

WOOD CARVING

JACOBETHAN STRAPWORK

**Steve Bisco shows
how to create a classic
strapwork panel**



PROJECTS TO CARVE Car door wedge • Hare and moon • Hens on a fence
• Redwing **TECHNICAL ADVICE** Sharpening knives • Chip-carving Celtic letters



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Ideas and solutions



PHOTOGRAPH BY SARAH BAKER



We often cover tools and their usage in the magazine, as well as projects and techniques that we think people would be interested in and have asked for. But one area of carving that intrigues me, and which

we do cover in the magazine every so often, is what you use to hold your work, while you carve, and also your work stations/areas of work.

We know that many carvers do not have dedicated workshops. We know that knife carving is the largest-undertaken aspect of carving so does not really require a dedicated work area or space per se, but what about you relief end in the round carvers? Where do you work, what work areas do you have and how do you hold your work? If you do not have an outside

workspace, do you carve in the lounge, spare room, bedroom and so on? If you require kit to hold the work, you need a bit more space and possibly a workstation. What do you do and use?

You are a wonderful, inventive and creative body of people and I would love to hear about how you have solved space and work-holding issues. Actually, I would love to hear about what you have been up to and are making. Just think – all those little bits of information you have that people can learn from is a wonderful resource and we all learn by sharing.

I am always intrigued by how people work and how they solve problems. Let's face it, we all have them and I do feel as though I have more than others at times, but we have all been there and love the cutting and shaping process. In fact, I have since I was a young lad. There is something magical about it, even if it goes wrong from time

to time. I guess that I just like making things.

Most people have a creative itch they wish to scratch but often do not find the time or the medium that they enjoy working with. I find it very sad that they do not find something they can enjoy.

With regards to carving, many people only encounter carved work in the context of craft fairs or seeing something carved in a shop or gallery. I do wonder how many clubs and organisations promote what they do to a wider audience. Please do let me know if you do. Spreading the word about our wonderful craft is fundamental to its growth and helping people to learn about it.

Have fun, Mark

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Moon-gazing hare

Duane Cartwright carves a hare in relief

The moon-gazing hare I have carved here is a popular subject found in many sculptures and artwork. For some, the hare is an ancient and sacred animal and is found in old beliefs and religions all over the world. The Celts & Saxons believed it to symbolise fertility, while Pagans believed moon-gazing hares would bring growth, re-birth, new beginnings and fortune. For others, the hare symbolised purity. It's also found in many poems and stories, like *Alice in Wonderland* with the 'mad' March hare.

The hare is Britain's fastest land mammal and generally lives above ground on a flattened hollow or grass-like nest, unlike its cousin the rabbit, which lives in a group and underground in burrows. It is surrounded by myth and is infamous for its courtship rituals where you can see the hares boxing; this is the image that has been most frequently recreated by many artists and sculptors over the years.

I have used spalted beech for this carving project, as the colour and patterns of the spalting make the carving as unique as the hare. The detail of the carving is kept to a minimum as the spalting and grain pattern would detract from any detail, making it hard to see. The simple contours of the carving bring out the best of the grain pattern. Spalted beech can be a challenging wood to carve as it can be very hard on the areas not affected by fungal disease, but the lighter white areas can be very soft to the point where the wood crumbles and tears. Even with the sharpest of tools the black streaks can be brittle and the wood can tend to snap or crack along these parts. The nicer the spalting patterns, the more challenging the carving can be.

Of course, you can use any timber species of your choice for this carving project with its simple detail, but it's worth trying a wood with a nice grain pattern rather than a plain wood like lime.



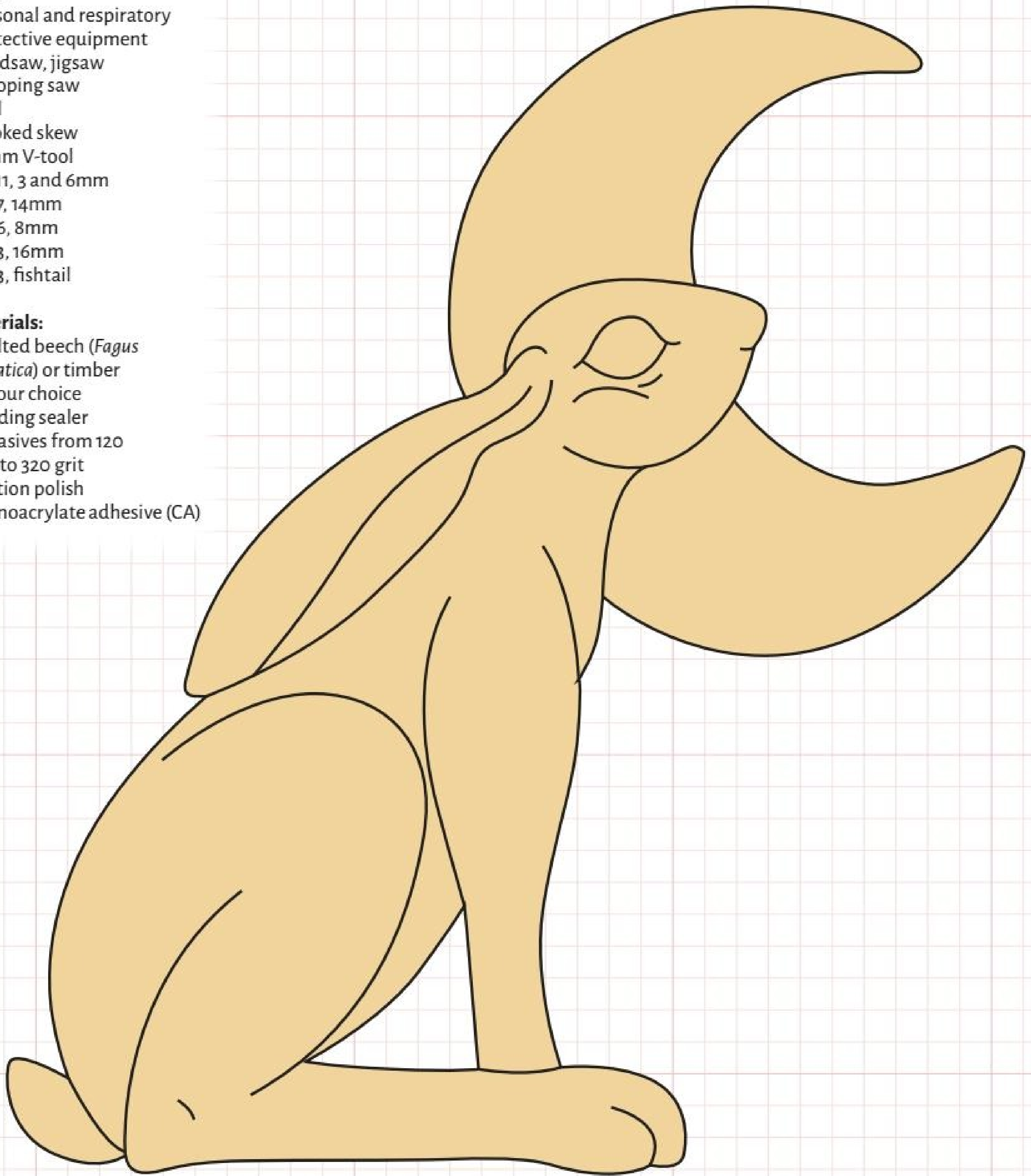
Things you will need

Tools:

- Personal and respiratory protective equipment
- Bandsaw, jigsaw or coping saw
- Drill
- Hooked skew
- 10mm V-tool
- No.11, 3 and 6mm
- No.7, 14mm
- No.6, 8mm
- No.3, 16mm
- No.3, fishtail

Materials:

- Spalted beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) or timber of your choice
- Sanding sealer
- Abrasives from 120 grit to 320 grit
- Friction polish
- Cyanoacrylate adhesive (CA)



PEG BOARD

Making a peg board is quite easy. Use some scrap old wood, such as an old shelf. Chipboard or plywood can be used, although solid wood works better as the holes stay stronger, which means it can be used many times. Either mark out a 1cm square grid across the board and drill some 6mm holes into the board on the crosses of the grid to about two-thirds of the thickness of the depth, or place the carving on the board and mark out a few places around the edge of the carving, then drill some holes. Either way, use some 6mm dowels in the pre-drilled holes to hold the project securely whilst carving. The peg board can then be attached to a carving vice or similar.



1 After transferring the design to your chosen timber, use a bandsaw or similar to cut just outside the outline removing the waste wood. Then on the side of the moon measure roughly 10mm from the back and draw around the edge of the moon and head. This will be the thickness of the moon.

2 Now drill a hole in between the legs, then use a coping saw or jigsaw to carefully cut out this area. Try to use a fine saw blade to remove this area if you can. This will make cleaning up later easier and there will be less tear-out of the grain if the wood is soft from the spalting.

3 Now secure the project ready for carving. Using a peg board is a good way to secure the carving to a vice, then use a deep 11 sweep gouge or V-tool to carve around the outside of the head, separating it from the moon.

4 Use a deep gouge to lower the moon to a few millimetres above the depth line drawn earlier, then use a shallow gouge to flatten and smooth the moon's surface to the required thickness.

5 Use a V-tool or similar to outline and carve around the limbs and the ears, separating them. Then use various gouges and start to shape the body. In this stylised hare the limbs will stand proud of the body and the back leg and the ears will remain at their original surface level.

6 Use a shallow gouge and carve the front leg so it slopes down and goes under the back paw by about 5mm. Then, round over the front leg and use a small deep gouge to carve around the toe on the back paw. Continue rounding over the paw and leg, keeping aware of possible tear-out when carving down the front leg as your carving across the grain and the soft spalting can tear. Use a slicing cut and take small slithers if the grain starts to tear.

7 Use a deep gouge and carve around the cheek, then carve across the eye so the cheek stands proud by a millimetre or two, then draw a circle for the eyeball with the very bottom of the eyeball going just under the cheek. Use the deep gouge to carve around the eyeball and around the ear. Use a shallow gouge to round over the eyeball and cheek, blending the features together.

8 Use a shallow gouge to round over the back of the ear then using the pattern as a guide, redraw the inner ear and use a deep 11 sweep gouge to carve out the inner ear. Keep aware of the grain direction to prevent breakout.

HARDENING SOFT AREAS

Some parts of the spalting can be very soft and will tear when trying to carve. Sanding sealer and Cyanoacrylate adhesive (CA) can help to harden the soft areas, the adhesive will darken and stain the area slightly and both will blunt the chisel's edge slightly so you will need to keep the edge stopped.

9 Draw a line from the top of the ear across to the tip of the nose; this will be the centre of the eye. Then use the sketch as a guide and draw on the top eyelid. Use the best fitting gouges to match the curvature of the eyelid and cut in creating a stop-cut. Use a shallow fishtail gouge reversed to carve the eyeball up to the stop-cut just created.



10 As before, draw on the bottom part of the eyelid, then use the best fitting gouge to cut create a stop-cut. Use a fishtail gouge or similar to carve and round the eyeball into the bottom eyelid. Use the corners of the fishtail to carve into the corners of the eye, keeping the eyeball round, then use a small gouge to carve a shallow groove under the eye.



11 Use a hooked skew with a slicing cut to clean up where the body and back leg are and around the tail area, then continue with the skew or a knife to remove any saw marks left around the edge of the front leg or the moon.



12 This part can be left out if you wish to keep the back flat, but to add some extra depth and shadow to the carving I have back carved it. Turn the carving over and mark out where the moon goes behind the hare and the back leg goes behind the front paw. Make sure the back lines up with the front.



13 Once you're happy with the marking out, use a V-tool or similar to carve around the moon and the front paw, then use a shallow gouge to lower the body so it gradually slopes towards the moon. Remember to carve the front of the head as well. Do the same with the back leg so it appears to go behind the front paw. Turn the carving over regularly and place on a flat surface to check how it looks. This will help to prevent overdoing the back carving.



FINISHING OFF

14 Once you're happy with the carving, the sanding can begin. Start with 120 grit or similar and begin sanding with the grain. If the wood seems to soft and tears or crumbles then use some sanding sealer to harden the area before commencing with the sanding. Once all of the tool marks have been removed and the surface is nice and smooth, brush down before moving onto the next grit size. Finish off the sanding with 320 grit or similar, then apply some sanding sealer all over the carving, back and front. Once dry, cut back with the finest abrasive to remove any raised grain, then apply another coat before applying your chosen finish. ▶



TOP TIP: You could carve a crescent moon separately and place it behind the hare's head by carving away a section from the back of the head so the moon sits flush with the back of the hare

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News & events...

Bringing you the latest news and event details from the woodcarving community

BDWCA NEWS

With the festive season well and truly behind us and, hopefully, the weather warming up, the attention of some of our members has now turned to what to carve for this year's competition entries.

In the UK we only have the one bird-carving competition, the BDWCA's Annual Competition and Show, which will take place this year on 14-15 September (the second full weekend in September) at its usual venue of the Agricultural Centre in Bakewell, Derbyshire.

While carvings for competition are generally kept secret until the day of the event, the exception to the rule is entries for our Regional Group Competition. Each year the group that wins gets to choose the subject for the following year. The 2018 bird was the nuthatch and 33 birds graced the table, with our Cheshire Group winning for the second year, and Cheshire member Mark Langford winning the prize for the best individual nuthatch.

The bird chosen by Cheshire Group for 2019 is the long-tailed tit. You may have seen a flock of them swoop into your garden, especially if you have bird feeders, and then swoop away again. They will be interesting to carve, with their small bodies – which are somewhat fluffy in appearance – and long tails, their short legs and tiny, triangular bills. To achieve the 'fluffy' look with painting could prove to be a challenge, although painting is not mandatory for this competition as the birds can be realistic – either smooth or fully textured – and painted or interpretive, which is usually polished wood.

One interpretive long-tailed tit will not be on the table for 2019, but for all the best reasons. Yvonne Langford, in her second year competing, entered one in the Novice Class at the 2018 show and was awarded a Gold rosette – her second – so she will be competing at Intermediate level in the main competition, although maybe she'll also carve another one for the Cheshire group entry.

Web: www.bdwca.org.uk.



ABOVE: Winners of the Regional Group Competition – Cheshire Group

BELOW: Long-tailed tit, by Yvonne Langford



Best Individual Nuthatch, by Mark Langford



2019 Events

• Midlands Woodworking and Power Tool Show

When: 22-23 March 2019

Where: Newark Showground, Lincoln Road, Coddington, Newark, NG24 2NY

Web: www.nelton.co.uk

• Craft Supplies Open Day

When: 6 April 2019

Where: Unit 2, Faraday Close, Harworth, Nottinghamshire, DN11 8RU

Web: www.craft-supplies.co.uk

• 49th Annual Ward World Championship Wildfowl Carving Competition and Art Festival

When: 26-28 April 2019

Where: Roland E. Powell Convention Center, 4001 Coastal Hwy, Ocean City, MD 21842, US

Web: www.wardmuseum.org



• Makers Central

When: 11-12 May 2019

Where: NEC Birmingham, North Avenue, Marston Green, Birmingham, B40 1PW

Web: www.makerscentral.co.uk

• Weird & Wonderful Wood

When: 19-20 May 2019

Where: Haughley Park, Wetherden, Nr Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 3JY

Web: www.weirdandwonderfulwood.co.uk

• The ToolPost Open Day

When: 1-2 June 2019

Where: Unit 7, Hawksworth Southmead Industrial Estate, Oxfordshire, OX11 7HR

Web: www.thetoolpost.co.uk

• International Woodcarvers Congress

When: 8-16 June 2019

Where: Jackson County Fairgrounds, 1212 E Quarry Street, Maquoketa, IA 52060, US

Web: www.awcltd.org

• International Woodcarving Symposium Brienzen

When: 2-6 July 2019

Where: Verein, KUNA 3855, Brienzen, Switzerland

Web: www.symposium-brienzen.ch

• Chestnut Products' Woodturning Weekender

When: 3-4 August 2019

Where: The Springfields Event Centre, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE12 6ET

Web: <https://chestnutproducts.co.uk>

• 15th English Open Chainsaw Carving Competition

When: 24-26 August 2019

Where: Cheshire Showground, Tabley, Knutsford, WA16 0HJ

Web: www.cheshiregameandcountryfair.co.uk

• Carve Carrbridge – Scottish Open Chainsaw Carving Competition

When: 31 August 2019

Where: Sports Field, Carrbridge, PH23 3AD

Web: www.carvecarrbridge.com



• Unika Sculpting and Woodcarving Exhibition

When: 29 August - 1 September 2019

Where: Tennis Centre, Ortisei, South Tyrol, Italy

Web: www.unika.org

• Yandles Woodworking show

When: 6-7 September 2019

Where: Hurst Works, Hurst, Martock, Somerset, TA12 6JU

Web: www.yandles.co.uk

• The 2019 Surrey Hills Woodfair

When: 5-6 October 2019

Where: Fish Pond Copse, Cranleigh, Surrey, GU6 7DW

Web: www.surreyhills.org

• The ToolPost Open Day

When: 2-3 November 2019

Where: Unit 7, Hawksworth Southmead Industrial Estate, Oxfordshire, OX11 7HR

Web: www.thetoolpost.co.uk

• North of England Woodworking Show

When: 15-17 November 2019

Where: Hall 1, Great Yorkshire Showground, Harrogate, HG2 8NZ

Web: www.skpromotions.co.uk

If you have something you want your fellow carvers to know, send in your news stories, snippets and diary dates to Mark Baker at Woodcarving, 86 High Street, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 1XN or to markb@thegmcgroup.com

Hens on a fence

Zoë Gertner shows how to have some fun by carving a delightful trio of hens



The inspiration for this carving came from my bantam hens. My hens are free-range and are very happy during the daytime, busily occupying themselves picking and scuffling the ground whilst hunting for 'hen delicacies'. As dusk falls they will make their way into their hen house and with some shuffling around, they arrange themselves, fluff themselves up and sit tightly together on the perch for the night. When settled in place, heads are put under wings, sleep commences, and I close them up for the night in case of any predators.

Next morning, as daylight breaks, as I open up the house, they are bright and alert, ready to begin a new day again.



