

Turning with a Twist

by Ian Elliott

At the moment I seem to be in an experimental mood, trying things I have never done before, or trying to work out how a piece of work I had seen made by someone else could have been done.

At our last demonstration before lockdown Richard Findley did a Barley Twist chair leg. Though it was interesting at the time I could not see how it would be incorporated into my work. Then a couple of weeks ago, Colwin Way on his SkillCentreAtHome Tuesday/Thursday demonstrations that I have been following on YouTube did a small Barley Twist only using files and abrasive.



This demonstration triggered a memory from my first year of turning, I had the privilege of been awarded the Morris Mutter trophy, those of you who have had the same privilege may remember the twist running up the centre of the trophy. Its two different coloured woods, a dark wood on the outside and a light wood up the centre. At the time this really intrigued me, and I did not know how Morris Mutter did it. So, six years on I thought I would give it a go, but first I decided to experiment by making a Goblet with a twisted stem. I used a piece of Spalted Beech which finished around 150mm x 60mm pictured left.

On reflection the twist should be deeper, but that is what trial pieces are for-to learn!



The next step was to prep up a two-wood blank for a spindle, Sycamore for a 6mm core and American Black Walnut for the outside. I turned it between centres to 15mm diameter. Then I attacked it with an ordinary round file, at an angle of about 45* not measured just, by eye. With the lathe turned off, turning the chuck by hand whilst filing, until the Sycamore started to show through. Then it was a case of keep filing until everything was even then filing and sanding to get the twist to a bead shape, going through the grades.

Unlike any other project I start I did not know or planned what this was going to be when finished. I now had a 15mm Dia. x 200mm twisted spindle, I decided it was going to be an over sized goblet. I sorted through my stock of wood and I had some A B Walnut to make the cup and base.

So above is the finished result, like a lot of experiments in fiction it turned out to be a monster, it stands 340mm high x 90mm Dia. at the cup and 85mm Dia. at the base. The spindle is no where near as slim as Morris Mutters, I did not have a photograph of the trophy but next time I get the opportunity to see it I will take a photograph.

But as I said at the beginning it was an experiment and if you don't not try you don't learn.