https://www.helenbaileywoodturning.com/>

In addition, South Africa's leading turners will be demonstrating in the two breakaway rooms. Last year there were 111 attendees, this year could be bigger.

The venue remains the same as last year (Northlink College, Tygerberg Campus, Rothchild Boulevard, Panorama Parow). For details and to register, visit www.awsa.org.za



Summer Challenge - Saturday afternoon, 18th October 2025 at **MiW**. A competition to make beforehand and bring a wooden item for the kitchen. This can be turned or “flat-work” – cutting boards, spoons, rolling pins, salad bowls, pepper-mills, and trivets are examples of things you can make. Bring and braai. Most details to follow.

East Rand Woodworkers Association fair – Saturday, the 25th October 2025. Details and venue to be confirmed, but likely to be the Northmead Methodist church, Benoni as past years.

Toy-makers’ Braai Saturday, 22nd November 2025.

The list of suppliers that donated to the 2024 event is given below. Please patronise them. If you can mention that you are from WWA and appreciated their donation, they will appreciate it.

CONTRIBUTING SUPPLIERS 2024

Supplier		
ANDROWARE (Blacksmith)	Häfele South Africa	Prosono International
Asax Agencies	Hamilton Brushware	Richem CC
CCL	HP Will	Robert Sorby
CGR Agencies	Lasher Tools	Skillcraft Agencies (iNGCO)
Creative Turning	Maple Street Timbers	Spear & Jackson (ECLIPSE)
Eco Timbers	MATUS & Hi-KOKI	Spectra Spray
FEW	Metabo Power Tools	Sprayon
FIRST CUT	MITCO Tool Company	Stevens & Co (Ryobi)
Genkem	Pepper Mills for Africa	Vermont Sales
Gedore Tools	Power Tool Repairs Cape Town	Upat SA

Woodworking Association of Pretoria Wood and Craft Expo
– 27 to 30 November 2025 – the usual venue.

Annual Subs are due. Please can you pay your R600- into the FNB account below? Please add your name and “SUBS” to the reason for payment so the treasurer can record your payment.

Reminder – New WWA Account
number with **FNB** – **63026931287** – please add this to your beneficiaries list.

Please make sure that your payment can be identified by adding your **name**, perhaps cell number and **reason for payment**. Annotations such as “annual subs” or “WWA shirt” without your name are not helpful – Anesh will not be able to trace your payment. Please note that the **Nedbank account has been closed**.



Access times for **Made in Workshop for WWA members :**

MiW access control for WWA members – all current paid-up members who have attended a meeting have been issued with a bar code sticker to be used to gain access. Please remember to bring your bar code, so you aren't delayed at the entrance.

MiW times for WWA members are as follows

Monday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday 9AM to 12AM. However please take note of the following: WWA members CANNOT just arrive at **MiW** and use machines unless they have booked them with **MiW**. This refers to the bookable machines such as the panel saw, thicknesser/planer, drum sander, spindle moulder as well as CNC machines of any kind. This applies only to the woodworking machines. The other machines require the purchase of a membership at the monthly (30 day) rate – which is a good rate anyhow. Machines such as the bandsaw and the Triton router table need no booking.

Henry also requires that all the major machines may only be used if the WWA member is familiar and fully understands the importance of the correct and safe use of these machines. Speak to Graham regarding training and qualification to use machines.

MiW is a **Maker Space**, which means that members are able access the machines which are included in the list above. Access to the other machines and facilities is subject to additional fees as mentioned above. While **MiW** will provide assistance and training where necessary, members are responsible for providing materials and performing the work themselves. Members need to be skilled and competent to use the facilities to do the work. For example, if you wish to use a CNC machine, you will need to manually program the tool path on the machine or import it from a design tool that generates the tool path for you. There may be a steep learning curve, but that is part of the challenge.

Bookings can be made during office hours of 8h00 to 17h00, weekdays by contacting one of these numbers:
Henry – 083-269 9505; Josh – 083-768 7853; or Trenton – 081-365 6039

Schedule for Regular Events

1. Second Saturday of month at 9h00 at **Made in Workshop** – Herman – all things turning related – 083 631 0501 [hermanpotgieteresq AT gmail.com](mailto:hermanpotgieteresq@gmail.com)
2. **Show & Tell** meetings are held at Hardware Centre every Friday Morning at 09:30. All WWA members welcome. Contact Eugene on 0824953394 or eugene@antlerfin.co.za

This list is subject to change, so please consult your *Crosscut* each month for any updates.



WWA BANDSAW BLADE DISCUSSION

Written by Roger Matthews, 2024 December
Updated by Trevor Pope, July 2025 after the club meeting

I would like to tap into the WWA's store of knowledge about *bandsaw blades*.

As a hobbyist with an engineering background, I these are my current practices and invite other members to comment and add to the info pool.

My machine is a "Record Power12" 300mm throat and maximum height of 153mm to the guide hear. It has been in use for 23 years. Wheels are 300mm diameter. Max specified blade width is 16mm. Blade length is 2040 to which I add 10mm to allow for a re-weld.

APPLICATION	Stock Thickness (mm)	Blade Width (mm)	Teeth per Inch (TPI)	Comment
RESAWING*	150	10 / 13	3 or 4	
Tight radii in thick boards	40-153	6	4	
General purpose blades	40	10 / 13	6	"Regular" blade for most work and roughing out.
Fine work	30-40	6	10	Tight radii and fussy geometrics. E.g. clock finials
Brass & aluminium	1-5	6	10	Seldom used, but very useful. Run at a slower speed if possible, on your saw.