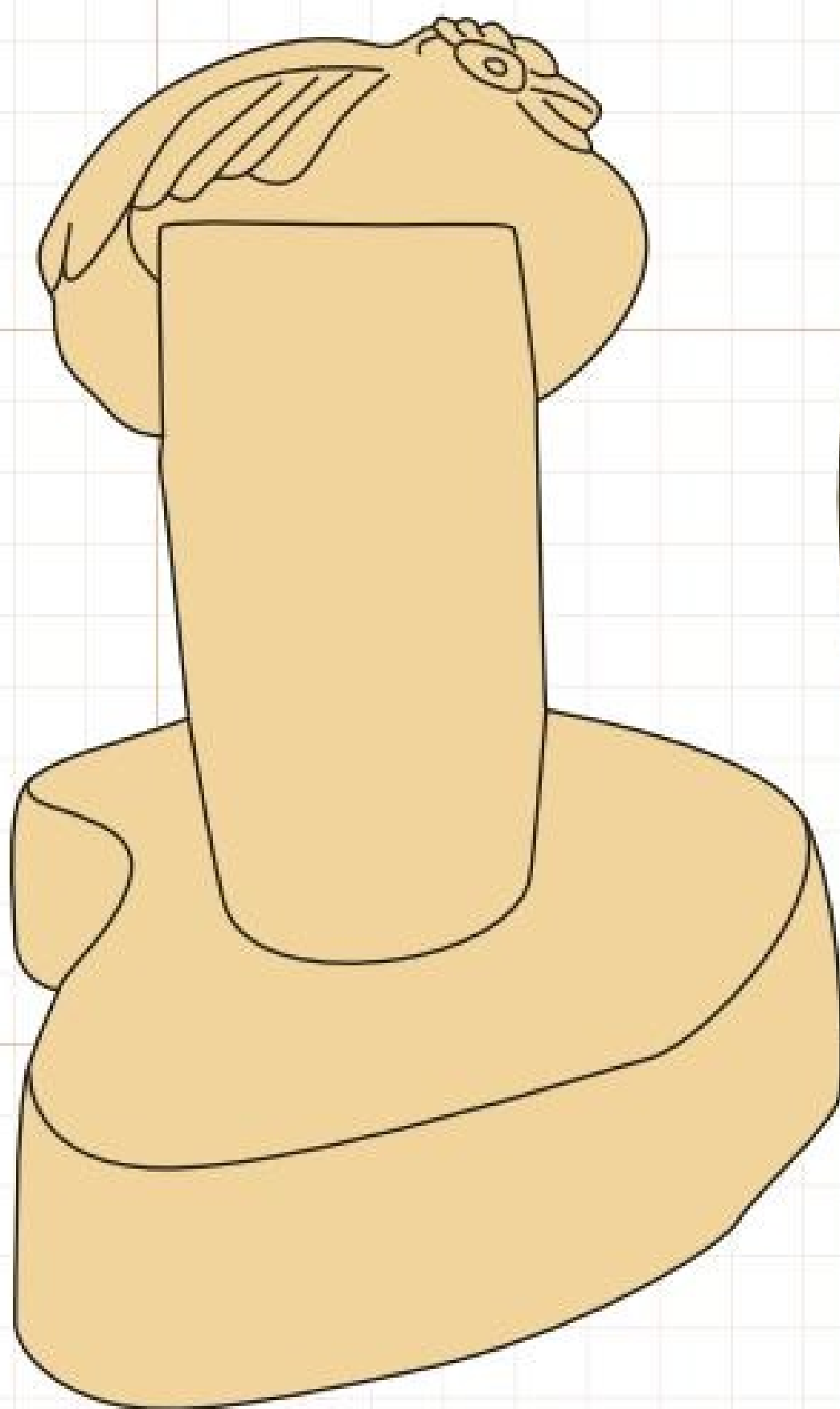
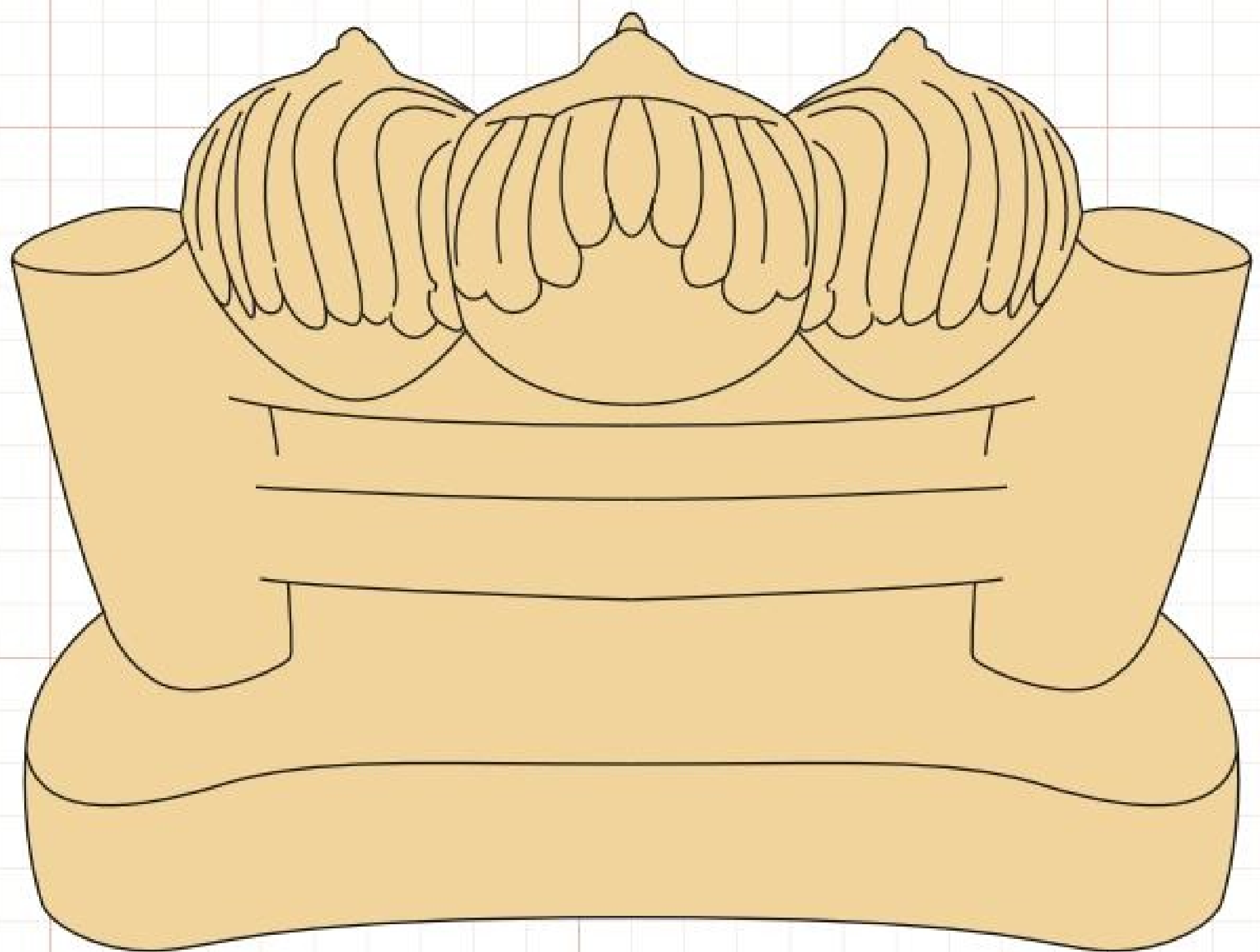
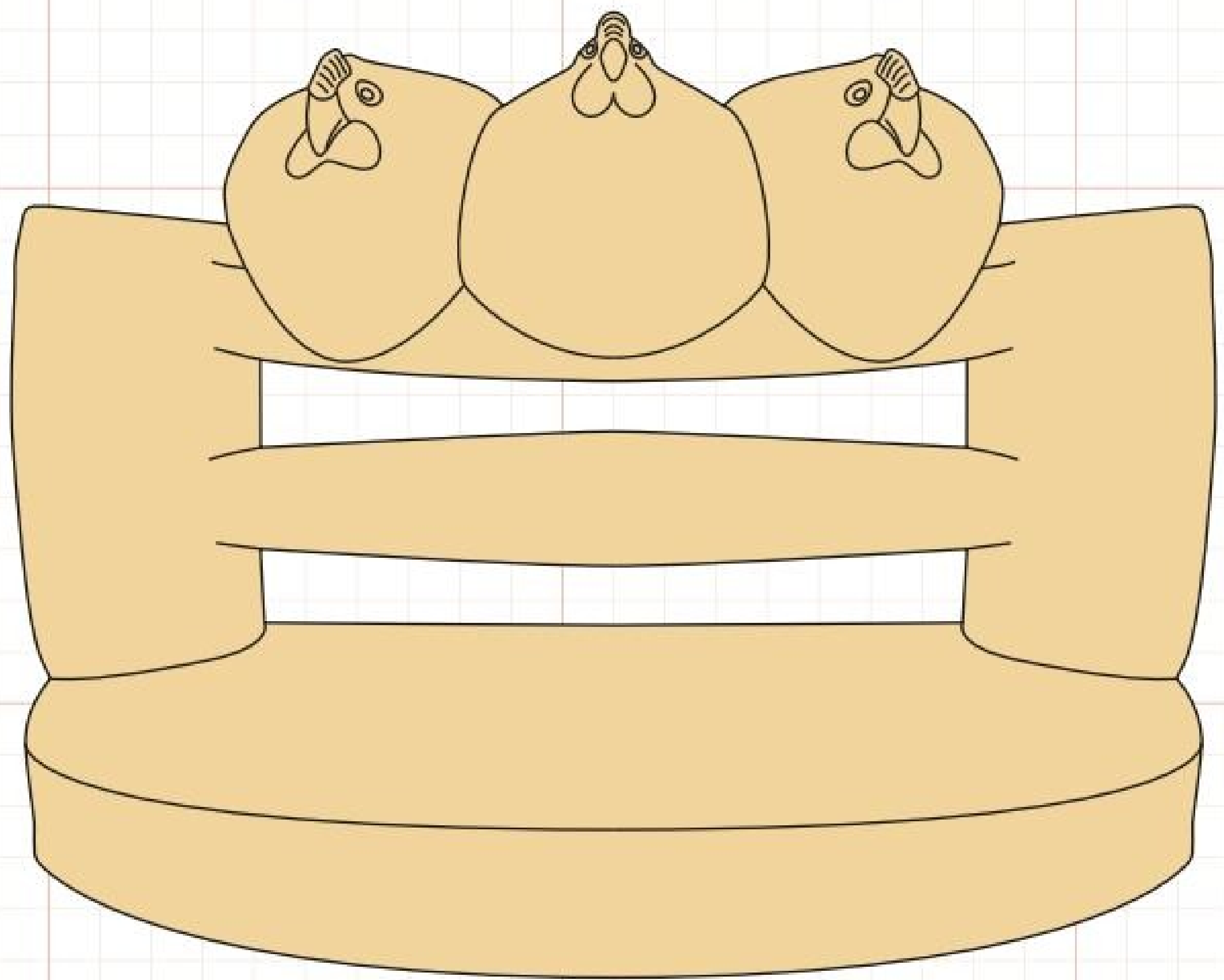
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ZOË GERTNER

Things you will need**Tools:**

- Personal and respiratory protective equipment
- No.9, 10 or 11, 3mm
- No.9, 6, 10, 12 and 13mm
- No.5, 6, 10 and 13mm
- No.3, 3, 6, 10, 13 and 25mm
- No.1, 6mm
- 3mm and 6mm V-tool
- 6mm skew chisel
- Mallet
- Small microplanes/files/rifflers
- Hand drill
- 6mm drill bit
- Handsaw and keyhole saw
- Nail punch
- Hammer

Materials:

- Timber of your choice to suit the size of project you intent to create
- Wax polish or finish of your choice



Preparation

1 & 2 I chose to use a cedar (*Cedrus* spp.) log but you can use any timber of your choice. It needs to be about 200mm diameter x 120mm high. Since I used a log, the bark was removed and flattened beneath with a wide No.3 gouge and mallet. A V-channel was cut round it, marking the base of the carving.

Draw the top view of hens perched on the fence between the posts on the upper surface with the areas in front and behind the hens to be removed marked with 'X' as shown. Place the handsaw in the previously cut V-channel and make a horizontal cut up to the base of the fence posts each side of the fence. Now saw down vertically in front and behind the birds, meeting up your vertical and horizontal sawcuts and removing the areas marked 'X'; alternatively, with a wide No.3 gouge and mallet split off narrow vertical slivers down to the initial horizontal sawcuts.

3 & 4 These areas removed, work in the same way across the corners in front and behind posts both ends of the fence. Draw hens, rails and posts on front face and mark areas to be removed above top of posts and between rails and the lower rail and base.

5 Across top of each post make a horizontal sawcut. Now work downwards towards the sawcut, and remove slivers until the height of each post is reduced using a wide 13mm gouge. The birds should now be raised above both fence posts. Then, with the No.9, 13mm round over the top edges of the hens, remembering to lift your gouge hand as you cut across the edges front and back, and begin rounding the upper edges, front and back.

6 Across the width of the upper surface of the hens, draw a midline and continue working from both sides towards this until the original sawn surface is removed and the hens are rounded over between the posts. Then on both front and back, draw the line of lower edge of birds so they are perched and overhanging the upper rail of the fence.

7 Below the hens and between the posts, scoop out down to the base both front and back to begin an indent beneath the hens. Work from each side with a No.3, 13mm to cut horizontally along the base between the posts, then scoop downwards with a No.5, 13mm.

Starting carving the hens

8 With a V-tool, mark the inside edge of both posts and begin rounding the posts lengthwise. Mark the lower edge of the hens with a No.3, 13mm by using opposing cuts to make a V-channel to cut the line of them across from post to post. On approaching the posts each end, invert the gouge so the channel links up with the inner edges of the posts. Repeat on the opposite side of the fence.

Cut towards the V-channel and remove the lower surface beneath the hens. Repeat the process by using opposing cuts to deepen and widen the channel, then removing below, until they project outwards. Repeat this on the other side.



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9 Round over their lower edges so that they overhang between the posts on both sides. Deepen adjacent to the inner edges of both posts and round each along its length. Repeat on the opposite side. Then on the rounded surface of the hens, draw their outlines resting on the upper rail between the posts.

10 Begin separating the hens on their lower edge by scooping away a triangular area between them using a No.9, 10mm. Sweep the gouge round towards the midline of each hen as you cut the indents between them. On both back and front surfaces reduce the thickness of the area below the hens, to be the rails lying between the posts. Alternate re-cutting the V-channel beneath the hens and removing the lower edge of the V-channel and its adjacent surface, then as described previously, with using a No.3 gouge, cut horizontally across the base between the posts and remove the lower part of the rail area. The horizontal cuts act as stop cuts to lessen damage to the base between the posts. Now with the V-tool, mark the division between the hens, cutting downwards into the indent from the most convex area of the block (ie. with the grain).

11 Turn the carving and continue marking the separations with the V-tool, starting from the most convex area upwards and towards the centre of the top surface of the birds from each side, so joining up on the uppermost surface and ready to start separating them.

12 Now use the corner of the No.5, 13mm and cut upwards along each side of the V-groove, removing its outer edge and widen the groove. Repeat this process working downwards towards the fence rail, then repeat on the other side of the fence. Continue thus until the divisions between are sufficiently deep to round over the edges of each side of each bird, then draw a centreline along the length of each hen and round over the body of each hen, cutting towards this centreline from both sides.

13 Draw the head area on each and taper the shape of each bird towards her head with the No.9, 6mm starting with the middle bird followed by the outer ones.

14 Continue shaping each bird by rounding her breast on to the face of the rail they are perched upon, then reduce the thickness of the heads, narrowing it to stand out from the body.

15 & 16 Now modelling the rear ends, start with the middle hen and reduce the body in front of the tail, then alongside it, tapering it to a triangular shape so that the tail now stands up at an angle above the rest of her body.

Taper and reduce the tails of the outer hens either side so that they droop downwards, then with the 10mm No.5 and No.3 gouges, refine and smooth the surfaces. When smoothing the heads, carefully pare upwards with the No.5 from either side, then on the fresh surface draw the face and eye each side, ready to detail later on. You may find a small Microplane useful for smoothing the upper and lower endgrain surfaces.

The rails

17 & 18 Further reduce the thickness of the wood beneath the birds to that of the rails and redraw them, back and front, between the posts below the hens. Mark the areas between them to be removed. Cut across from post to post along the upper and lower rail edges with a V-tool to mark them across the width. Now, reduce the hatched area between the rails. Cut away from the rail edge at a slight angle to chamfer it to minimise breakage.

19 Adjacent to each post, use a narrow chisel and cut away from the post surface towards the void-to-be, so that the horizontal rounding of the post can be continued later on. Reduce the areas to be voided between the posts until the rails overhang these areas, then smooth off the surface. Repeat on the opposite face. Do not cut through yet because the support is needed when carving details on the hens – just reduce sufficiently to allow a drill to be inserted from each side later on.

20 When the horizontal indents have been made, further reduce the thickness of the rails towards their final size, ensuring their ends lie within the posts. Deepen the indents above and below them again if necessary, then smooth off the faces of the rails each side, and now the detail on the hens can be completed.

The tails and rear ends

21 Start with the middle bird, on her triangular rear end, use the V-tool to cut upwards along each side, angling the two V-channels so they meet within the tip of the tail. Remove and deepen the triangular area within and round over the upper edge of her rear end into the newly formed triangular indent. Smooth the rounded surface ready to texture later on.

22 Using a V-tool, cut outwards on the outer surface each side of the tail marking the tail feathers lying each side. Remove the triangular indent between each feather, then with the No.3, 6mm, round the ends of each feather into a scallop shape and tidy their meeting edges using the point of the 6mm skew chisel.

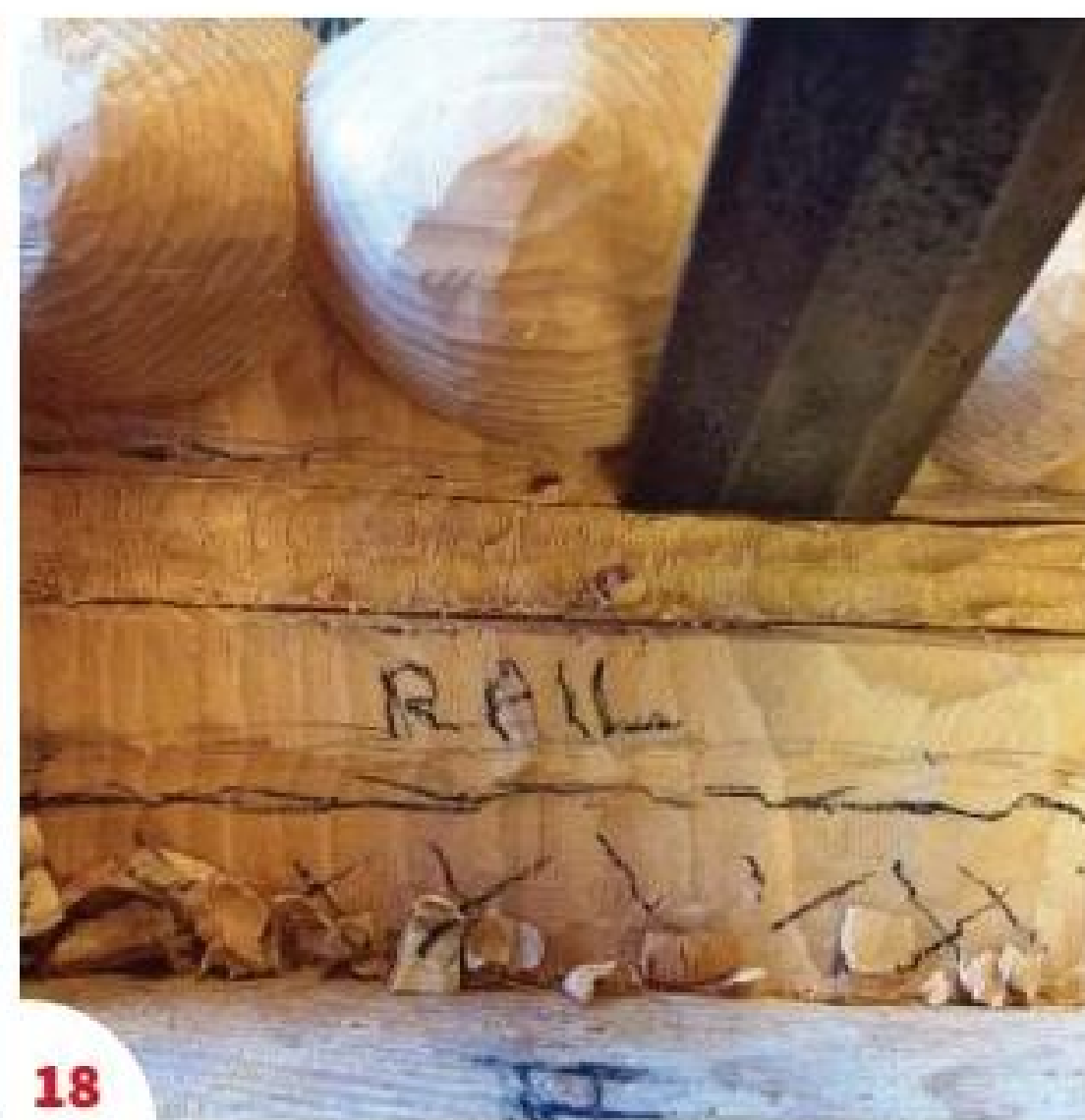
23 On the tails of the two outer hens repeat the procedure as above, then mark in the primary wing feathering in the same way. Gently remove the lower edge of the V-channel so that the edges of upper feathers overlap those beneath. Now, create the appearance of the fluffy bottoms by cutting small indents using the No.9, 10mm, to texture the rounded rear ends of the three birds.

The heads

24 Starting with the middle hen, narrow and smooth the head and neck from each side, making sure it is symmetrical. Once symmetrical, draw both side views of the face, beak comb and wattles on each side and mark them out using the 3mm V-tool. With the No.3, 3 and 6mm, use opposing cuts around the features and then relieve them by removing the adjacent surfaces, leaving the comb indents until later. Refine the beak but leave it fairly substantial and don't undercut it yet.



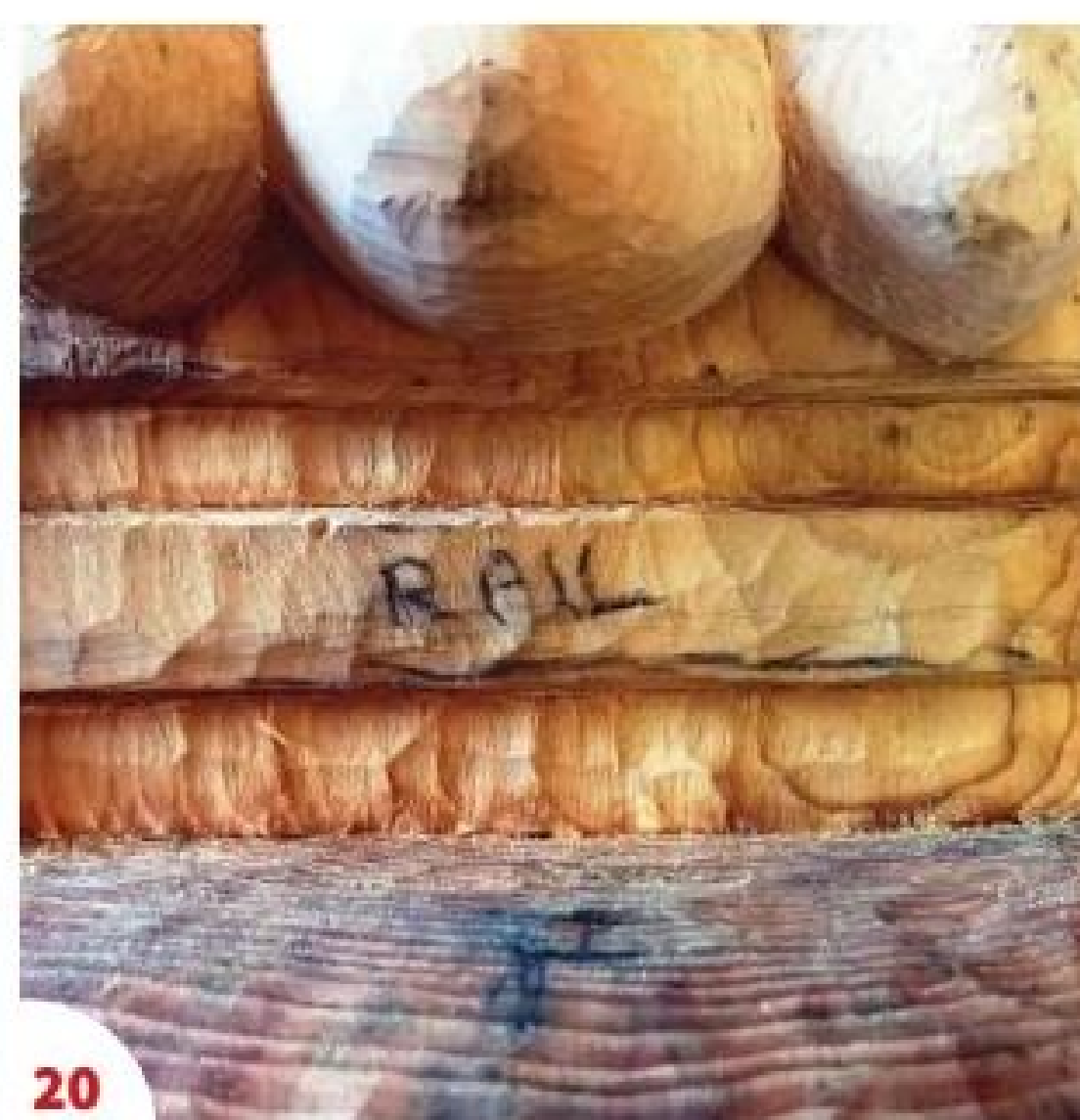
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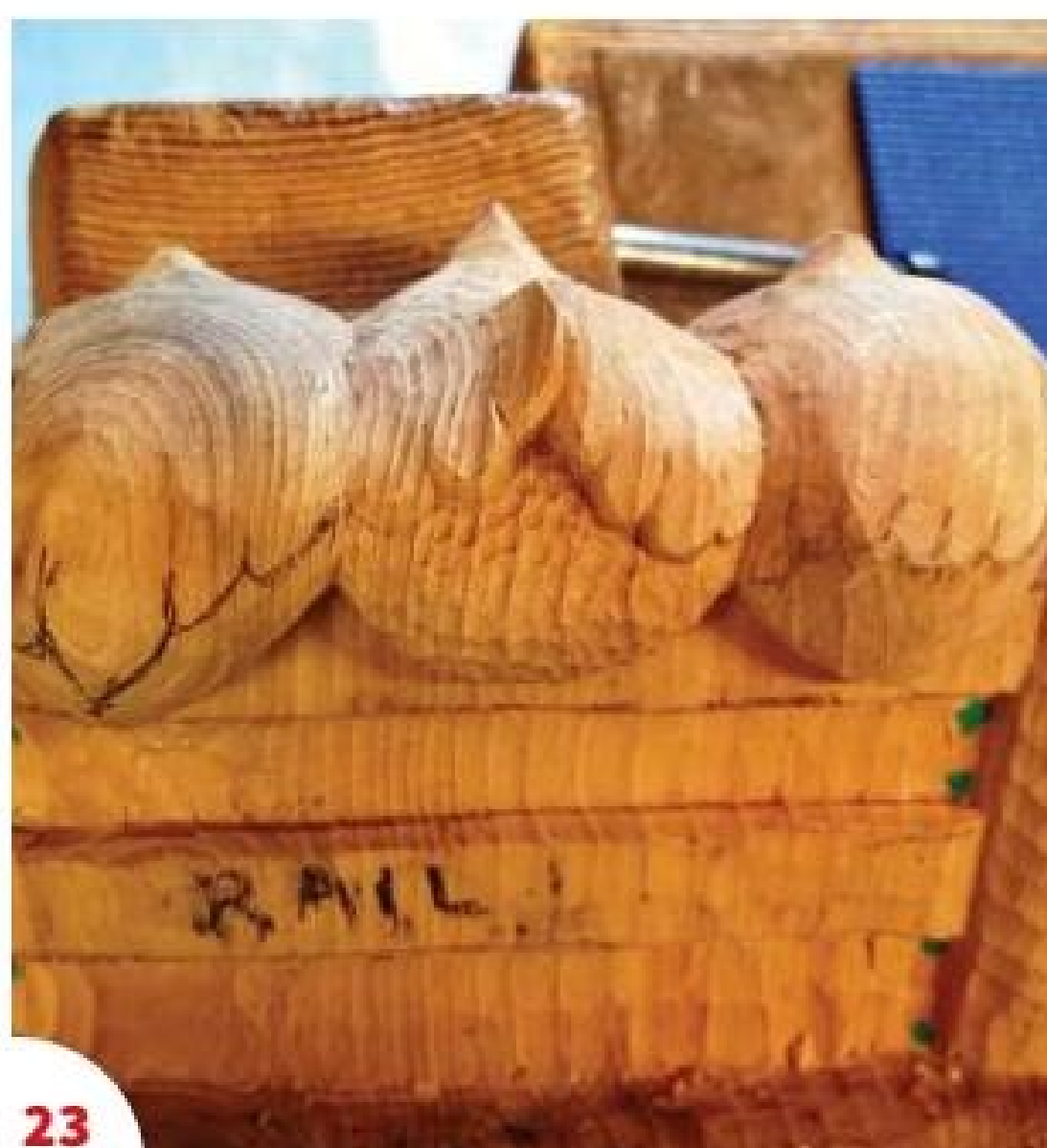
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**25****26**

25 Texture the breasts with shallow indents as described for the rear ends with the No.9, 10 or 11 gouge. The feathering around the neck can then be marked using the 3mm V-tool.

