Reverse Chucking by John Birdsall

The woodturning establishment today is increasingly pushing the desirability of re-chucking our "finished" bowls to remove or modify the chucking on the bottom. For those who use a spigot this is not an issue as the spigot must be removed or modified into a foot. However dovetail recesses are another story. My personal thought is that a properly finished dovetail does not detract from the finished piece, and that the end user of the bowl unless a woodturner themselves is unlikely think twice about it.

That said I feel as we develop our turning skills and move forward removal of chucking marks is a desirable step forward, especially if we wish our work to stand up to serious scrutiny.

With personal good intentions some time ago a set of Cole Jaws was added to my Christmas wish list. Of course this is only the start of re-chucking, unless the bowl rim is suitable for gripping by the buttons it does not work.

There are many additional and home made devices available to us and so long as we are working over the bed the tail stock can be brought up as additional support.

Some time ago I took the very deliberate decision to remove the chucking from everything I made. This has worked fine whilst working over the bed, but having set out to make a 17 inch platter with a part waney edge rim, I thought I was going to have to back track on my decision.

I know a vacuum chuck is the optimum answer, but with a solid spindle and a finite bank balance that went out the window. Other options were Cole Jaw extensions and large stepped dovetail jaws, but the uneven rim ruled these out. Although these methods may have sufficed if it were possible to use the tail stock for extra support, unfortunately I have only a 12 inch swing over the bed.

The Longworth chuck featured in Woodturning magazine no.212 this April would appear an excellent way of re-chucking whilst turning outboard although again would not safely grip my uneven rim, and I suspect suffers some of the other limitations of Cole Jaws, where the tail stock is often required for extra support.

The Longworth chuck feature did get me thinking and I recalled seeing a picture of a large bowl in what I think is called a cradle chuck somewhere on the web. So here is a picture of my version with a 14 inch wide rimmed robinia bowl mounted up.

It is 20 inches in diameter; the body is made of 24mm MDF (two 12mm pieces glued together) for rigidity. The rings are 12mm MDF. With a series of different size rings and a range of M6 bolts with wing nuts it will safely reverse almost any bowl or platter up to 18 inch diameter. A piece of router mat is placed between the rim and the back plate for grip and padding and tissue between the ring and the underside of the rim.

I say almost any bowl or platter, I'm still thinking about a large natural edge bowl!