



A Personal Summary of a Good Holiday!

by
Gordon Malan & Heather Thornes

Newcastle to Stavanger

We were up at 0440 hr on Monday morning, and drove to Newcastle Airport. (The spare room of Jonathan, Heather's son, was full of boxes of trainers that he sells on eBay, so there was no room for us to stay overnight with him!)

Our flight left on time and we were welcomed on board the 30-seater by the Captain saying: 'Welcome on board, *Lady* and Gentlemen!' – Heather and the attendant were the only two females on board. The flight was uneventful and we arrived in Stavanger 2.5 hr later.

The bus driver of the airport bus most helpfully telephoned on our behalf and then dropped us off at a bus stop, saying that this was where we would be picked up. We made several telephone calls to the organiser – 'Someone will be with you in 20 minutes ...!' – but we were still there 1.5 hr later.

We were by the docks, and there were several huge cruise liners in the docks, which we later discovered prevented our boat from mooring here! Eventually, the organiser told us an address and to get a taxi to the MS Gann.



After a trip of about 20 minutes, we were on board and went to our cabin and started unpacking. Then I noticed we were under way (no prior announcements!), and we eventually docked in the centre of the city, only about 400 metres from where we had been waiting!



Well, it all ended quite satisfactorily, and we did not sail until 2300 hr, so after exploring the boat and getting our

bearings, we were able to go ashore, where we ate an ice cream in the evening sunshine.

Cruise Organisation

The weather was very good, throughout, and we only had a few light showers on our last two days. The cruise was organised by a man who runs a firm selling woodworking, woodturning and wood carving equipment (Verktøy AS) – like Snainton Woodworking Supplies, but in Norway!



The organiser, one Odd Erik Thjømøe, had arranged for around 20 world-class woodturners, carvers, woodworkers and equipment suppliers to join the cruise. These largely international experts attracted other passengers, punters and customers at the various ports at which we called on the way up and down the coast.

Some of the more notable international experts on board as demonstrators were:



Nick Agar, Terry Scott and Mark Baker, Wayne Barton, Clive Brooks of Robert Sorby (left to right, above);



Jimmy Clewes, Bonnie Klein, Glen Lucas, Rolly Munro, (left to right, above); Bob Neill, Richard Raffan, Åsmund Vignes and David Muckle (shown left to right, p.2, col.1). Other demonstrators are not excluded intentionally, but photographs of some of them appear elsewhere, below.



This trip was billed as a 'once in a lifetime voyage where you will not only see the beautiful country of Norway, but you will meet many woodturners, learn



a lot of turning techniques from skilled turners, and even do some woodturning yourself on the high seas! A very special experience!

Most passengers brought their wives or partners, and there were some 230 passengers on board. It was an international cruise with voyagers coming from around the world, with representatives from Canada, all over the USA, the UK, Europe and Scandinavia, Russia, Australia and New Zealand. There was plenty of opportunity to meet and get to know the experts and our fellow passengers at meal times, socialising in the lounges, or on the decks around the ship.

The meals on board were of Norwegian fare and they were very good; they were served by volunteers, who agreed to serve us in exchange for a free cruise — one was an English school teacher! Here they are in the bows, enjoying the view as the ship negotiates the very narrow entrance to Trollsfjord:



The Cruise

The boat sailed in the evening, usually between 2000 and 2300 hr, and we arrived at the next port around midday on the following day. We started off from Stavanger, visited 13 ports on the 4900 km round trip up to Hammerfest and back to Stavanger. We visited Sandane, Geiranger, Molde (col.2, left) and passed the



Arctic Circle marker (above, right). We also went to Namsos, Bodø (below) with its gardens and Cathedral with an amazing modern stained glass window:



Then we went north to Tromsø and Hammerfest, where we took the bus to Nordkapp (see below). The ship moved south to Shortland, where the inhabitants had decided that its buildings would be coloured blue!



We continued south to Mosjøen, Trondheim (where Heather & Gordon discovered the statue of Leiv Eiriksson, who discovered America in 1000 AD). Ålesund was an attractive town, where we scaled the hill to get this photograph:



The Gann called at Bergen, then we were back to our starting point at Stavanger.