26 On each side of the head use a nail punch to mark the eyes, then cut a hollow within the wattles using a No.9, 10 or 11, 3mm. Finally, tidy up all meeting edges between the bird and the top rail on which she is perched. Repeat the process for the two outer hens, ensuring the meeting edges between them and the sides of the posts they are touching are cut cleanly.

27 & 28 If you have not already done so, smooth and adjust the dimensions of the lower rail and slightly chamfer its upper edges each side, ready to drill through.

Using a hand drill fitted with a ¼in wood drill bit, set it in the void-to be between both the upper and lower rails, and the lower and ground/base. Drill a series of holes in the waste section, partly drilling from the opposite faces in case the drill bit breaks out on the opposite side and damages the rail, or the bit direction is inaccurate. Then use a keyhole saw or similar, to cut horizontally along towards the post each side. Repeat the process along the upper surface of the lower rail towards each post and carefully remove the wood between the two rails with a No.3 gouge.

**27****28**

29 Smooth off the upper surface and faces of 2nd rail by paring with a flat/No.1 chisel then repeat the procedure on the lower surface of the second rail and the ground. Smooth the base beneath the lower rail then round the bottom of posts into the base. Adjust and tidy the insertions of the ends of the rails into the two posts.

**29****30**

30 Using the 3mm V-tool, cut concentric circles on top of the posts to represent the annual rings. The bark on the posts was represented by using a No.11, 3mm and cutting wavy grooves lengthwise along them.

Finishing the heads

31 Using alternate cuts from each side of the beak with the 6mm skew chisel, pare the upper mandible to shape, then mark a dividing line between the upper and lower mandible with the 3mm V-tool, the corner of No.3 gouge or point of skew chisel, cutting inwards from the tip. Then with a No.3 or No.5, 3mm, remove below the lower mandible, shaping it so that the beak projects forward. Finish the comb by cutting upwards and sideways from each side with a twisting action at intervals along its length to form its crenellations. Then repeat the above for the other hens.

Applying a finish

32 Carefully pare and remove any deep cuts or errant digs, lingering saw cuts or evidence of drill holes, making sure all meeting surfaces are cleanly cut and splinter-free. There are many wood finishes available in the market – I finished my hens using a colourless wax polish then buffed it with a lint-free duster and a soft brush. You now have your finished carving of hens on a fence and my hens on their perch. ▶

**31****32**

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Decorative coat hook

Mark Ivan Fortune carves an unusual decorative oak coat hook



The creative process of wood carving is not only a manual physical one, but more challengingly, it is an inner emotional process of artistic feeling. When one embarks on a creative endeavour one comes face to face with self-reflection and inevitably self-doubt. As the edge tools penetrate the wood, it is as if one is diving into unknown waters. To fully immerse oneself in the experience one must embrace this uncertainty as the essence of the art. From this vulnerable state comes an opportunity for one's own self-expression while creating something genuine and true. In a practical attempt to minimise the unknown, one may look to clay modelling, drawing and sketching; and be well advised to do so. But no matter how conclusive we are

in our preparation, even when the ground work has been carried out by another hand; a certain liberty of execution must prevail to maintain the integrity and life of the carving. Photographic copying of natural leaves, clever as it is, holds little interest. Much more compelling is the delineation of subjects reimagined; stylised Gothic leaves of bulbous form; creeping and menacing. Or the rich frills of the Regency period. Here I have drawn from two distinct retrogressive styles of foliage and combined them to create a practical everyday item where the decorative aspects can still be appreciated when in use. Due to the inherent nature of the piece, the use of undercutting shall not be employed as it must remain practical and robust.

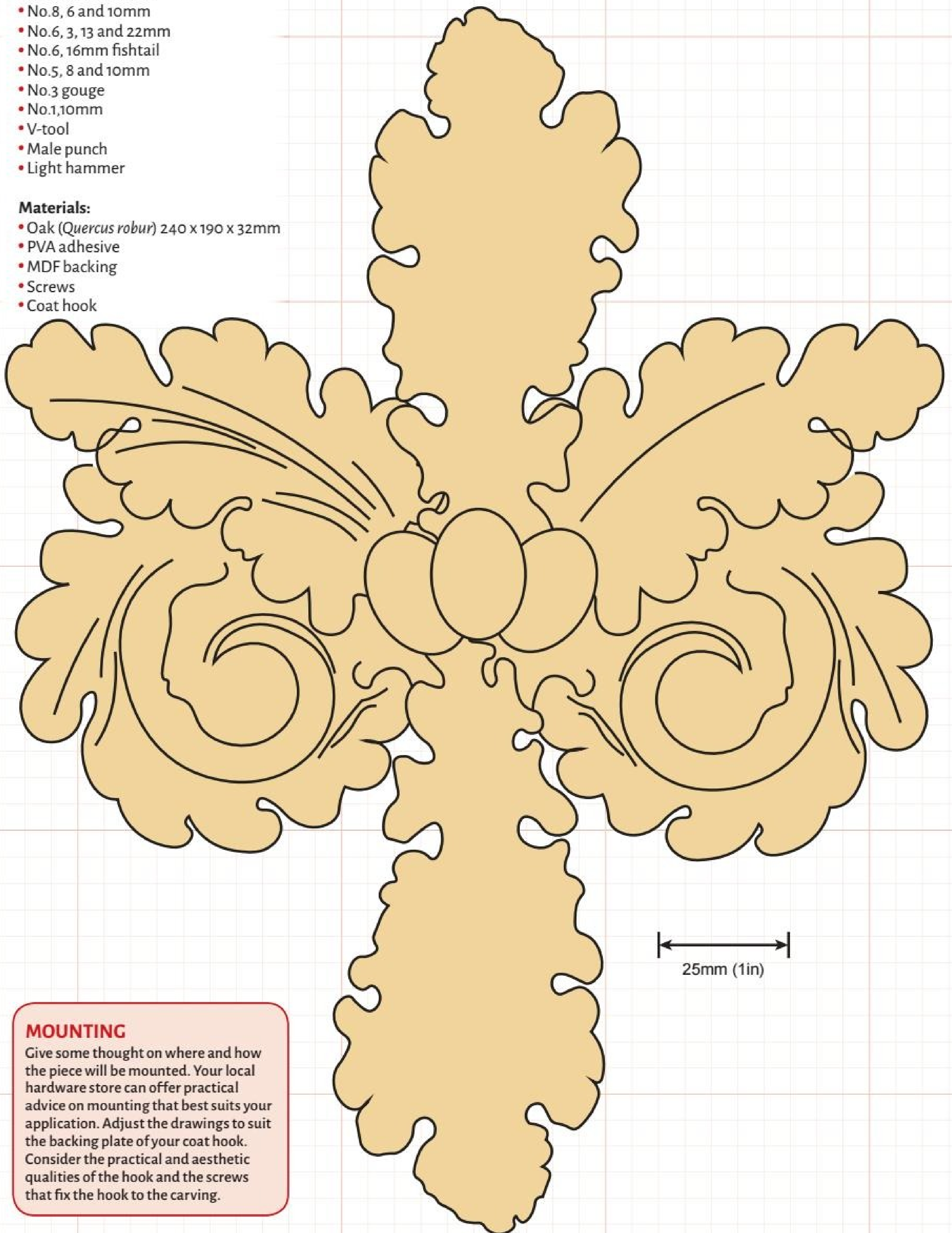
Things you will need

Tools:

- Personal and respiratory protective equipment
- No.11, 1.5 and 3mm
- No.8, 6 and 10mm
- No.6, 3, 13 and 22mm
- No.6, 16mm fishtail
- No.5, 8 and 10mm
- No.3 gouge
- No.1, 10mm
- V-tool
- Male punch
- Light hammer

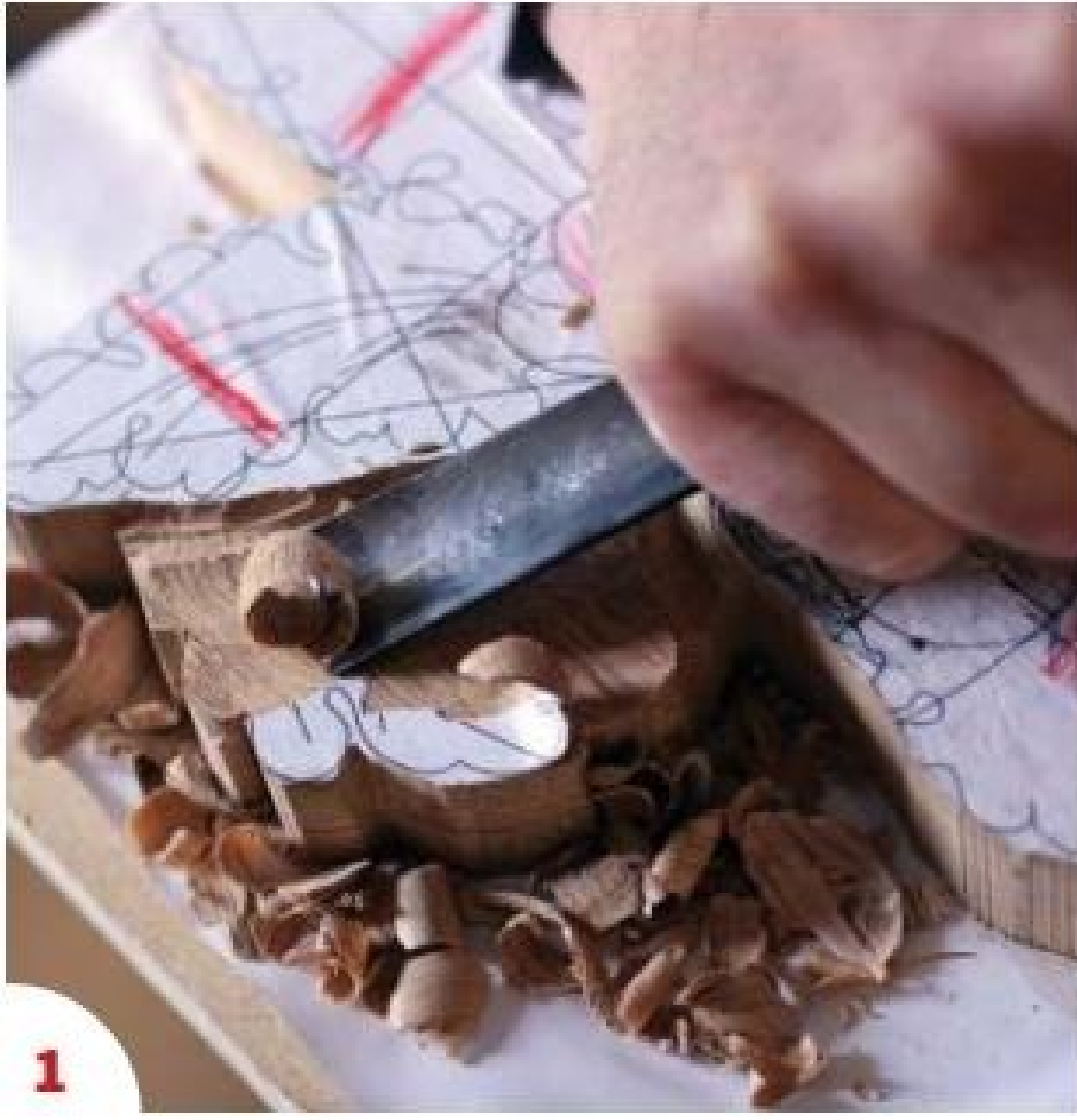
Materials:

- Oak (*Quercus robur*) 240 x 190 x 32mm
- PVA adhesive
- MDF backing
- Screws
- Coat hook



MOUNTING

Give some thought on where and how the piece will be mounted. Your local hardware store can offer practical advice on mounting that best suits your application. Adjust the drawings to suit the backing plate of your coat hook. Consider the practical and aesthetic qualities of the hook and the screws that fix the hook to the carving.



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1 Cut out the traced blank, leaving any sharp corners for the carving stage. Glue to an MDF backing with paper sandwiched between. Ensure mating surfaces are flat as any gaps will result in breakage during the carving stages. Mark the scrolled leaves down to half the thickness of the blank. Separate the forms. Begin by first working in from the sides with a v-tool to prevent breakage. Then with a No.6, 22mm reduce the height to half the thickness of the blank.

2 Alternating between the V-tool and the appropriate sweep gouge, refine the lower portion of the outer leaves. Use vertical stab cuts, taking care not to undercut. Use a skew or fish tail to clean the base of the cuts. Level the spiral sections to a clean finish with a No.3 gouge.

3 Separate the lower leaf with a V-tool, cutting down to 6mm above the spirals while keeping a safe distance from the acorns.

4 Now separate the outer leaves by tilting a V-tool so it is cutting at 90° on the acorn side. Invert a No.3 gouge and round over the leaf into the root of the V-cut. Alternate between these two cuts to gradually bring the leaves down to the desired depth. Round over the leaves towards the tips. They should embody a soft wing-like flow.

5 With a V-tool refine the outline of the acorns by first cutting away the waste between the tips at an angle and then stabbing vertically. Clean around the grouping of acorns with No.5, 10mm and No.6, 8mm gouges. It is vital to the piece that the shape of the acorns is maintained by stabbing the outlines accurately.

6 Gently stab the central acorn, dropping the height of the two flanking acorns down to a flat plane. Reduce the upper and lower leaves to achieve enough clearance to form the acorns.

CARVING SPHERES

Carving clusters of any spherical forms that abut one another presents a unique set of challenges. It can be a great help to draw the acorns in section as three circles abutting one another or to model them in clay so as to gain a better understanding of how they relate to one another. Keep in mind the aim in this piece is to create a representation of three acorns abutting one another. They do not need to be geometrically correct.

7 Round over the outer edges of the central acorn. Redraw the centre lines. Beginning with the central acorn use an inverted No.6, 8mm fishtail, working in both directions, carve along this central axis line lifting the handle to follow the spherical form. Repeat this cut for the other two acorns.

8 Redraw the eyes, spirals and veins. With a V-tool, cut the central curving veins of the two outer leaves. Open the tip of the left outer leaf with a No.6, 13mm.

9 Stab the inner spiral with a No.5, 10mm. Clear the waste using a slicing cut. Alternate these cuts until you have a smooth, harmonious spiral. The ridge will act as the central vein of the leaf and must be accurately maintained and re-established throughout the carving process.

10 Round over the heads of the spirals to an even curve with an inverted No.3, gouge.

11 With a No.8, 10mm, make two diagonal cuts across the top leaf, rolling the tool as it exits the cut to prevent chipping the edges. Now with an inverted No.3 gouge, round over the ridges between the troughs.

12 With a No.6, 22mm, cut across the grain, reducing the height of the tip of the upper leaf, again rolling the tool as you exit the cut.

13 With a No.8, 10mm make two steep descending cuts either side of the tip. Take an inverted No.3 gouge and round over the outer mounds. Use the corner of the tool to separate these forms from the central vein.

14 Use a No.8, 6mm to carve two troughs either side of the central vein the full length of the leaf, splaying out to either side at the tip. This will give the clearance needed to round over the mounds with an inverted No.3 gouge while simultaneously creating a sharp central vein.

15 Clear the area for the hook to a snug fit. This should be done with a No.8, 10mm so as to leave a rounded edge. Flatten the mating surface with a No.3 gouge. Retrace the base of the hook and holes ensuring correct vertical alignment.

16 Shape the lower leaf in a similar way to the upper but this time make two cuts across the tip with the No.8, 10mm. Finish as before by creating a strong central vein and rounding over the bulbous elements with an inverted No.3 gouge.

17 Drill all the eyes vertically to a good depth with the appropriate sized drills. Where the eyes are not enclosed multiple holes may be needed.





18



19

DRILLING ACCURATE HOLES

Drilling accurate holes on sloping ground can be greatly assisted by the use of an awl. They generally have a flat spade tip that is pushed into the wood between the fibres and twisted, pushing the fibres apart.

18 All the eyes are finished in much the same way. Redraw or imagine the outline of the two leaves meeting and insert a No.5, 8mm with the corner in the eye. Use vertical slicing cuts from both directions gradually separating the two forms.

19 Round over the outer edge of the spiralled leaves with an inverted No.3 gouge dipping the height of the ridge between the two lower eyes. Hollow the tips of the leaves with a No.8, 10mm.



20



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20 Re-establish the central vein of the leaf as in step 10, maintaining an accurate curve. Use a small No. 11, 1.5mm veining tool to establish the central vein by running the tool around the curve just shy of the ridge. Carefully soften both sides of the cut with an inverted No.6, 3mm. See the finished piece for a clear view of what is intended.

21 Run a No.11, 3mm along the outside of the tubes. Now with an inverted No.5, 8mm round over the leaf between. Repeat this process until there is enough elevation to form a pleasing tube that radiates out from behind the acorns.



22



23

22 Open out the tips of the troughs with a No.8, 6mm gouge. Round over the tubes with an inverted No.5, 8mm.

23 Now we will form the acorn cups using a stop cut. Mark out the cups, and with a No. 1, 10mm gently stab in the line of the cups. With the No. 6, 16mm fishtail gouge complete the stop cut by carefully carving in toward the stab cut. Now working toward the tip clean up the acorn to a smooth even form.

24 Ensuring the surfaces of the acorn cups are smooth and well formed we can texture it with a male punch or a blunted nail driven by a small hammer. It may be a good idea to experiment on a scrap first. Punch to random depths and avoid creating any uniform patterns.



24



25

25 Use a riffler, file or rolled up piece of sandpaper to chamfer all the eyes. This creates a more comprehensive form that softens the entry holes by catching light on the rim.

Remove the carving from its backing with a paint scraper. Oil with linseed oil and give a light coating of beeswax buffed to a soft sheen. Align the hook and drill screw holes. There are many possibilities for mounting. I have used dome-headed slotted screws that pass right through the carving and into rawl plugs set into the wall. ■

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Carving a door wedge

Peter Benson looks at carving a humorous and quirky doorstop



Two of the most irritating sounds in a household are a tap that is constantly dripping and a door that is ajar and keeps banging with each slight hint of a draught or breeze. We can't do anything about the tap here, but we can help with a noisy door. The easiest way to do this is to use a door wedge that can hold the door in whatever position you desire.

From the design point of view, as long as the wedge will fit under the door, you can add whatever you like to make it more attractive. As long as the wide end is larger than the gap under the door and there is a wedge shape, anything goes.

Usually something is added to the top of the wedge, perhaps a mouse or frog or something similar, but this requires a piece of wood that is quite thick and this is not always available. I have chosen a car disappearing under the door so you could start with that and then find a design of your own.

I have used a piece of lime (*Tilia europea*) 75mm wide, 40mm thick and 140mm long, tapering along its length. Your sizes may, of course, vary. So, before you start on this project you need to

look at the door for which it is intended as the distance from the bottom of the door to the floor can vary considerably from door to door. For this design to look right the blank part of the wedge needs to be hidden under the door. Measure the clearance between the door and the floor and cut your block so that this distance is the same as the thickness of the block approximately halfway along its length. You can check this again later before you do any painting.

There is a wide range of variations that you can include in this project. The one shown is pretty basic and simple with a minimum of detail for someone who would like a quick project. For the more adventurous carvers amongst you, a more careful study of a particular car model and the detail involved can make the whole project much more personal and can make a gift with a difference.

Alternatively, if you are not into cars, why not carve a wedge to resemble a piece of cheese or even a slice of cake. The carving of these is very simple and you can really go to town on the painting. Carving doesn't always have to be meaningful, it can just be fun – as in this project.

