

Local woodturner shows off his craft

When Matthew Lovell was made redundant from his job as Commercial Director for a demolition company, at a time when his 40th birthday was approaching, it seemed like a good time to re-assess his life.

“I’d been working for the same company since I left Sheffield Polytechnic, and with its takeover by a larger company, things were not the same. The hours were long, as was the commuting, which would get longer when the company relocated to Wakefield from Rotherham. In some senses being made redundant did me a huge favour.”

So what does a person do after a lifetime of knocking things down?



Matthew Lovell at work on his woodturning lathe.

“As usual, my wife was the driving force behind my new venture. She arrived home with a lathe for my 40 birthday and told me I had to learn how to use it! We had just spent four years renovating our Victorian semi in Sheffield, and I had built wardrobes, bookcases and various other pieces of furniture. I’d really enjoyed working with the wood, but woodturning was something new to me. The lathe lay in a friend’s garage for four months because we had nowhere to put it – my wife claimed it looked smaller in the catalogue,” laughs Matthew.

And so to the next problem – no workshop. Matthew and his wife, Lisa, had looked at moving out in to the Peak District several years ago, with the view to running a holiday cottage, but with the increased time commuting, as well as three children, they decided against it. But now, as the opportunity was there again, they began looking in earnest. After much searching, Youlgrave’s Christmas and April Cottages came on to the market, and with a potential workshop it fitted all the criteria.

“It’s great working from home. I can be flexible with my hours, which means I get to see more of the children, and with such a wonderful backdrop, it can’t fail to inspire me. We moved in last August and I enrolled on a course at Craft Supplies in Millers Dale to learn how to use the lathe. One particular setback was that I had to wait over a month afterwards for an essential part to arrive, so then I had to learn the whole process again.”

Matthew’s products range from boxes to bowls, platters to candlesticks, and in a variety of woods, from the exotic to things made out of donated tree trunks and wood destined for the fire. “I’ve already had a few commissions, including a box to keep keys in and a fireside box for long matches. It’s all new to me, but an exciting process of discovery.”

Does he rate working for himself? “It’s really scary, with no control over cash flow, but I can work at my own pace and I’m doing something I really love. What could be better?”

Matthew will be opening up Christmas Cottage on Church Street during Well Dressing week for an exhibition of his work, and for sales. Opening times are 10am-4pm from Saturday 19 through to Friday 25 June. If you can’t make these times simply come through the 5-bar gate and try the house or workshop, or call 636151 for more details.