Each morning, the passengers were able to descend to the B-deck, the 'car deck', where the lathes and all the other equipment had been laid out. Here, passen-

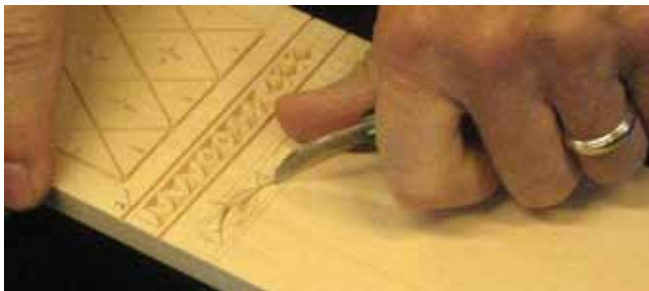




gers were able to have private tuition from the experts or just watch them demonstrating their specialist techniques or merely making things they or their audience wanted.

There was an opportunity for passengers to book one of a dozen lathes and get expert tuition from one of three experts. Heather availed herself of this opportunity and she turned a very nice little bowl under David Muckle's guidance.

In addition, we could book onto courses to learn to carve wood (using mallet and chisels), make a knife and scabbard, make items out of felt, or do wood-chip carving with two extremely sharp and specialist knives.



It was the latter course on which we registered and it ran for three hours over each of three mornings. This required some skill, but it was relatively easy to learn the basics. Here, Gordon is presented with Wayne Barton's 'practice' board, after guessing the number on the back. We both enjoyed this course, which we will follow up now we are home.



There was also the opportunity to try our skills at pyrography, under Bob Neill's tuition. Below, Heather pyrographs a butterfly while John Hexell also tries his hand and his wife Jackie looks on:



After lunch, when we had docked at the next port, the passengers could book on an excursion or just go ashore to wander round the town under their own steam. Alternatively, we could join the locals who came aboard at each port and see more of the demonstrators and experts doing their specialist thing — it was all very relaxed. Below, a group of carvers, accompanied by their Trolls, wait to board at Sandane as the Gann docks:



We went on six excursions by bus, some of which were more interesting than others. Here, a group of passengers wait on the quay for the bus in Bergen:



We did a long eight-hour bus round-trip from Hammarfest to North Cape [Nordkapp], which was rather barren, but there was a marvellous visitor centre there!



On other occasions, we also went ashore to the Tourist Information Office and asked what we could do for two hours: we were given a map and did some sightseeing by ourselves, usually ending up with a refreshing ice cream!

Norway is expensive, and on one occasion, two ice creams cost the equivalent of about £8 (NOK 80), while a small bottle of beer was usually around £10 (NOK 100)! In the evening, after dinner, there was usually a presentation by one or two of the experts about their work, or from the organisers to those who merited awards (see below).

A Gallery was organised for people to display their turned or carved work during the trip, and there were



some superb pieces arranged on the library table for most of the voyage. Dick Veitch's organisation and the help that he gave to the other Gallery volunteers was appreciated by all.

At the end of the cruise, there was an auction of items, which had not already been sold, that were donated by their creators. This raised some £8,000 for Norwegian Cancer Research, presented here by Odd Erik.

I managed to acquire two manta ray pieces [see, centre of top, right image] by Terry Scott (a Kiwi magician of a wood turner), outside the auction, fortunately. In the auction, I got a 'concertina' bowl by Clive Brooks of Robert Sorby and a platter by Richard Raffan (Australia, and one of the foremost wood turners in the world today). Heather got a lovely coloured platter by Bob Neill, the Welsh pyrography expert. Terry, Richard and Rolly Munro gave me some private tuition, which I found most useful. When we left the boat at Stavanger, our cases were loaded down with wood!



garments, outside felt hats, and he used a jigsaw to make three-dimensional castles and houses. After he met his wife, he sent her a castle with the message, 'A beautiful Princess like you needs a splendid castle like this to live in!' So she married him.