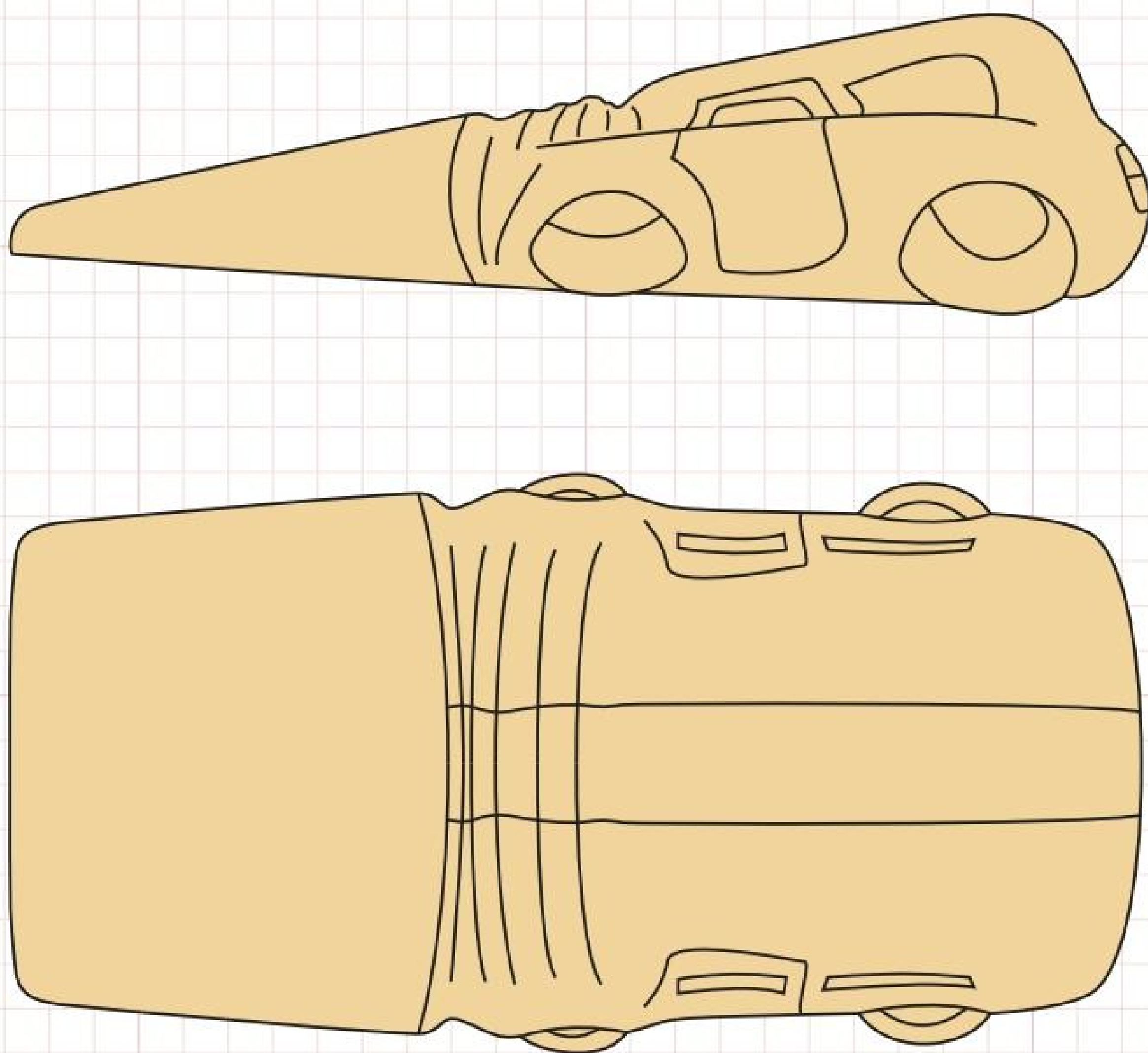
Things you will need

Tools:

- Personal and respiratory protective equipment
- Safety glove
- Knife
- No.5, 7 or 8mm
- No.3, 3mm

Materials:

- Lime (*Tilia europea*)
75 x 40 x 140mm (adjust for size required)
- Abrasives down to 240 grit
- Finishing paints of your choice
- Varnish



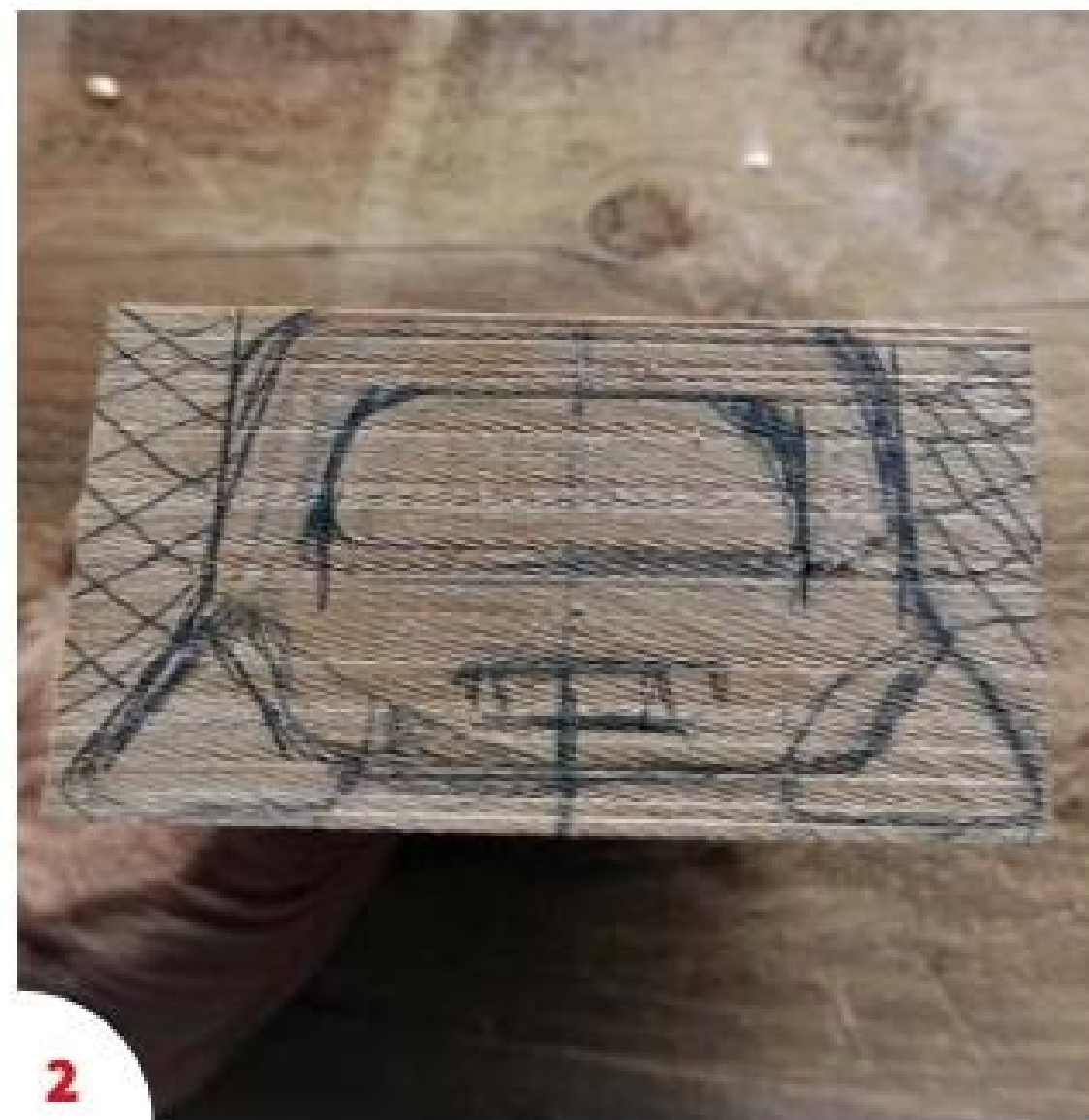
1 & 2 Cut out your timber block to a size to suit you. It would be a good idea to sand the block as smooth now as you can as you will only be carving part of it. Draw the outline of the back of the car onto the end of your block – it doesn't really matter which way up you have the block. Note where I have marked the waste wood.

3 & 4 Remove the waste wood with your knife down to the outline marked for a distance of around 50mm from the end you have marked. The bottom should remain the same depth and the top will taper downwards as you go along the block.

5 Round off the top of the back as shown and blend in with the sides.



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6 Repeat on the other side. Shape the lower part of the rear end around to the back wheels on each side, checking that the overall shape is symmetrical.

7 Roughly shape both back wheels checking that they are the same size – the angles need not be the same. Don't remove any wood from the underside of the car body as this needs to rest firmly on the floor or carpet. When you are happy with the shape and size of the back wheels, repeat the process with those at the front.



8



9

8 Using a small gouge or your knife you now need to cut in the wrinkles on the front of the car. You don't have to be too careful with these as they are supposed to be the result of a car crash – so can be almost any shape. Just make sure your cuts are clean without any stray chippings.

9 Rough sand the body so you can check the overall shape.

10 Draw in the windows and doors on both sides and the back, making sure that the left and right sides are the same. As the roof is squashed at the front, draw the lines for the bottom of the windows parallel to the floor and the tops sloping downwards towards the front.



10



11

11 Using your knife, carefully cut in the outline of the doors and windows. With a small No.3 gouge, take out the wood within the window outline to a depth of around 1mm or less. It needs to be enough to show a clear outline of each window.

12 You now need to give the whole carving a thorough sanding to remove any scratches and to prepare it for painting. If you don't want to paint it, after sanding, give it a coat of varnish all over.

13 & 14 Paint the car in the colours of your choice and give it an overall coat of varnish. You can add as much or as little detail as you wish. ▶



12



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Jacobethan style

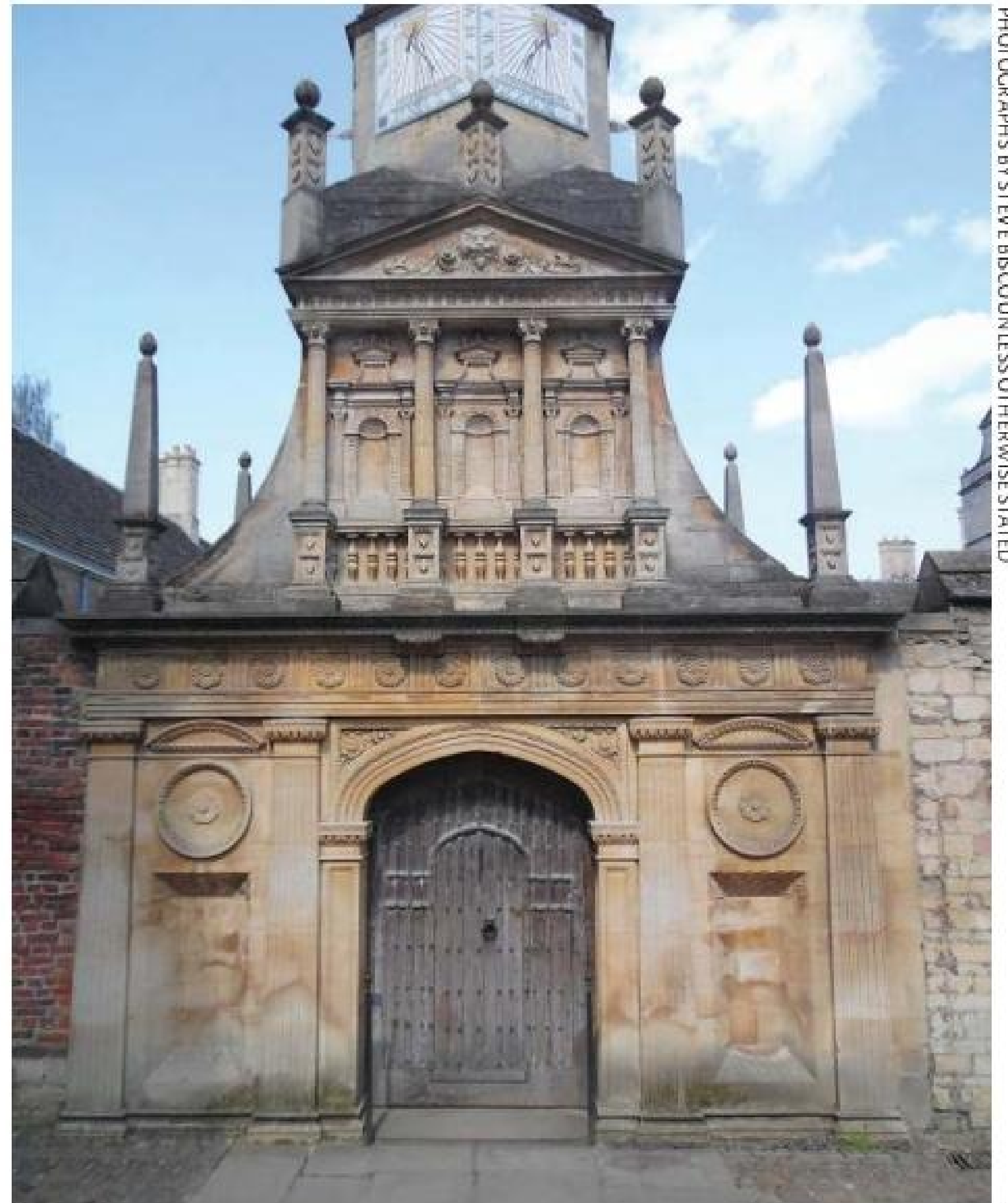
Steve Bisco explores the development of the Renaissance style in Britain in the Elizabethan and Jacobean era

Jacobethan is a composite term coined in the 19th century to describe the styles of the Elizabethan period (1558-1603) and the Jacobean period (1603-1625). Queen Elizabeth I reigned for 45 years and never married, so when she died without heirs in 1603 she bequeathed the throne of England to her second cousin, King James VI of Scotland, who thereafter became King James the First of England and Sixth of Scotland. It was customary for the names of kings to be expressed in Latin, and the Latin version of James was 'Jacobus'. The 22-year reign of Jacobus I/VI therefore became known as the Jacobean period which, lumped with the Elizabethan period, gives us 'Jacobethan'. Although Elizabeth was the last of the Tudors and James was the first of the Stuart dynasty, they are conjoined for stylistic purposes as the decoration and architecture of this 67-year period marked a seismic shift in fashion from the late Gothic of the Tudor period to the Renaissance (literally 'rebirth') of the Roman Classical style.

The Renaissance had started in Italy in the late 1400s but had been slow to reach Britain because the Protestant Church of England was at war with the Roman Catholic Church and anything Italian was treated with suspicion. However, the Renaissance slowly crept into England during the reign of Elizabeth I, and was more advanced in Scotland where the Auld Alliance with France had allowed more contact with European fashions. With the new king and the new century, the Renaissance kicked up a gear.

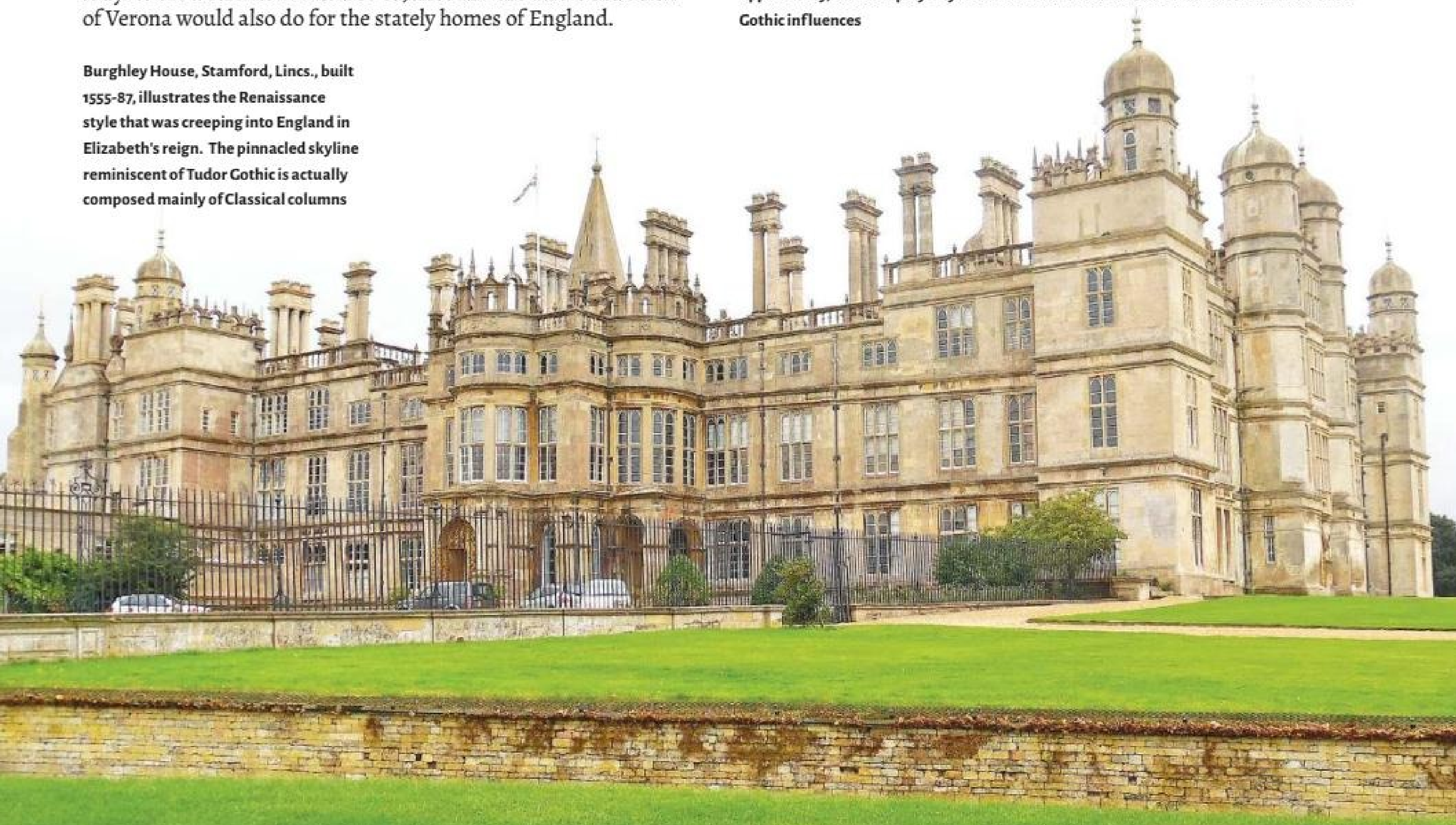
It was a turbulent and dynamic period in history that included the defeat of the Spanish Armada, Francis Drake's circumnavigation of the globe, the Guy Fawkes, Gunpowder Plot, the founding of the American colonies, and the life and work of William Shakespeare. It is no coincidence that design became more 'theatrical' in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period as both monarchs loved a play and a masque ball, and with Shakespeare, Marlowe and Johnson to entertain them, theatres were allowed to expand and develop fantastical stage sets to lead the viewer into the world of Renaissance Italy. What would do for Romeo & Juliet and the Two Gentlemen of Verona would also do for the stately homes of England.

Burghley House, Stamford, Lincs., built 1555-87, illustrates the Renaissance style that was creeping into England in Elizabeth's reign. The pinnacled skyline reminiscent of Tudor Gothic is actually composed mainly of Classical columns



PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVE BISCO UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED

The Gate of Honour at Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge, built in 1557, is composed of Classical elements such as the Corinthian columns and round-arched niches in the upper storey, but the 'spiky' skyline and the Tudor arch over the main door still show some Gothic influences



From the start of Elizabeth's reign we begin to see Classical detail creeping into architecture and decoration, although the buildings it was imposed on still had a rather Gothic look about them. Burghley House, in Lincolnshire, built in 1555-87 by Elizabeth's favourite, Robert Cecil, has a roofline sprouting pinnacles like a Gothic cathedral, but on closer inspection these are seen to be groups of Classical columns into which the chimneys are incorporated. The same is true of The Gate of Honour at Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge, built in 1557. Its main door has a Tudor Gothic arch and the general impression of the skyline is, again, one of pinnacles, but the upper storey is faced with a pedimented colonnade of Corinthian columns and Classical niches that is pure Roman.



Middle Temple Hall in London – centre of England's legal profession – was built 1562-1572 with much elaborate woodcarving, including strapwork elements. It was opened by Elizabeth I and the first performance of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* was given here.

The inclusion of Classical detail continued to develop throughout the reigns of Elizabeth and James, but the form of decoration which came to dominate the era was strapwork. Strapwork decoration is low-relief carving that represents leather straps 'nailed' to a flat panel with scrolled curls, three-pointed corners, and with raised elements such as domes and pyramids. Although this came to Britain by way of the Italian Renaissance, its roots lie in Islamic Spain rather than Classical Rome. It is found on wood and stone panels, pilasters, newel posts, stairs and friezes, and also in elaborate plaster work in grand ceilings. Open strapwork crestings carved in stone were also used on the rooflines of buildings.



This elaborate strapwork panel, dating from 1619, on the façade of the Tower of the Five Orders at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, is a fine example of this style at the peak of its popularity



The Queen's House, Greenwich, completed in 1618 by Inigo Jones for James's queen, Anne of Denmark, was the first truly Classical building in Britain

But towards the end of James's reign, the Renaissance finally struck home with the first truly Classical building in Britain. The Queen's House, Greenwich, was completed in 1618 by Inigo Jones (1573-1652) for James's queen, Anne of Denmark. Jones, a theatrical designer and later architect, had travelled in Italy and became a disciple of the Palladian Classical style of Andrea Palladio (1508-1580). But Jones's designs for the Queen's House, and soon after the Banqueting House in Whitehall, were ahead of their time and it would be another 100 years before Palladian Neo-Classical became properly established in Georgian times.