*For resawing is there any experience of the American “Wood Slicer” blades which feature alternate 3tpi and 4tpi teeth on the same blade and are claimed to damp out harmonic vibrations and thus provide a better finish?

For resawing, whatever blade and wood are involved success needs a slow enough feed. This is to allow the gullets sufficient time to clear the shavings formed by the teeth to be cleared from the kerf, and thus avoiding clogging and overheating of the blade.

For small wheel saws (say 250mm dia. and less) First Cut (and maybe others) offer a “Hobby” blade which has a band thickness of 0.4mm against the normal 0.60mm. These blades are more flexible and fare better with the number of fatigue cycles that short blades suffer compared with those on the bigger machines.

This factor was unearthed by Winston Klein on his small bandsaw and proven by his experience. The thinner band also works well on two Ryobi saws with 240 dia. wheels at our village’s Man shed.

Three-wheel bandsaws have much smaller wheels, so the fatigue problem is much more severe. For those bandsaws, a special thin blade intended specifically for them is required to avoid premature blade breakage. Set up and alignment can be quite difficult for those saws due to the extra wheel.

What is the widest blade that can be used on a particular bandsaw? The manufacturer will specify this. The maximum width will be limited by the space available in the blade path, the width of the wheels, the geometry of the guides, and also the maximum tension that the frame of the saw is able to support. With wider blades, higher tensions are required to keep them properly straight to avoid bowing, and to reduce vibration. For resawing, wider is better – combined with a higher tension, the blade will be less inclined to bow, which causes a barrel shaped cut.

When replacing a blade, there are two schools of thought on how to position the blade on the tires – centred on the tire or with the teeth centred on the tire. In either case the guides will have to be adjusted so that the teeth are in front of the guides, with no contact between the teeth and the guides. Graham showed how to do this in the demonstration. The location of the blade on the tires slightly affects the angle of the blade with respect to the fence, and hence how the blade cuts. This is important when resawing, if the blade doesn’t track parallel to the fence, it will try to veer off in one direction. The blade may be forced into a slight bow and the cut will not be straight, top to bottom. If the tension is too low and/or if the blade is blunt, it may tend to bow.

When to replace a blade?

Blades will inevitably become too blunt to cut easily, sooner if gritty or abrasive woods containing silica (such as blue gum) are cut.

When the feed pressure required to achieve a reasonable cutting speed increases to the point where the machine seems to be slowing down or making extra noise, the blade is probably blunt. Extra feed pressure may cause the blade to bow, causing a slight barrel shape in deeper cuts.

Sometimes the blade will break before it is blunt. If the weld is poorly annealed, it may break on the weld, but if the weld is properly made and annealed, it will break elsewhere. If the blade has broken prematurely, and is not yet blunt, it may be worth having it rewelded, however before doing this, carefully inspect the blade. When a blade is close to the end of its fatigue life, it will start cracking and obviously, the biggest crack is where it will break. On examination, you may find multiple cracks, and then you know blade is definitely scrap.

When a blade is close to breaking, it may develop a bump as it goes around, and if you inspect it, you may find a crack developing. At this stage, you will be lucky to get a few more minutes of use out of it before it breaks, so I recommend you change it right then. When you take it off, you may find that as you fold it into the special three-loop fold, it will break at the crack.

Any blade can be resharpened, but mostly it is cheaper to buy another, given the labour required. Only on the bigger blades or specialised blades, is it likely to be worth resharpening. If the blade is sharpened more than once, it will be necessary to give attention to the set to ensure it is still adequate. This is best done by comparing it with a new blade. Sharpening will need to be done with an abrasive wheel, as the steel is too hard to be filed. Try to preserve the same tooth shape when sharpening, but it is not critical, as the blade is probably on the way out already.

It is wise to have several spare blades so that you can finish a job when the blade breaks. For resawing, it may be worth reserving a special blade or a new sharp blade just for that task and then put the old blade back on for day-to-day use. A sharp blade needs less feed pressure, so it will remain straighter for resawing.

If you wish to sharpen your own blade, a small Dremel type grinder fitted with a small aluminium oxide wheel that fits between the teeth can be used. Another alternative is a chainsaw sharpening grinder. A Google search will show various jigs for holding the grinder, the blade and some sort of indexing mechanism.

Does the blade tension need to be backed off between uses? It seems to depend on the saw. Some manufacturers insist and even provide a special lever to de-tension and re-tension the blade. The Elektra Beckum BAS500 is an example of this. The Startrite 352 (also sold by Record) user manual makes no mention of slacking off between uses. Leaving the saw fully tensioned should have no effect on the life of the blade, as the primary mechanism for blades breaking is flexing around the wheels as it is driven, causing fatigue cracks. I suspect the material used for the tires on the wheels may be a factor. Left tensioned, it may deform slightly, causing a bump in the tires after a long time under tension in one position.

Bandsaw tyres. The tyres on the wheels are usually made of rubber or poly-urethane and can wear out. Tyres may be bonded to the wheels or removable. Replacement tyres in poly-urethane are available locally, but make sure the size is right and be prepared for some difficulty fitting them. Tools4wood and Temu list some tyres.

Bonded tyres can be replaced with new polyurethane tyres by Printflex, in the Jo'burg South.