



Crosscut

Journal of the Wits Woodworking Association

◀ Hamlet round skew chisel showing the skew ground tip

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Next meetings – Woodturners – Monday, 1st September 2025 from 18h00 at **Made in Workshop** – New range of turning tools (ex Black-line) - demo by Brendan from Hardware Centre, who are now the distributors.

Main Club meeting – Wednesday, 10th September 2025 from 18h00 at **Made in Workshop** – Using a Festool Rotex sander – Do's, don'ts and how to avoid pad damage – Graham Swallow.

News

Woodturners – Monday, 4th August 2025 from 18h00 at **Made in Workshop** – Function and use of various skew chisel profiles: rectangular versus oval versus round. We watched a short video by Brian Havens on the topic that explained the differences very well. He explained the usage of each one and the advantages and disadvantages. The video can be found here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ARCH_J7ypPk

Herman showed examples of the different chisels and there was the opportunity to try out each on the lathe.

If you wish to make your own round skew chisel, High Speed Steel (HSS) round bar in 200mm lengths can be bought from Toolquip (www.toolquip.co.za). Diameters listed are 8 up to 16mm in 2mm increments, and 20mm. Being a turner, you can make a handle yourself, with a ferrule from a copper pipe fitting.

If you are unsure about the angles to grind your skew chisel to, this article provides some guidance:

<https://woodworkersinstitute.com/tips-on-using-the-skew-chisel/>



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.

Mr Woodturner has moved from Blairgowrie to 137 Alberts Road, Newlands 2192 - not far from where we had our workshop in Albertskroon and where Tom had his antique shop.

Mr Woodturner

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.



Plastic or Wooden Cutting Boards - which are better?

Trevor Pope

Wooden and plastic cutting boards are commonly used in the kitchen for food preparation. We know that wood and plastic have their own advantages and disadvantages.

A cutting board needs to contain and support the food as it is prepared, usually with a knife, for consumption. The board should resist cutting with the knife, but also not blunt the cutting edge of the knife – which seem to be contradictory requirements.

After preparation, the board needs to be cleaned to remove residual food stains, odours and contamination. Most importantly, microscopic contamination needs to be dealt with – bacteria, viruses and fungal spores need to be removed or neutralised. It is important to realise that some foods, like salads and bread, will not be cooked after preparation, so contamination needs to be avoided. One strategy is to use a different cutting board for high-risk foods such as meat to avoid contamination of uncooked foods.

The general concern with both wood and plastic materials revolves around how they are used as cutting boards. With thousands of knife cuts, the surfaces are scored by countless microscopic grooves that are perfect hiding places for pathogens. The grooves are almost impossible to completely clean out. Pathogens can be very hardy. Detergents and hot water are the first line of defence. Plastic cutting boards can be exposed to higher temperatures and corrosive detergents in a dishwasher. However, wood has another advantage, namely the extractives that wood inherently contains to protect against infection in nature, prove effective against bacterial contamination. This has been documented in several papers that have compared the two materials, using objective tests that measure contamination by pathogens during use and cleaning.

However, there is another twist to this debate. Recently, concerns are being raised about pervasive plastic pollution in the environment. As plastics degrade, they shed microscopic particles even down to the nanometre size range. These are becoming pervasive and have been found in even the most pristine natural environments. They are also detectable inside the human body, presumably from the food we eat, the water we drink and the air we breathe.

Not much is known about the long-term effects of these micro and nano plastics inside the body. Some are completely inert, but there are others that have been implicated in harmful effects, such as the so-called “forever” chemicals added to some plastics. There is research being conducted into the effects of micro-plastics in the human body and in the foods we eat. One study implicated micro-plastics in the formation of cholesterol deposits in arteries. Not enough is known yet, but if you are concerned about what may come up, you may wish to reduce your exposure to microplastics.

All plastic surfaces shed material in use, to some degree. Heat, abrasion and chemicals in food (such as naturally occurring acids) accelerate shedding and contamination of food and water. In particular, avoid heating and cooking foods in plastic vessels.

When a cutting board is used, all those scratches made by the knife also dislodge microscopic particles of the cutting board material. We know many woods are food safe, so microscopic particles of cellulose and lignin have no harmful effects, being comparable to the insoluble fibres in many foods. However, the effects of microscopic particles of plastic in the gut are not well known. Depending on the type of plastic, these particles may not be completely inert or benign. This is something more to consider when deciding between plastic or wooden cutting boards

Cutting board food safety principles:

- Use separate boards for high-risk foods such as chicken to avoid cross-contamination.
- Use bleach as well as detergents to clean high-risk boards that are used for preparing meat products. Chlorine based bleaches are suitable for plastic boards, whereas non-chlorine based bleaches (ammonia or peroxide) are more effective on wooden boards.
- After cleaning, allow the board to dry out thoroughly to make the surface less hospitable for pathogens. Some bacteria are able to resist desiccation, forming spores that can be very hardy, but most can't survive drying out.

(Anthrax is an extreme example, where spores have been shown to be pathogenic after being buried for more a century. This is why there is caution about redeveloping the burial grounds associated with Sizwe hospital in Sandringham.)

Wooden boards can be refinished when worn – this not only improves their looks but can get rid of the microscopic scratches that hold pathogens. Refinishing removes worn, weathered surface wood and exposes fresh wood with extractives that are able resume their anti-microbial duties to reduce contamination. Planing the surface is better than sanding which just introduces a fresh set of microscopic scratches. Woods with a uniform grain such as beech and maple are easier to clean and less likely to trap pathogens. Woods with variable grain such as ash and oak (so-called ring-porous woods) are harder to clean and refinish, trapping pathogens and stains in the softer wood grain. End grain seems to resist wear better than side grain. Refinish with a food safe finish such as liquid paraffin, technical oil or a product specifically marketed for cutting boards and butcher blocks.

I hope I'm not being alarmist about plastic contamination – there is much we don't know about the effects of micro plastics – but it is good to be aware of the issues.

In the meantime, keep on making and using wooden cutting boards, plates and utensils.