This strapwork stone cresting on Bangor Town Hall in Wales, dating from 1852, illustrates the popular revival of the Jacobethan style in the Victorian and Edwardian era

The Elizabethan and Jacobean style was replaced by the Baroque style in the reign of James's son, Charles I, but like most styles it was revived in the 19th century, driven by Victorian nostalgia for the Old England that was quickly vanishing in the modern industrial world. Now given the composite name 'Jacobethan', it was used in many grand houses and public buildings in Victorian and Edwardian times. ▀



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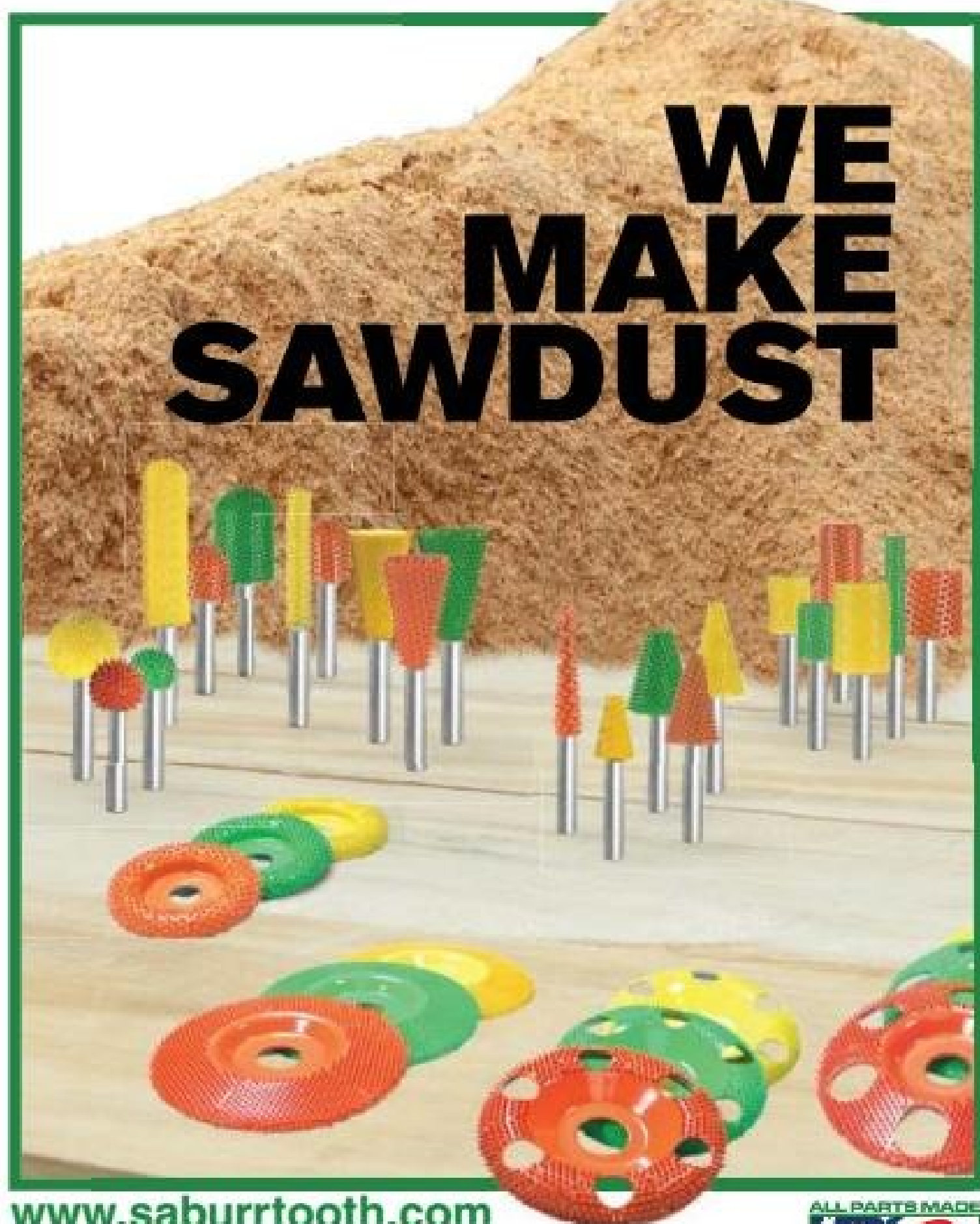
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Jacobethan-style strapwork panel

Steve Bisco carves an oak panel in the strapwork style of the Jacobethan era

Wooden panelling was the principal form of surface decoration in houses in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. In Tudor times this had mostly been in the 'linenfold' pattern resembling folded cloth, but in Elizabeth's reign a new style called 'strapwork' (see previous pages) swept in from Europe. Strapwork panels are generally much more complex than linenfold, with tightly-curved scrolls and pyramid-like projections giving them more visual depth and bolder contrasts of light and shadow. They could be found on walls, on doors, on newel posts, on chests and cabinets, and even on chair backs, where the projections must have been less than comfortable.

For the carver, the extra depth of decoration makes much more work than a linenfold panel. The board must be as thick as its foremost point and, as this is often a fairly small part of the overall composition, it means that a lot of surplus wood has to be removed to work back to the basic strapwork and the background level of the panel. For the paying customer it would have been a lot more expensive than linenfold wainscot, which can be produced mainly with moulding planes.

Strapwork remained the principal style throughout the reign of King James I/VI but, like most styles, it enjoyed its own renaissance in Victorian and Edwardian times when there was a desire to recreate 'Old England' in the new industrial world.

This design comes from *The Manual of Traditional Woodcarving*, published in 1911 and still available from Dover Publications. If you want to look it up, it is fig.876 on page 455, one of several alternative panels designed as hall panelling to go with a grand Jacobethan staircase. It has all the key features of strapwork – the appearance of thick leather or wrought iron straps with three-pointed corners and curled scrolls at various points 'nailed' on to a flat board with a central projection of an elongated pyramid. This is the image we have to create in a solid board with the 50mm thickness needed to accommodate the central ridge.

It really has to be in oak to fit the period style, so there is some heavy chiselling involved. To recreate a 400-year-old appearance I have gone for a fumed finish with dark wax polish, but if you prefer you can leave it in its new oak colour with just a light-brown wax.



Things you will need

Tools:

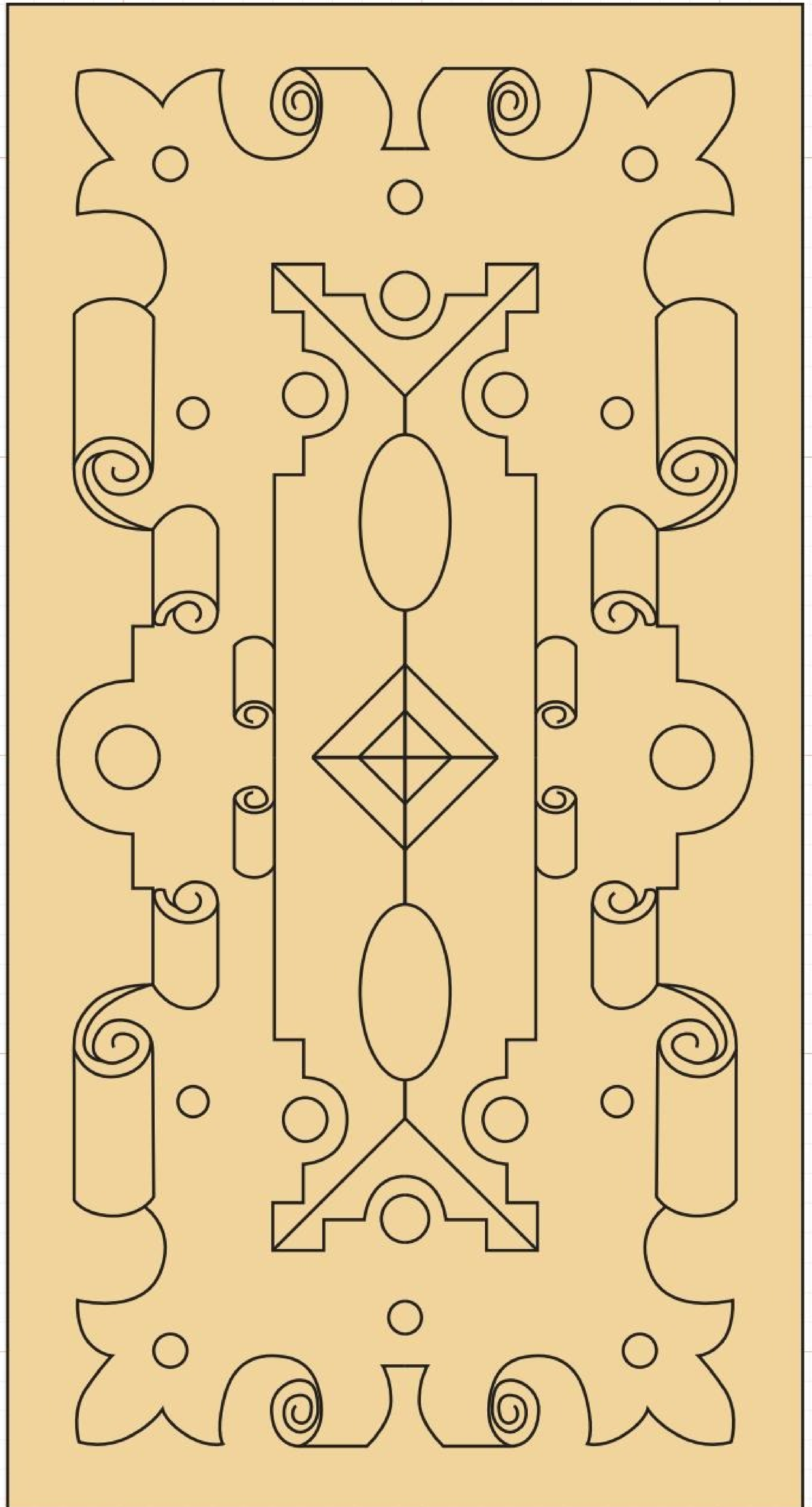
- Personal and respiratory protective equipment
- 20mm fishtail gouge
- No.3, 10mm fishtail gouge
- No.9, 16mm curved gouge
- No.9, 3 & 20mm
- No.5, 7 & 13mm gouge
- No.3, 10mm gouge
- No.8, 8mm
- 3 & 6mm straight V-tool
- 3, 6, 6, 15 & 20mm flat chisel
- 10mm skew chisel
- Cabinet scrapers

Materials:

- Oak (*Quercus robur*)
480 x 254 x 50mm
- Household ammonia
(for fuming)
- Dark-brown wax polish
(Antiquax brown wax)

DID YOU KNOW?

Strapwork decoration is said to have developed originally in Spain from the influence of Moorish interlaced patterns in about 1450. It spread to Italy in the Renaissance and then to France where it was used in the 1530s in the Palace of Fontainebleau. It was then adopted in the Low Countries and eventually became popular in Britain from around 1550 to 1630, by which time it had gone out of fashion in Italy and Spain.



**1****2****3****4****5****6****7****8****PREPARATIONS**

1 Get a piece of oak, 480 x 254 x 50mm with planed edges, and make a full-size copy of the drawing to fit it (a print shop can help you with this). Get a few sheets of carbon paper to cover the surface.

2 Tape the drawing firmly and accurately to the wood with the carbon paper under it. Now carefully trace the pattern on to the wood. This pattern has lots of straight lines, circles and semi-circles, so use a ruler and a circle template if you have one.

3 This is a complex pattern and it is easy to miss bits, so keep the drawing taped on one edge while you lift it up to check, then you can put it back exactly in place to trace in any missing bits. By tracing the pattern instead of pasting it on you can see how the grain runs in relation to the pattern lines.

4 Scribe or draw a line around the block at a depth of 13mm from the back. This will be the level of the 'floor' of the panel, above which everything else will stand.

BLOCKING OUT THE LEVELS

5 Now we must remove all the wood outside the pattern area and down to the floor level. Start by using a V-tool to cut around the outside of the pattern and along the top of the 13mm line to create a stop line to reduce the risk of splinters running off into the pattern and floor.

6 Use a large, deep gouge, such as a No.9 20mm, to cut away the surplus wood. Make sure you keep the 'wings' at each side of the cutting edge above the surface to prevent splinters running off into the wood you want to keep. Take note of the grain direction along the pattern edges and also the 'up and down' direction in relation to the floor. The end grain across the ends of the pattern is hard to chisel so it is best cut away with a tenon saw.

TOP TIP: If you are skilled with a router you could use it to save some time and effort in blocking out the levels (steps 6 to 9). But take care – if your routing skills are not up to the job you could quickly wreck the whole carving.

7 With the bulk removed, you can pare down the edges of the pattern, making sure they are vertical to avoid the pattern spreading, and level the floor to the 13mm line. Use a simple depth gauge of a flat piece of wood with a screw inserted through it to ensure all of the floor is at the same level.

8 Now it gets more complicated as we start to gouge away the surplus wood above the level of the strapwork. It is not practical to leave the 'nailheads' in place at this stage, so leave the new ground level 10mm above the floor level so there is enough wood to mark them in later and cut around them.

9 Work the strap area flat and level at 10mm above the floor level at this stage, but leaving a slightly higher section where the large 'nail' on the side projections will be. Make precise, vertical cuts down the sides of all the scrolls and the central block so their exact position is translated down to the strap level.

10 Now lower the height of the scrolls so each one will be roughly as tall as it is wide when it is rounded into a cylinder later.

CARVING THE DETAIL

11 With everything blocked out in the right position and at the right height, you can now start working on the details. Start by marking the small 10mm diameter nailheads in their correct position and cut round them. Work the strap surface down so it is 25mm below the top of the central block, which we can still measure from with the depth gauge at this stage. It can curve slightly upwards at the corner points and slightly down at some nailheads to create the effect of being pliant. Round over the 10mm nailheads and the large 20mm ones on each side.

12 Now shape the pyramidal ridge along the centre. Mark the positions of the two ovals, the diamond shape and the two ends of the ridge along the centreline, then chisel round the straps that project on to the sides and ends of the ridge. Now chisel away the surplus wood to form the sides of the ridge into an inverted V.

13 The sides of the ridge must go down to the floor level inside the strap area, with the strap extensions laying up the sides and ends. Shape the strap extensions and their 13mm nailheads. Use a broad, flat chisel to make the sides of the V dead flat with a sharp ridge. Slide the chisel sideways in a slicing motion as you push, then finish with a flat cabinet scraper to get a fine, smooth finish.

TOP TIP: Abrasives tend to dull the surface of oak, so to get a smooth, glossy finish it is best to scrape it smooth. This can be done by holding a flat chisel in an upright position and pulling it towards you. Better still, get a set of cabinet scrapers, which come with flat and curved edges that are dragged across the surface.

14 Carefully mark out and carve the two oval features and the incised diamond shape in the centre. These need to be crisp and accurate in view of their prominent position in the carving.

15 Now we move to the scrolls, starting with the four small ones that curl outwards from the central ridge. These are too small to hold much detail, but try to create a 'swiss roll' that appears to be a part of the strapwork that has curled up like a dry leaf.

16 Move to the medium-size scrolls. The size of these allows a more defined spiral that can be carved by slicing with very sharp 3 and 6mm flat chisels. Undercut both sides of each scroll so it clearly appears to be a part of the strapwork that has curled up upon itself.



9



10



11



12



13



14



15

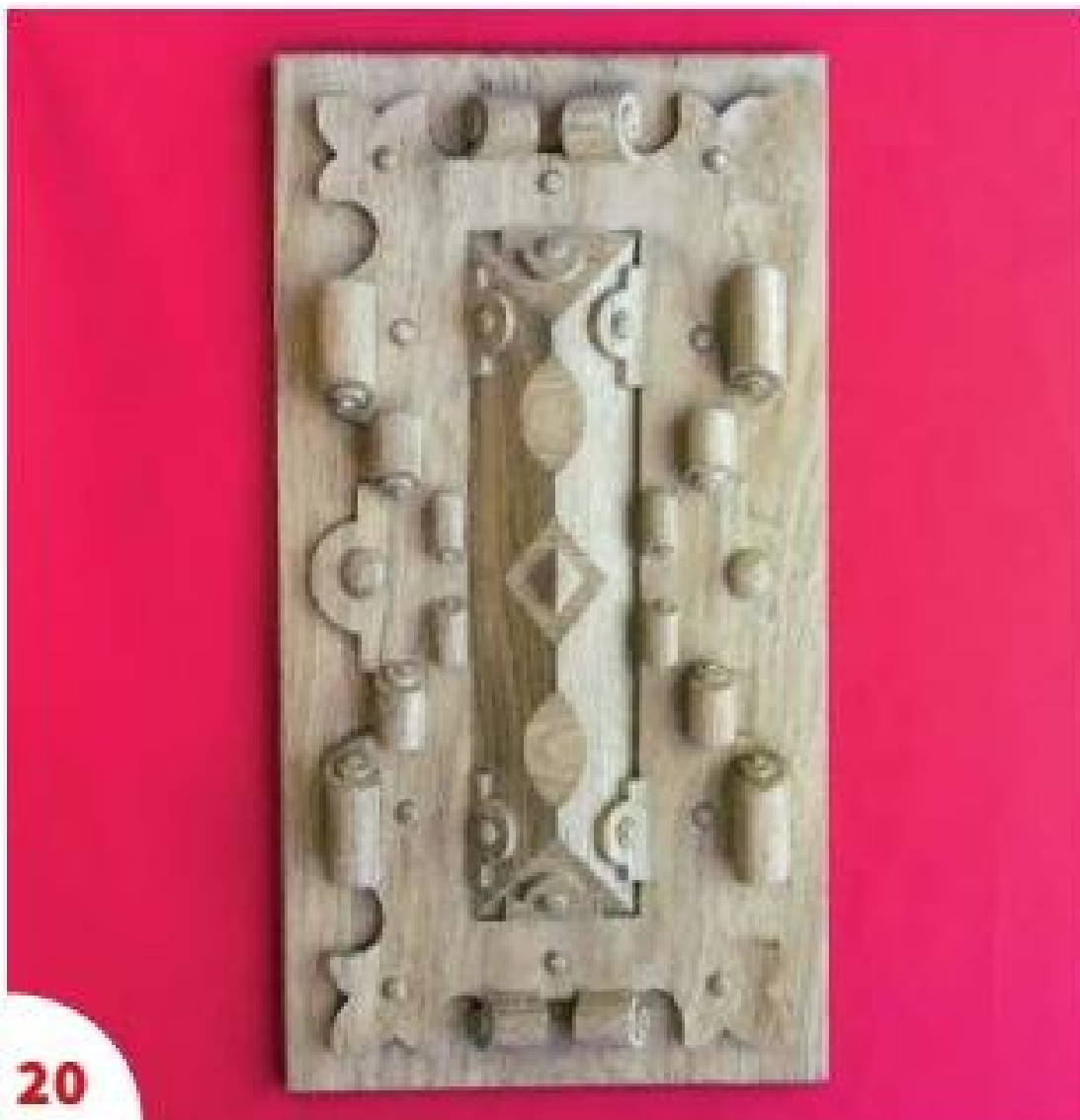


16

**17****18**

17 The four biggest scrolls that curl back from the outer edge are a defining part of the carving. Carefully shape the edge of the strapwork into the spiral edge of the scroll, and undercut as before to make the 'roll' stand above both the strapwork surface and the background floor of the panel.

18 Now carve the two scrolls at each end of the panel. These rise up from the surface of the strapwork and curl under themselves on to the background surface. Use a No.8, 8mm gouge to create a soft bend rather than a square edge where the scroll rises up from the strapwork. As the ends of the spirals project across short grain it is best to keep them almost flat and cut the spiral lines into the ends with gouges.

**19****20**

FINISHING

19 Plane a chamfer of about 2mm around the outer edges of the panel to give it a neater finish. Slightly undercut around the whole outer edge of the strapwork with a 3mm V-tool to make it look detached from the background of the panel, and generally check over the whole carving to refine details and surfaces. Use cabinet scrapers and the edge of a flat chisel in the narrower parts to scrape the flat and curved surfaces to a smooth finish without using abrasives, which would dull the surface.

20 Here's the finished panel. If you want to leave it in its new oak colour, just give it a couple of coats of a light-brown wax polish, but if you want to 'age' it to the dark brown of 400-year-old oak, don't polish it yet.

**21****22****23**

FUMING OAK

New oak is pale, but it darkens to a deep brown after centuries of exposure to the air. Placing new oak in ammonia fumes replicates nature's ageing process at the rate of about a century an hour. The ammonia acts on the tannins found in the heartwood of oak – but sapwood (the young outer layer of wood under the bark) has no tannins and will stay pale, so make sure your oak is all heartwood.

21 To darken the oak by fuming get a plastic tub and put in about 50-80ml of household ammonia in a shallow dish. Place the carving in the tub, raised above the dish on wooden supports, and seal the tub. Follow the manufacturer's safety instructions, wear suitable personal and respiratory protective equipment and work in a well ventilated place. Stand back at arm's length. Leave it until the oak darkens to a pleasing dark brown – about 4-8 hours depending on the temperature, the concentration of ammonia and the amount of tannin in the oak. When you open the tub afterwards, stand back and let the fumes clear before you take the carving out.

22 The smell of ammonia will clear from it after a while. Then, give it a coat of a dark wax polish, brushed into the crevices and then buffed up to a soft sheen with a cloth.

23 The finished carving now looks like a relic from Shakespeare's time. ▶

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Redwing

Mike Wood
shows how to create
a colourful autumn
and winter visitor

Redwings (*Turdus iliacus*) are the smallest birds in the thrush family seen in the UK. The common name derives from the red feathers on the birds' underwings. They are also easily identified by the broad, cream-coloured stripe above their eyes.

They are mainly seen in the UK in autumn and winter when they migrate to Scotland from Iceland and to southern England from Scandinavia and Russia. The birds migrate at night in large flocks containing hundreds of birds. As an 'eruptive species', they migrate in response to changes in the weather and their food supply.

In the autumn months, they feed on fruit and berries in hedges and orchards, then, when winter sets in, they move to open areas such as parks and playing fields to feed on earthworms. In severe winters, they may be seen feeding in gardens. In the spring, they return to their northern European breeding grounds where they build nests in shrubs or on the ground in conifer and birch forests. A small number of redwings have been observed nesting in the Scottish Highlands.