Jim made a windmill device out of soft drink bottles and a couple of metal rods, which was attached to the deck rail, creating a noisy, but amusing distraction. One of the ladies on board made a felt effigy of Odd Erik. Jim mounted it on one of his windmill devices. This was an



excuse for a public 'Trial' in the panorama lounge, at which Jim was found to be guilty of bringing Odd Erik's good name into disrepute (luckily, the lady escaped!). At a suitable point at Trondheim, Jim was 'made' to walk the plank, with much shouting, bellowing and gesticulating, then had to swim for his hat!

Fun & Games

During the cruise, when we arrived at almost every port, Jim Sterling, an Australian, now married to a Norwegian and living in this northern country, would leap onto the quay as soon as it was safe to do so. On the quay, he struck up on Scottish bagpipes to draw a fascinated crowd, often accompanied by his wife on the washboard!



One of his specialities is inventions – a bicycle and windmill driven lathe; he was selling leather

Awards

One of the suppliers involved in the Cruise was King Arthur Tools. One evening, two groups of the woodturning/woodworking demonstrators were awarded elaborate plaques designating them either as Commanders or as Knights, approved by The King! Clive Brooks, Bonnie Kline and Glen Lucas were made Commanders. Richard Raffan, Knut Andreas, Wayne Barton, Terry Scott,





Bob Neill, David Muckle and the two Norwegian wood carvers were made Knights. Odd Erik was given a warrior helmet made by David Muckle, and then a series of 'fun awards' were made by Bob Neill.

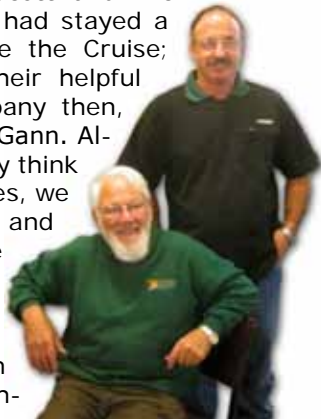
A young couple, Brad & Laura Duckett from the USA, had been awarded the Teknatool prize, where their travel expenses were paid by this woodturning supplier (but they still had to pay USA tax on the 'freebie' gift!).



One evening, Odd Erik made a further presentation of a book on Norway to this pleasant couple.

Friends Made

We got to know Terry Scott and Dick Veitch quite well, as they had stayed a few nights with us before the Cruise; we thoroughly enjoyed their helpful advice and cheerful company then, and also on board the MS Gann. Although they would probably think of us more as acquaintances, we appreciated the friendship and help of Mark Baker, Clive Brooks, Richard Raffan, Rolly Munro, Gerry and Christine Marlow, Margaret Garrard, Wayne Barton and Bob Neill, amongst others.



John and Jackie Haxell had the cabin next to ours, and we spent many a social occasion with them, leaning over the rail, enjoying a meal in the dining room, or in the demonstration areas.

Colin and Sue May were very friendly until I managed to out-bid them to secure a Richard Raffan plate! Fences were mended, though, and they secured (an arguably more attractive) plate from Richard at a price that was less than they would have had to pay for the first one! We have been in e-mail communication with both couples since we returned: Colin has now had to buy a lathe for Sue to use – another convert!

The Cruise Ends

On our return, a number of the passengers had to spend the night in Stavanger. We had been booked



into an hotel and we did some sightseeing in the attractive part of Old Stavanger (above), where we met up again with the Marlows.

We had dinner, before catching a flight the next day on a 40-seater flight back to Newcastle. We met and had a very good Indian dinner with Jonathan and Sarah, his girl friend, before we made our way back south to our home, where all was well when we arrived at around 2300 hr. When we got back, I quickly put some of my training into practice, and made three items: a platter, a chip-carved bowl and a chip-carved box.

Shortly after our return, I had a Woodturning Club meeting on Thursday 1 September. Joey Richardson, who was scheduled to do the demonstration, had had to withdraw as her Mother was ill. Instead, we had a demonstration by David Muckle from Darlington: the same man who had tutored Heather when she made her bowl on the cruise! He recognised me in the front row, told everyone about the cruise we had been on, and gave an interesting demonstration.

Some Special Pieces



A spoon and ornamental platter by Terry Scott, with minimal help from Gordon, and a chip-carved box made by Gordon, practising this new carving technique! ●