Redwings are on the red list for conservation in the UK, which is the highest level of priority for species needing urgent preservation action. Globally, they are categorised as Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List. The main threats to redwings are the effects of climate change on their breeding sites in northern Europe, and the loss of the shrubs they nest in due to over-grazing. They are vulnerable to severe winters and colder summers.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MIKE WOOD

Things you will need

Tools:

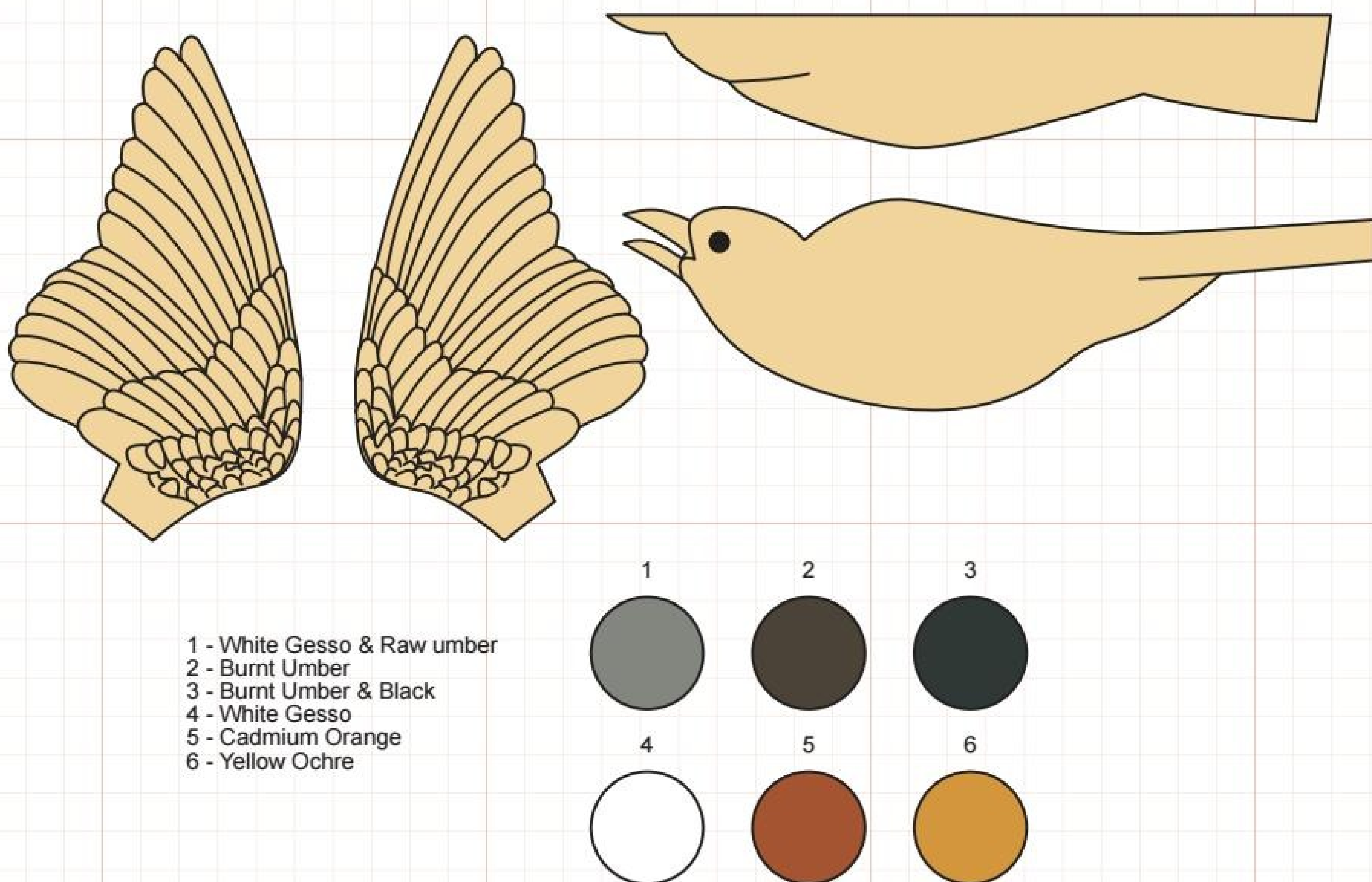
- Personal and respiratory protective equipment
- Bandsaw, coping saw or fretsaw
- Carving knife
- Rotary power carving unit
- Coarse taper burr
- Medium flame or taper burr
- Bull-nosed stone burr

- Round-nosed burr
- Fine ruby taper burr
- Drill and drill bit for the feet
- Sanding drum
- Pyrography unit with scalpel nib

Materials:

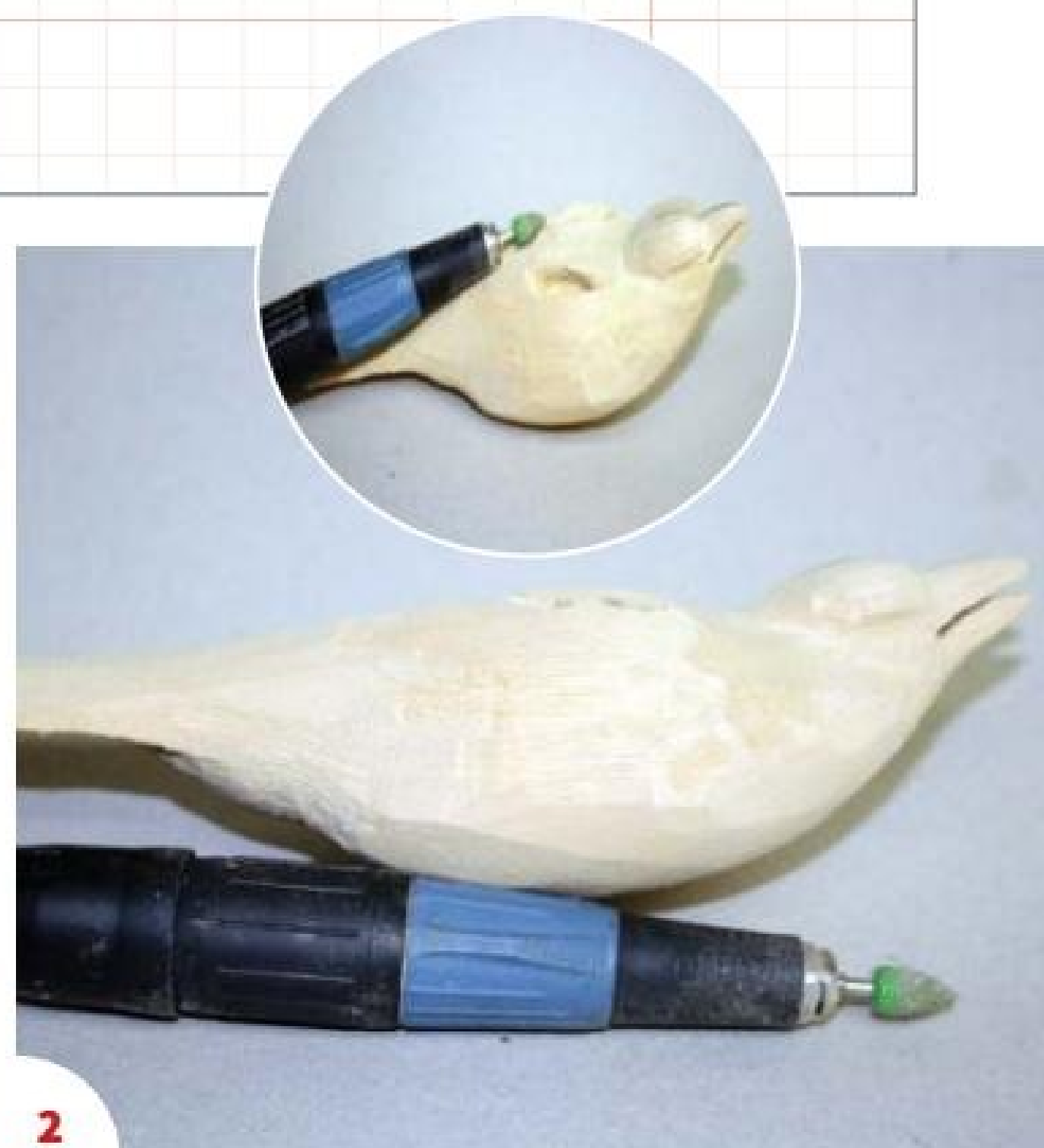
- Jelutong (*Dyera costulata*) is used for the body and lime (*Tilia x europaea*) is used for the wings. Alternatively, use a timber of your choice

- Body: 80mm L x 70mm W x 60mm H
- Wings: 90mm L x 15mm W x 20mm thick
- Eyes & feet
- Thin leaves of brass sheet
- Timber for the beads/berries or buy them
- PVA adhesive
- Plastic wood
- Paint brushes/airbrush
- Abrasives 120-240 grit
- Acrylic colours as per the colour palette



1 Start by using the templates shown to help you create the wings and the main body. Once the timber is cut, mark in the main feature/shapes of the body and the wing details.

2 Now, rough out the bird body with a small, toothed burr held in a rotary carving handpiece, or use hand carving tools to do the shape. Once the body is shaped, cut in the sockets for the wings. Note the small tenon on the templates which are to be slotted into the holes cut. Dry fit them, but do not stick them in place at this stage.





3 Study your reference material well and draw in the feather and wing details. Then use either hand or power carving tools to create the detail on the wings. I use a burr in a high-speed rotary handpiece. It doesn't matter what route you take as long as you work safely and end up with the result you require. But remember, if using rotary power carving techniques, wear eye protection and a respirator to protect against the airborne dust.

4 Once the wings are carved, fit them in the sockets on the bird. Once you can see the detail and the fit works well, remove them. Carve the beak so that it is open and will accept a berry.



5 Draw in the main side and top body and neck and feathers – not the fine detail at this stage. This includes the position of eyes. Once marked, carve them. I use a tapered-point rotary burr to form the feathers.

You will also need to cut the eye sockets. This can be done with a burr or drill and drill bit. Once the eye socket is cut, fit the eyes you have bought or made to fit in the hole. I use plastic wood to hold them in place. Any squeeze-out is shaped and excess removed to create the perfect eye shape and surround. Do clear any excess off the eyes well while the plastic wood is wet. It is difficult to remove once dry.

6 Now move on to using a round bull-nosed burr to create some soft texture to give you the cloud-like fluffiness of the feathers.



7 Move on to the back, top and underneath of the bird and mark the detail. Once marked, carve the feathers you have marked and soften them as required.

8 Now is the time to work out what you will place the bird on. I wanted a bird that was on a bush with berries. Here you can see I have used a few branches and stuck them into a base. I cut metal leaves from thin metal foil and then made the berries from wood. The feet I make, but you can buy them, as well as the leaves and berries. They are drilled into place to suit the position you want the bird on your stand.

9-10 Once you have your base sorted, remove the bird and pyrography the fine details.



11 You will likely find that a scalpel-edged pyrography blade will cut nicely clean incised detail, but you can experiment to see what suits your needs. Once the pyrography is done on the main body and wings...

12 ... glue the wings and feet into place in the previously cut sockets. I used plastic wood for the feet and shaped the excess to create the leg/body meeting point. Because I wanted to colour the branches and base as well as the feet, I gave these a coat of white gesso at this stage.

Note also that the berry is now red. As mentioned you can buy berries or make them. If making them, the chances are you will have to colour them. A paint brush or airbrush will help with this. You can also apply shading to age the berries as required.

13 Now use white gesso and a touch of raw sienna to undercoat the entire bird.

14 Once the gesso is dry, paint some dark and light edges to the wings.

15 Once the high and low-lights are dry, go over the wings with a thin wash of umber. They are now beginning to look close to the real thing.

16 You now need to create a template and use an airbrush or hand brushes to paint on the feathers on the back. Note the subtle detail. Use a dry-brush technique if using hand brushes or very light coats from an airbrush until you have the shape and colour tone required.

17 The underwing coverts need to be painted using burnt sienna and cadmium orange. If required, low-lights are created with a darker mix of burnt sienna.

18 Once dry, add a small amount of yellow ochre to the orange mix and lighten the edges of the feathers.

Note also the low-lights/darkened ends of the feather tips. Burnt umber mixed with black will be ideal for this and can be graduated up and along the feather edges or a bit. I know this is fiddly, but it creates the visual effects that you need when creating realistic birds.

TYPES OF BIRD CARVING

Creating a life-like bird requires studying hard the subject matter prior to creating it. Then there is the fine detail and colouring to make sure you get it right. This type of carving is not for everyone.

You can look at carving something in relief or in the round but without so much detail. Stylised carving can deliver incredible results. It is just tricky to convey the essence of the correct bird so you have to study the subject well before carving, but there is no need to create the fine detail and colour.

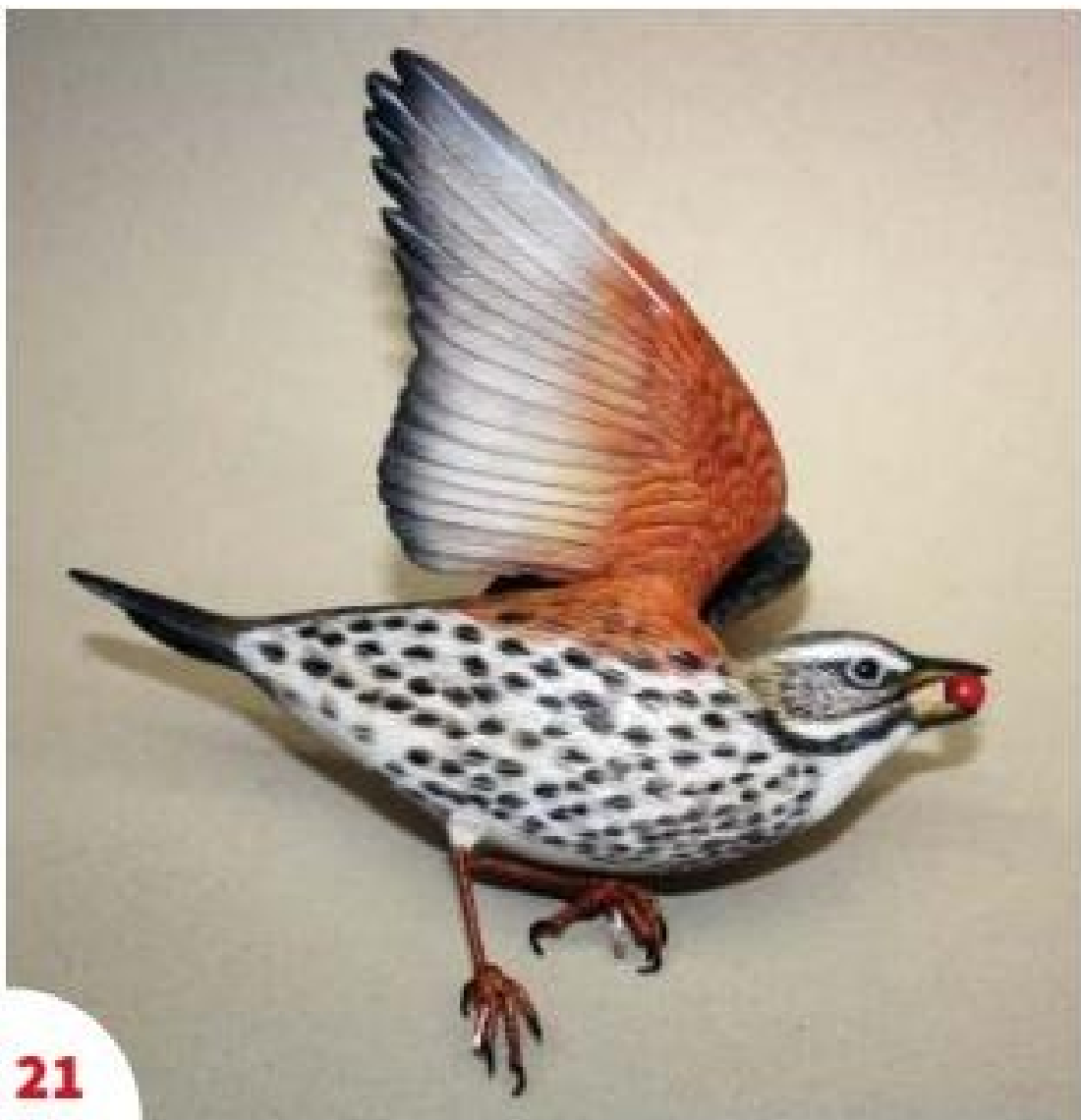


**19****20**

19 Use a small amount of burnt umber and black to paint in the spots on the underside of the bird.

20 Coat the beak in yellow ochre, then create a darkened area on the top and underside of the lower beak using burnt umber and black. The inside of the mouth is a deep reddish-orange. I have not shown red on the palette but it can be used as required. I did use a red for the berries.

Then you need to create the flecked area around the eye and the streak at the back of the eyes. Burnt umber and burnt umber and black will serve you well for this. For the band around the cheek that terminates on the nape of the neck, mix a bit of yellow ochre and burnt umber to create the light patch.

**21****22**

21-22 Now it is time to coat the feet. Cadmium orange mixed with burnt umber will do the main part and the tips of the toes are coated in burnt umber. You will also need to coat the back of the bird with several thin washes of burnt umber.

23-25 The base section now needs to be coloured to suit your wishes. The berries are painted red with high or low-lights to create age and light. The branches and leaves were primed and then sprayed the appropriate colours to show aged timber and leaves. That is your bird finished. I hope you have some fun making this. ▶

**23****24****25**

Modern traditional lovespoon symbolism

David Western takes a look at lovespoon symbols and their significance and meaning

Lovespoon symbolism is a fascinating subject. We delved into a number of the designs found on historical spoons housed in museum and private collections in previous issues. We saw that the variety of symbols that appear on antique lovespoons was far more limited and the symbols themselves far more basic than they appear in our modern era. In this issue, I'll examine some of the symbols which are now considered traditional to lovespoon design but which have, in fact, only appeared in an appreciable way in the mid portion of the twentieth century.

Despite having seen many hundreds of antique lovespoons held in museum and private collections, I have not seen every lovespoon ever carved. As a result, I can only base the following on what I have viewed firsthand and not on hearsay. Many of the symbols that are considered fundamental to modern day lovespoon design are not seen at all among the antique collections, their addition to the lexicon of lovespoon design seems to have occurred during the post Second World War boom in lovespoon carving, which was more directed at a growing tourist demand for souvenirs rather than from carvers continuing to create them as genuine love tokens.

Much has happened in the lovespoon world during the last forty or fifty years. New styles of carving, increased mechanisation and new purposes for the spoons have lead to the creation of a myriad of new symbols and ideas. Nowadays, the design field is vast, the artistic opportunities endless and messages which can be sent boundless. There truly has never been a more golden age for lovespoon carving and for carvers to build on previous legacies.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID WESTERN

WEDDING BELLS

Although wedding bells are a favourite feature on modern lovespoons designed for nuptials, they simply don't appear on historic spoons and there may be a couple of reasons for this. In the early days of lovespoon carving, big church weddings were not as important among rural folk as they are today and many couples may not have even visited a church to tie the

knot. This meant that romantic symbolism remained the main purpose of a traditional lovespoon and marital symbols were scarcely considered. It is also important to remember that originally, the Welsh style of lovespoon was carved and given to initiate a courtship and was not a gift with which to celebrate the culmination of the courtship. Although it is known

that wooden spoons were used during wedding celebrations in Scandinavia and Brittany, they were of a much different style, type and purpose to the spoons we commonly identify as true lovespoons. Celebrating the wedding is a relatively new use for Welsh style lovespoons, and these new symbols are a reflection of that.



Traditionally, lovespoons were created to generate a romance, and were not considered a wedding gift

PADLOCKS

Surprisingly, padlocks don't appear on historic spoons despite the common presence of keys and keyholes. I confess that having seen so many old spoons with keyholes and keys, that the lack of padlocks is something of a mystery. Nowadays, the padlock makes a great representation of security or of love held fast, but the carvers of old just didn't seem to bother with them. I'm not sure when the

padlock started becoming a popular symbol, but I have a lovely spoon in my collection that is likely from the 1970s and which sports a wonderfully romantic lock and fitting key joined by a length of chain. Padlocks are wonderfully versatile as they can link with chainwork and cap the design, enabling the spoon to be hung, engraved with text or simply appear within the design.



The padlock is a simple symbol which can make a profound statement of security and love held fast

LEAVES AND FOLIAGE

Although extremely rare, the use of leaves to symbolically suggest fertility or the growth of a relationship is not completely unknown on historical lovespoons. A few spoons displaying foliage can be found in museums but what separates them from modern lovespoons utilising plant motifs is their more stylised representation. Modern foliage carving is far more biologically accurate and the designs much more complex. On the few historical spoons which display foliage work, it is usually

kept simplistic and more geometric. Unfortunately, some heavily foliated Swiss tourism spoons from the late 1800s to early 1900s have been confused with Welsh lovespoons, leading some carvers and historians to think this was a common symbolic device used by romantic spoon carvers. For modern carvers, leaves, fruit and berries represent an ideal opportunity to symbolise growth and fertility as well as representations of years and decades, numbers of children or places of origin.

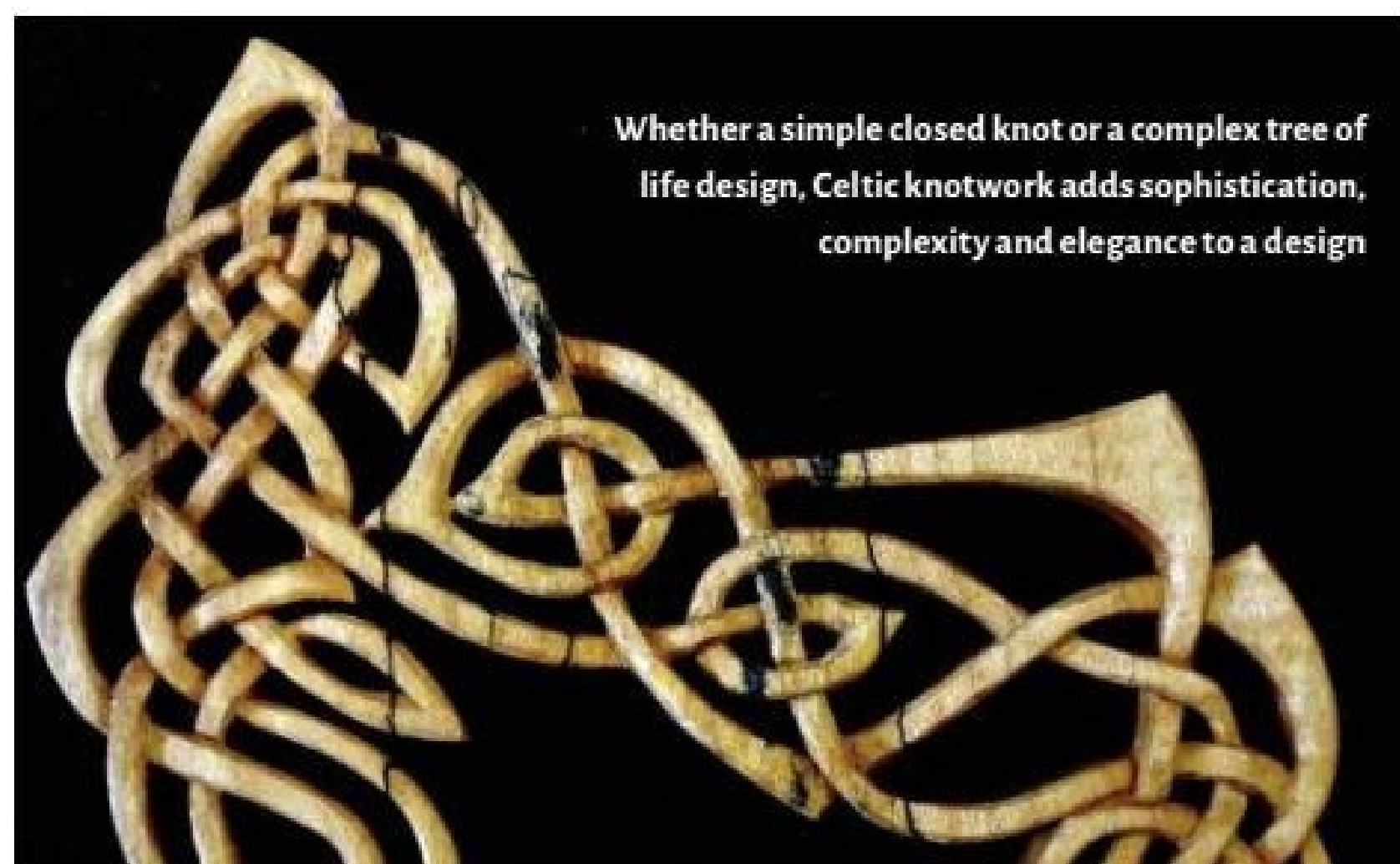
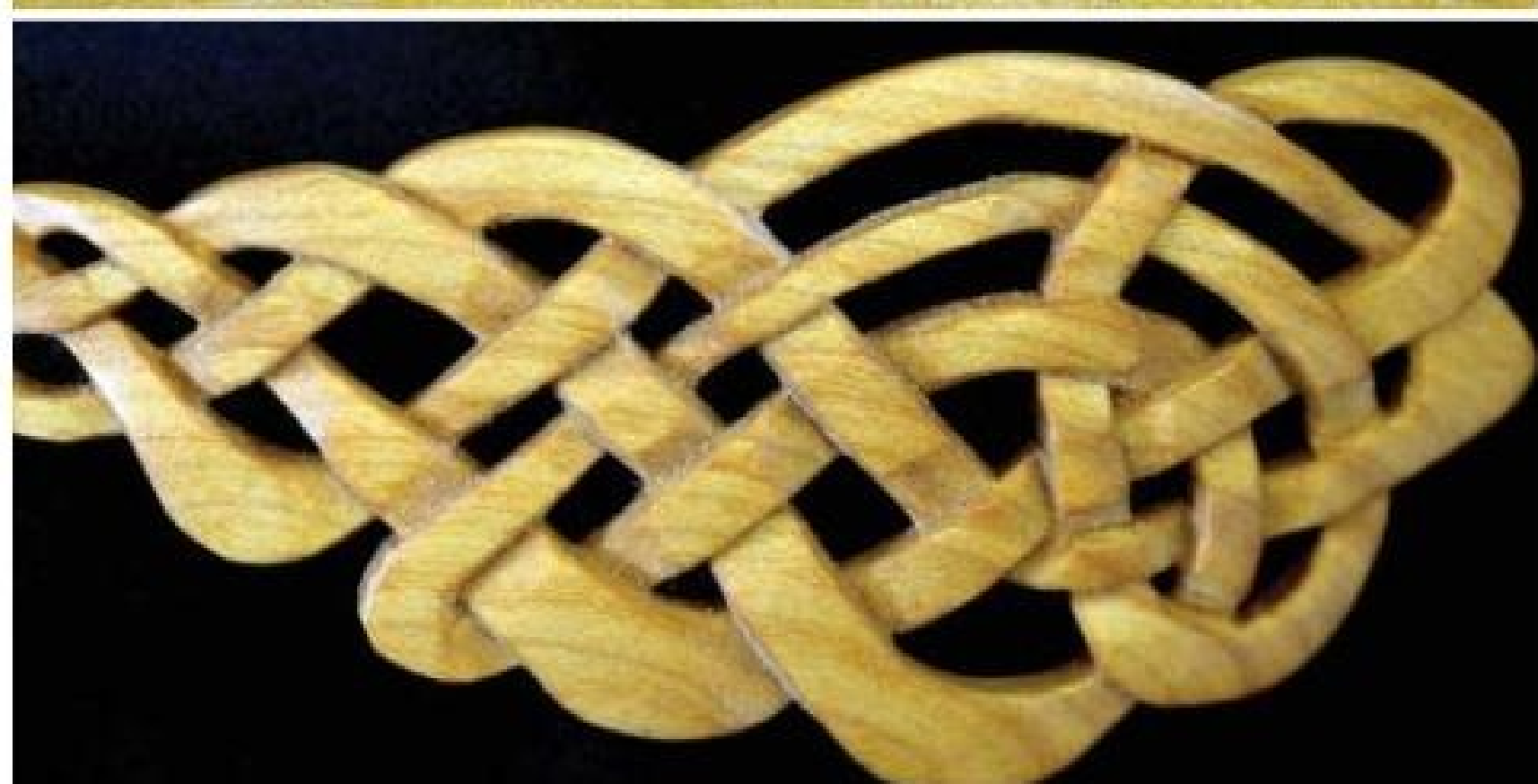
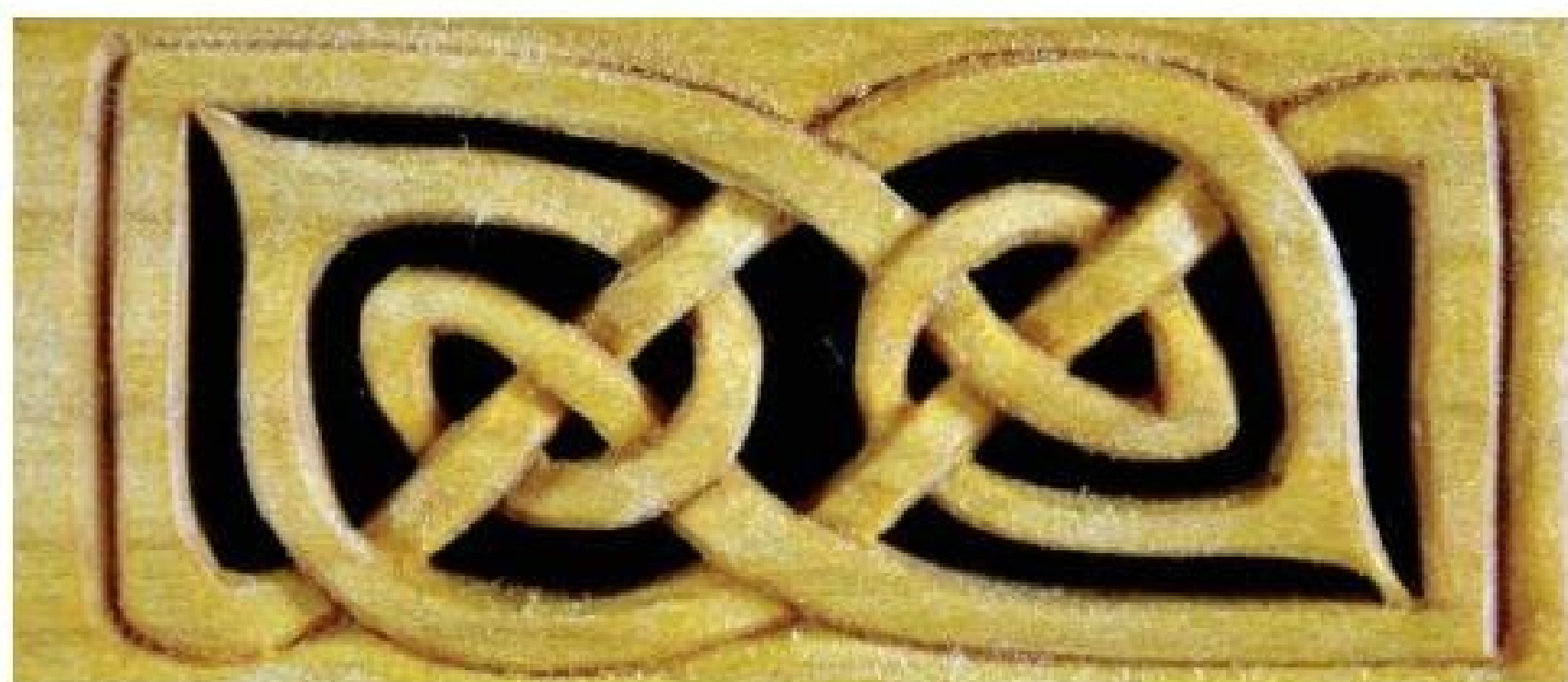


Traditionally a symbol of growth or fertility, foliage offers the carver an opportunity to symbolically represent time, places or numbers of people

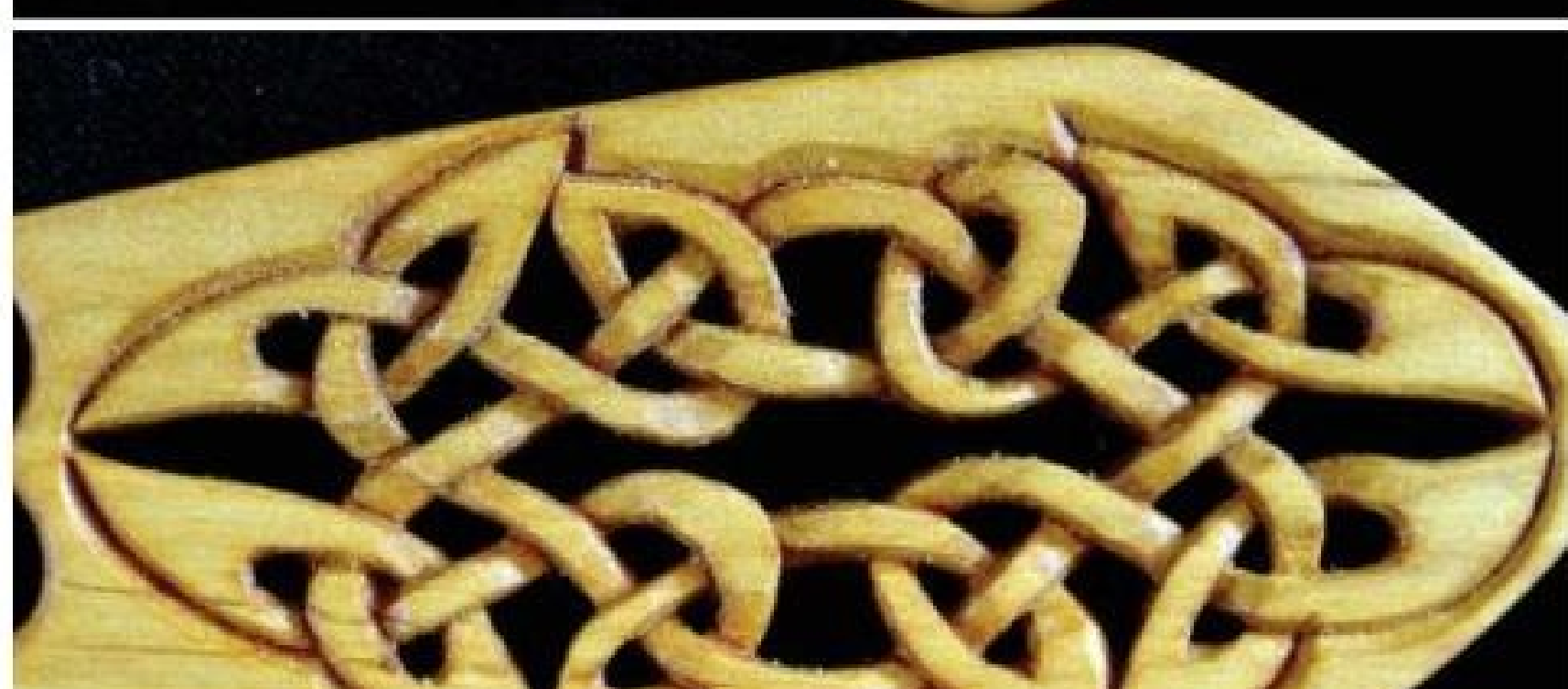
CELTIC KNOTWORK

Modern carvers have embraced the complexity and visual beauty of Celtic knots to represent the notion of eternal love (especially with closed knots that have no beginning or end). Often viewed as a traditional design feature of lovespoon carving, Celtic-style knotwork was simply not undertaken until the post-war era. The difficulty of drawing them out,

combined with the technical skill and equipment needed to render them, meant that they were not something that was carved in the old days. The timeless quality of Celtic art enables it to seem a very conceivable form for lovespoon design and is probably a major reason it is so popular today among both carvers and those who give and receive lovespoons.



Whether a simple closed knot or a complex tree of life design, Celtic knotwork adds sophistication, complexity and elegance to a design



CROSSES

The cross is another of those much-in-demand modern symbols, which is unknown on antique examples. Although it appears sporadically on European spoons, it is not seen on Welsh spoons from the historic period leading up to the 20th century. This is odd and a bit confusing given the power of the church at the time. Perhaps it was the rustic's way of

rebellling or perhaps it was simply because the spoons were all about love, desire and passion. Whatever the reason, the cross was not a symbol that traditionally held much sway. In our modern age, the cross has come to be a symbol of religious devotion, a symbol of marriage and (in its Celtic form) of pride.



Whether to represent religious devotion or Celtic pride, the cross is a popular symbol on contemporary lovespoons

SYMBOLS OF NATIONALISM

Symbols of nationalism were seldom considered in the old days. Modern carvers have embraced various national flowers, animals and objects to signify the recipients' national origins. The inclusion of daffodils for Wales, thistles for Scotland, Shamrocks for Ireland and Roses for England enable carvers to

make a nationalist statement in a beautiful way. The Welsh Dragon often appears in designs as does the American eagle and English lion. In an age when people are marrying across borders at an unprecedented rate, making use of these national symbols enables a carver to add a good deal of personality to a lovespoon design.



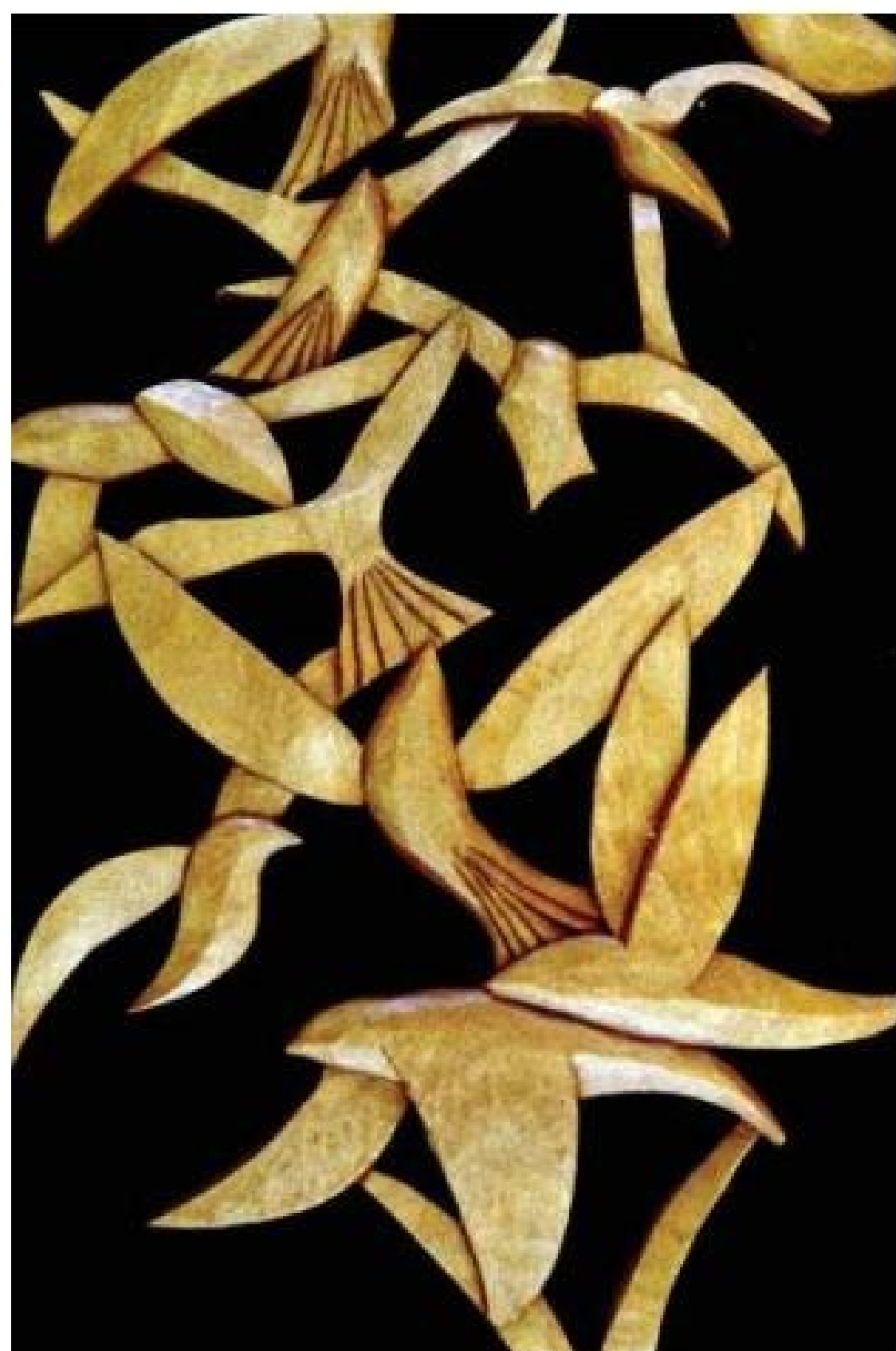
National flowers, animals and icons make perfect representations of national origin and pride



BIRDS

Birds, especially paired lovebirds have, over the years, made intermittent appearances on traditional spoons to represent love and bonding. Contemporary carvers make a good deal of use of paired birds to represent that same idea. As with foliage, the birds

utilised by modern carvers tend to be much more complex and realistic in form than in the old days. Better tools and techniques combined with access to a great variety of design styles enable current carvers to really maximise the appeal of this lovely symbol.



Love and bonding are represented by paired lovebirds



MISCELLANEOUS

Although commonly seen on modern spoons to represent good luck and good fortune, the horseshoe is another of those symbols unknown to tradition. As with crosses, it is a surprise not to see them historically, especially as most lovespoons were carved by rural folk. A horseshoe should always be carved with the open ends pointed upwards so the luck won't run out. Having seven nail holes is also considered fortuitous!

Similarly, the treble clef and music notes are popular new symbols that frequently appear on lovespoons carved for those of a musical inclination.



The horseshoe is a symbol of good luck in modern carvings



PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

A quick look through the so-called traditional lovespoons for sale on the internet will illustrate how the design of lovespoons has moved away from actual traditional design and has now become its own style. In the modern fashion, symbolic elements are often stacked one on top of another more in the manner of a tiny totem pole, rather than being placed in the style of a traditional lovespoon.



In this picture, you can see a typical modern 'traditional' design, which simply piles a number of symbols in a heap. It's a nice enough spoon, but it lacks cohesiveness and a feeling of unity. There's no sense that the spoon is a unit, more that it is a disjointed collection of random symbols.



In this spoon, that feeling of a pile is still there, but now some effort is being made to unify the design a bit. The cross acts as the stem, uniting the bowl to the handle and the pair of hearts offers symmetry and a fuller look to the design as it builds off the cross. The Celtic knotwork moulds into the hearts and culminates in a central crown, which both enables the spoon to be hung from the wall and repeats the point of the spoon's bowl. Perhaps not a masterpiece, but it is a distinct improvement on the previous spoon.



This spoon blends very traditional symbolic elements with some modern features important to the spoon's recipients. Here we see how a stack of elements can start to be combined to tell a bit of a story. The cats at the bottom support the fleur-de-lis with the traditional symbols filling negative space and lending structural support as the design is carved. The stars and the hearts celebrate an anniversary and are located at the top of the design where stars would logically appear. While simple, the design moves from 'the ground' where the cats stand to 'the sky' where the stars float. Nothing is placed randomly; the design has been purposefully created.

Finally, this very modern design makes use of design and engraved text to tell its story and to present it as much as a work of art as an object of craft. Throughout the design, a strong feeling of symmetry reinforces the idea of 'two as one'. From the embracing couple at the crown through the pairs of knots, 'roads', plants, and fish in the handle and on to the joined bowls at the bottom, the spoon is all about pairing. Each element contributes symbolically to the couple's story and each has relevance and meaning. The story may not be so clear to those not in the know, but to the recipients it is clear and unambiguous. For me, this is how modern symbolism can be used in a way that would have been completely foreign to the early carvers, yet is right in line with the tenets of the lovespoon tradition! Be bold and experimental with your designs, but keep in your mind that the spoon can tell a story and can have great meaning if the design is handled carefully and with thoughtful consideration! 

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Meet the puppetmaster

Anthony Bailey has a 'no strings' interview with marionette maker Tony Sinnett

My childhood experiences of puppetry are limited to very non-PC Punch & Judy shows and *Thunderbirds* and *Stingray* on the TV. These are just two types of marionette or puppetry performance, one non-realistic, the latter attempting to be very lifelike. Skilful yes, but the art is to give real character and life to an animated figure, without losing the rawness of working in wood. That is where Tony Sinnett's love of carving really lies; a much more chip carved approach, using minimal carving tools to create characters that have expression even before they start moving. His website really piqued my interest, so I had to find out more about his work.

Does not compute

As youngsters Tony and his older brother used to play around at computer programming using an old Apple II, which his father, who used to work in IT, brought home. After finishing his A levels in Computer Science, Art & Design and Craft/Design/Technology he

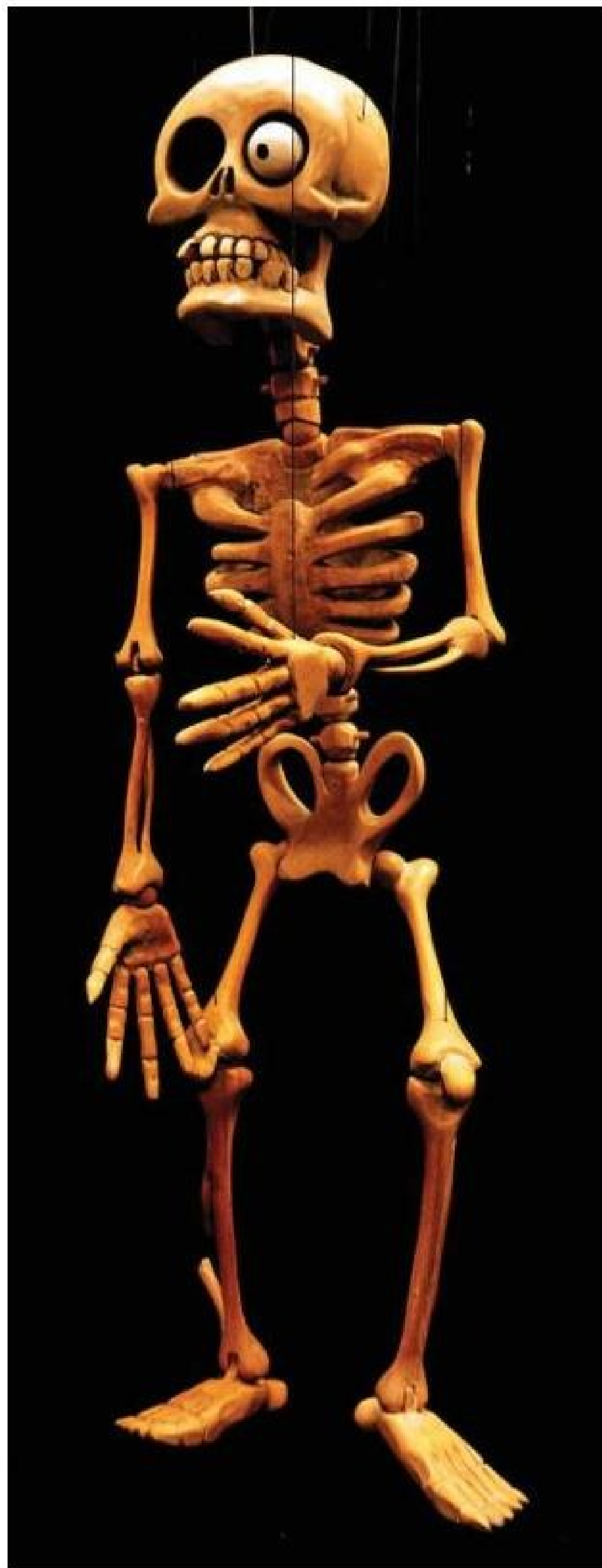


PHOTOGRAPHS ON THIS PAGE BY TONY SINNETT

Another carved cowboy puppet in progress, this time with blinking eyes. The puppet now lives in Texas



'Smokey' - a fully carved marionette standing 23 inches tall, he can draw and holster his gun



A 'trick' skeleton puppet. The eyeball falls out and can be put back in



A pair of more 'realistic' looking marionettes made for a tv advert

applied to Oxford Brookes University to study for a computer science degree. That however was not to be when the acceptance letter didn't arrive and by the time he found out he had a place he had started working.

A pipe dream

I'm always a little in awe of any craftsman or artist who has a skill way beyond my own, so it was reassuring to find that Tony had started in another trade entirely many years ago, as an apprentice building church organ pipes for about eighteen months. Visiting churches as part of his job inspired Tony, being able to see and appreciate fine ecclesiastical carving work. It obviously sowed a seed in his mind.

Tony applied to the London City & Guilds School of Arts for a degree course in wood and stone carving and painting, but the local council, who at that time provided funding, were not prepared to support him in his application because they felt his employment prospects in carving were too limited. He did, however, do a

short course with Dick Onians who gave him some very useful advice and help. He is therefore largely self-taught.

Rocking on

Frustrated by not being able to learn carving at an academic institution he decided to go self-employed as a cabinetmaker, but was soon commissioned by a friend to make a rocking horse for his daughter. This became a business in its own right, but with the rise of the internet and competition from retired hobbyists it eventually became less and less viable. As Tony says, "You don't get repeat commissions for rocking horses, people only want one of them." He went on, "they weren't particularly satisfying to make because they are just a series of blocks glued together and shaped, not the most difficult thing to do; I wanted more of a challenge." Unfortunately, during this period the foot and mouth epidemic struck and Tony couldn't access his workshop, which was on a farm at Scaynes Hill in West Sussex. It was a difficult period financially for him as a result of the impact of the disease.

A lifelong interest

The fascination with playing and making puppets went back to childhood, but Tony finally started making puppets as a business in the early 2000s. At the time there still wasn't a developed internet and sales were mainly made at craft fairs – although interest in his work was quite variable and the cost of having a stand made it an expensive way to try and earn a living.

New opportunities

The arrival of the internet where anything could be 'googled' opened up a new avenue for selling his unique marionettes. This has resulted in a variety of orders for his character figures including work for advertising agencies, music labels, Glyndebourne Opera and the BBC, where lifelike puppets are frequently required. Two realistic puppets were featured in the Dick & Dom bungalow series in one episode, replacing the main live characters as they exit an elevator. A patron in the USA buys many of his marionettes to add to his vast collection, being a children's

doctor some of them are apparently used therapeutically in his work. Tony apologised for not having a current project underway, “I can’t make them quickly enough for my major American client,” he says. His marionettes sell far better in the USA, Australia, Japan and Singapore than here in the UK. “I prefer working for individual clients because while TV and advertising work is well paid; it is also very stressful. Sometimes it can be a very short production deadline, when my work needs care and concentration get it right. Even simple decisions on something like

eye colour for the head can get bogged down in the client’s corporate chain.”

Self-taught

Tony Sinnett has basically had to learn all his skills by experiment and experience and reading various books and magazines including our very own *Woodcarving*. He reckons he has spent about twenty years doing carving of one sort or another. He explained the different kinds of puppets – marionettes on strings, hand puppets, shadow puppets and tabletop puppets or ‘bunraku’ on rods.

Marionettes, he explains are difficult to move realistically but with skill, the control (the wooden device the strings are attached to), can be used to make marionettes do all kinds of things apart from just limb movements. He freely admits he is still learning and wants develop his skills even further. He has a stock of large lime boards sourced from a timberyard in Oswestry, Shropshire, and reckons there is enough keep him going for years – because the puppets he creates are rarely bigger than two feet tall. His workshop, too is smaller.



Although Tony has a lot of larger tools, he finds the smaller Flexcut gouges and knives suit his style of carving more where small parts have to often be held in the hand and worked on



Shaping a small bigfoot head. The mouth is carved seperately so it can open and close

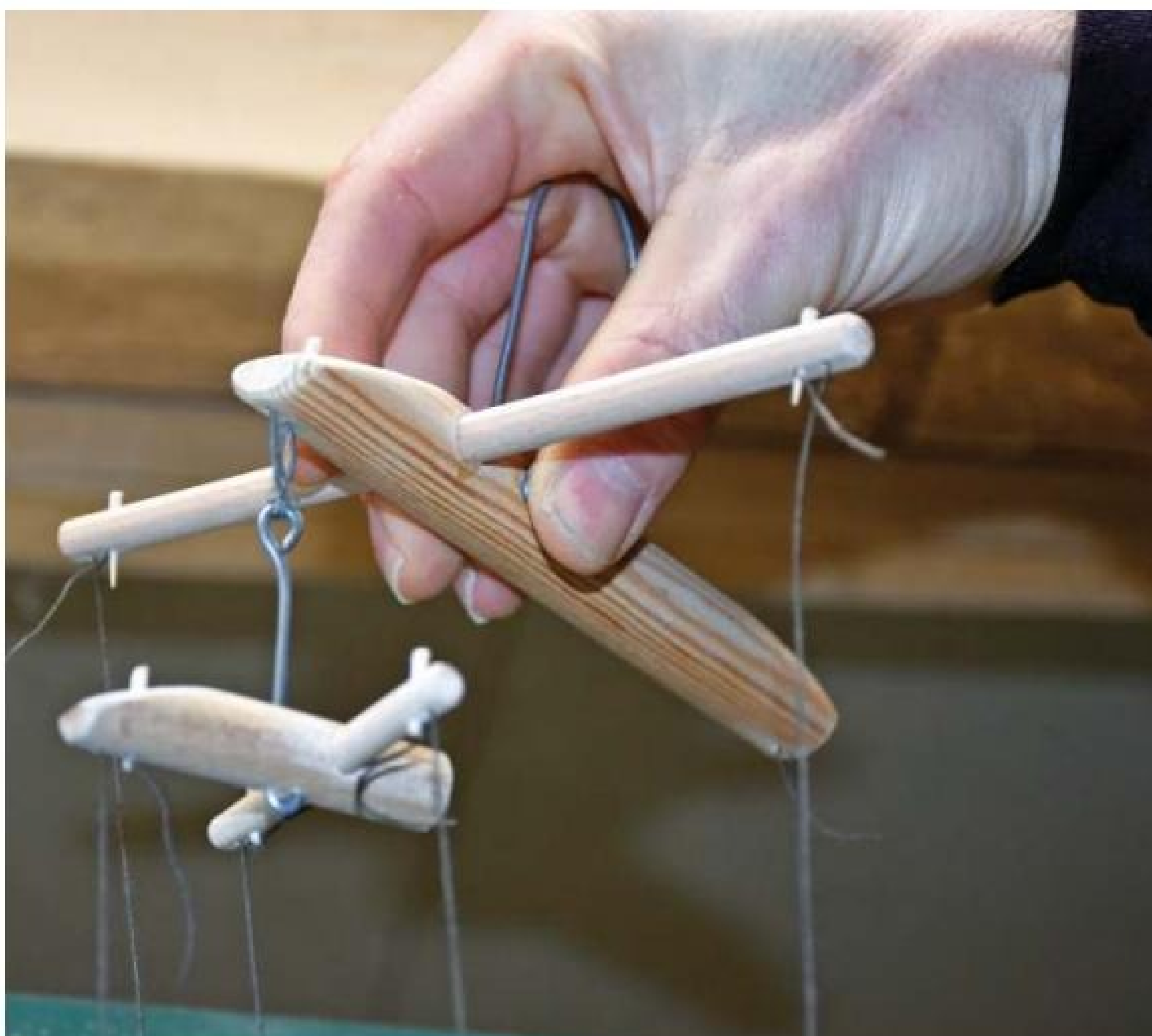


Tony often uses knives to shape parts

PHOTOGRAPHS ON THIS PAGE BY ANTHONY BAILEY



Tony now works in a much smaller workshop than when he was making furniture



A small controller for a bird marionette

Question and Answer

What was the first piece that you made?

"I think it must have been a buzzard; it is hard to remember, it was such a long time ago."

What are your influences?

"As a child I was fascinated by Ray Harryhausen stop motion animation in films like *Jason and the Argonauts*. Even today I love creating skeletons and experimenting with stop-motion video."

"I admire the work of many of the Czech carvers such as Jakub Fiala, Ludek Burian, Vaclav Krcal Lenka Pavlickova, Antonin Muller and Ales Mertl. I have been lucky enough to meet many of them over the years and own some of their puppets in my personal collection."

What are you biggest mistakes and challenges in the workshop?

"I've made loads of little ones, but if something isn't working I just stop and start all over again. I find trying to read the grain in lime, which use for all my carving work is often difficult and when you are carving slender parts its easy to break them."

What is the best piece of advice you have been given?

"Keep practising and keep your tools sharp."

What is your favourite type of woodcarving?

"I prefer to see the toolmarks as with chip carving – faceted."

What are the biggest differences in carving since you first started?

"It is a move towards being hyper-realistic. I admire people like Ian Norbury but have no desire to achieve that level of finish."

What is your favourite piece of equipment?

"I have a medium size Record bandsaw, which is a bit big for my latest smaller workshop and an Axminster scrollsaw, both essential for initial shaping."

What would you like to happen in the future?

"I want to move more towards making films and also have more control over my work."

What are your likes and dislikes in woodcarving?

I think we've covered that one – hyper-realism. I can get more expression and feeling into a face or body than is possible with smooth surfaces."

What helpful advice do you have for other carvers?

"Start with something that isn't complicated."

A top hint or tip?

"I use a limited set of short Flexcut tools and a leather safety glove. I need to keep the block in my hand a lot of the time and i find longer carving tools are not ideal, although I own quite a few."

Tony Sinnett, thank you for taking the time to explain your skills and influences which lead you to produce such amazing creations!

Visit: www.tonysinnett.com

Sharpening – theory

Nic Westermann demystifies sharpening carving knives and chisels

A few years back the (now ex) MP Ann Widdecombe appeared on a TV series having lost a large amount of weight. Sensing blood or money in the water, publishing houses circled trying to persuade her to write a book on her dieting secrets. In typical style she said that it would be pointless as the book would contain only two instructions: 'Eat less, exercise more.'

Sharpening is the same. There is a massive amount of seemingly conflicting literature on the subject but the basic principles are very simple and can be distilled to just two, very simple points.

Firstly, you need to cut the bevels to the right basic shape, the form of these

bevels being dependent on the tool. This is best done using a coarse grit, especially if reshaping of the bevel form is needed.

Secondly, you need to refine the finish of these bevels to produce two smooth planes meeting, producing the final cutting edge.

That's it; it really is that simple, but like dieting it can also be hard to accomplish these tasks.

In the following articles in this series we will be looking at specific tools and applying these two rules to sharpen them efficiently; but first, let's look at these two points a little closer.

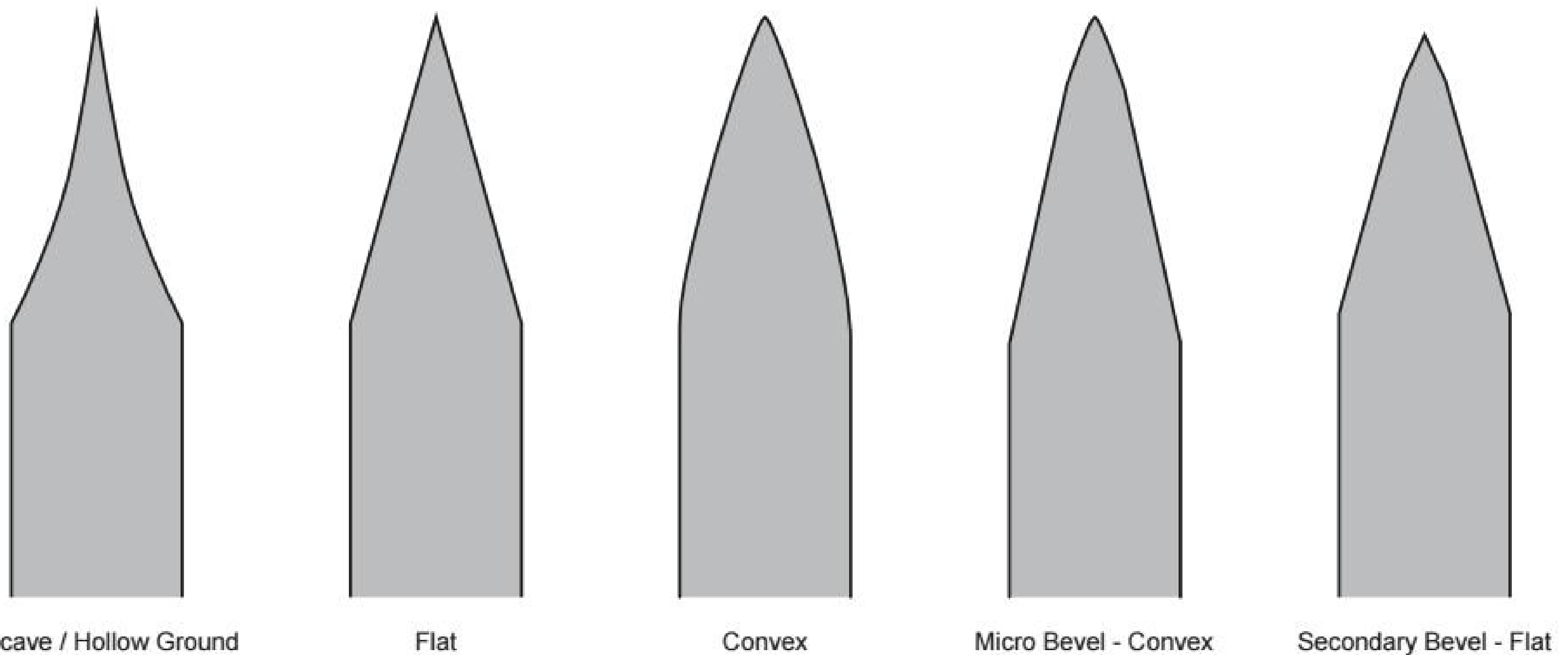
PHOTOGRAPHS BY NICK WESTERMANN

Types of bevels

The form – what shape should the bevel take?

There are many choices, but the most common symmetrical forms are shown in the drawings, Fig 1, below.

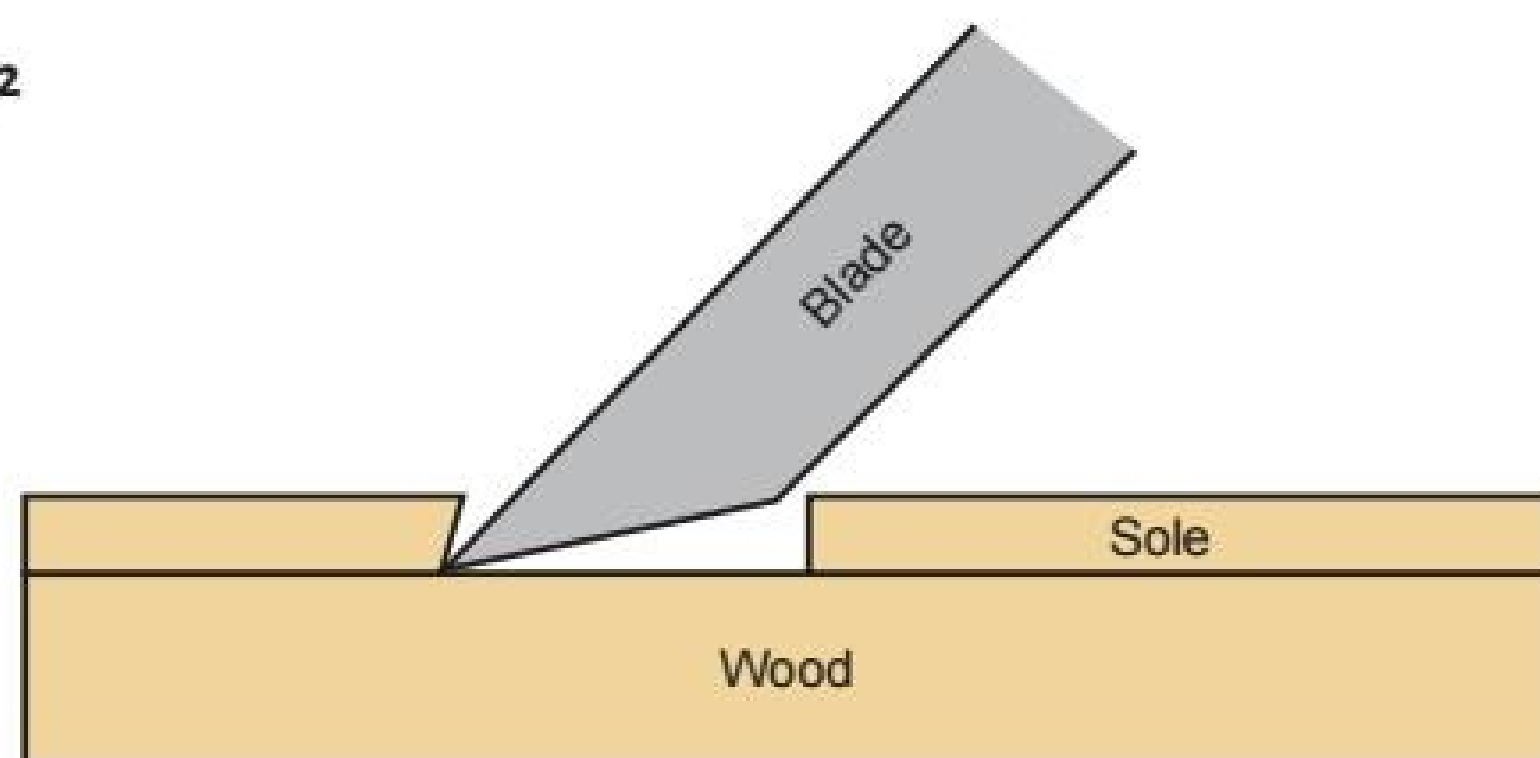
Fig 1



Understanding how and why a blade cuts also helps you decide what form is most appropriate, so here is a little bit of cutting theory:

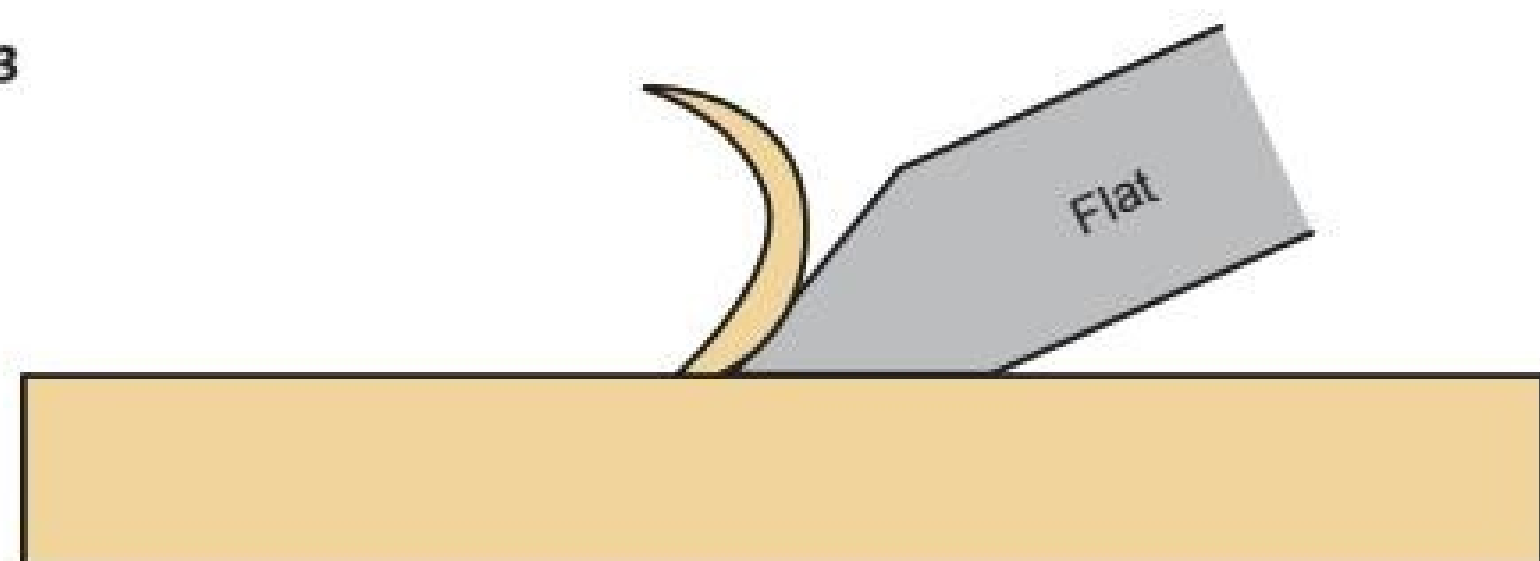
- When a hand plane cuts, the blade is held at the correct angle by the sole gliding over the wood, so the bevel does not need to engage and clearance can be left. See drawing, Fig 2, below.
- A carving tool does not have the luxury of this built-in support. Knives especially derive support from the bevel engaging and guiding the cut, thus the bevel must match, or more accurately mirror the cut being taken. See drawings, Fig 3, below.

Fig 2

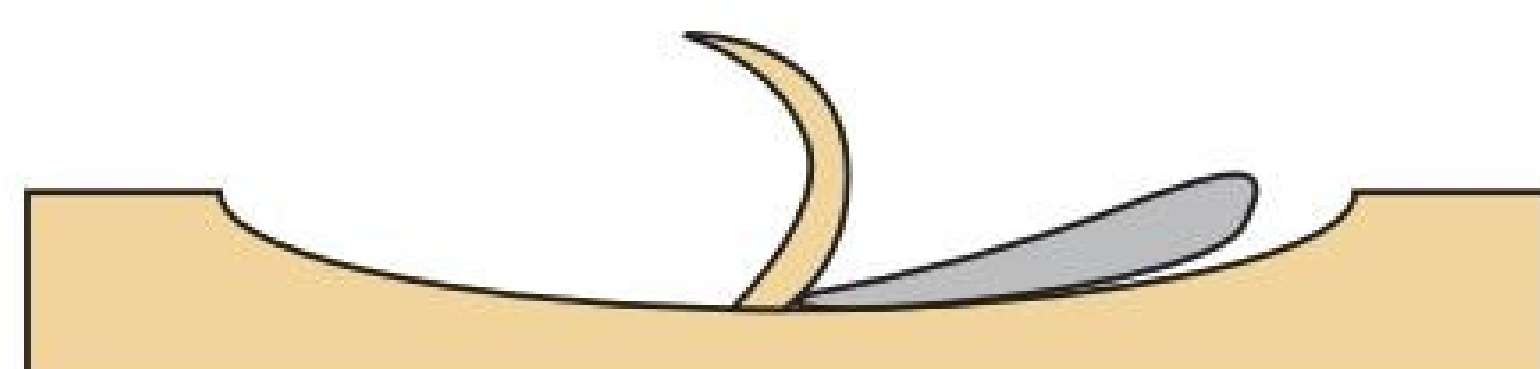


No bevel contact, support provided by the sole

Fig 3



Convex for concave surfaces
ie. bowl, spoon etc



- So, we see that bevels can be flat or convex to match the cut. They can even be hollow ground (concave); however, these are rarely truly hollow, but allow sharpening to be achieved much more easily. I actually view this as a type of inbuilt jig. See drawing, Fig 4, below.

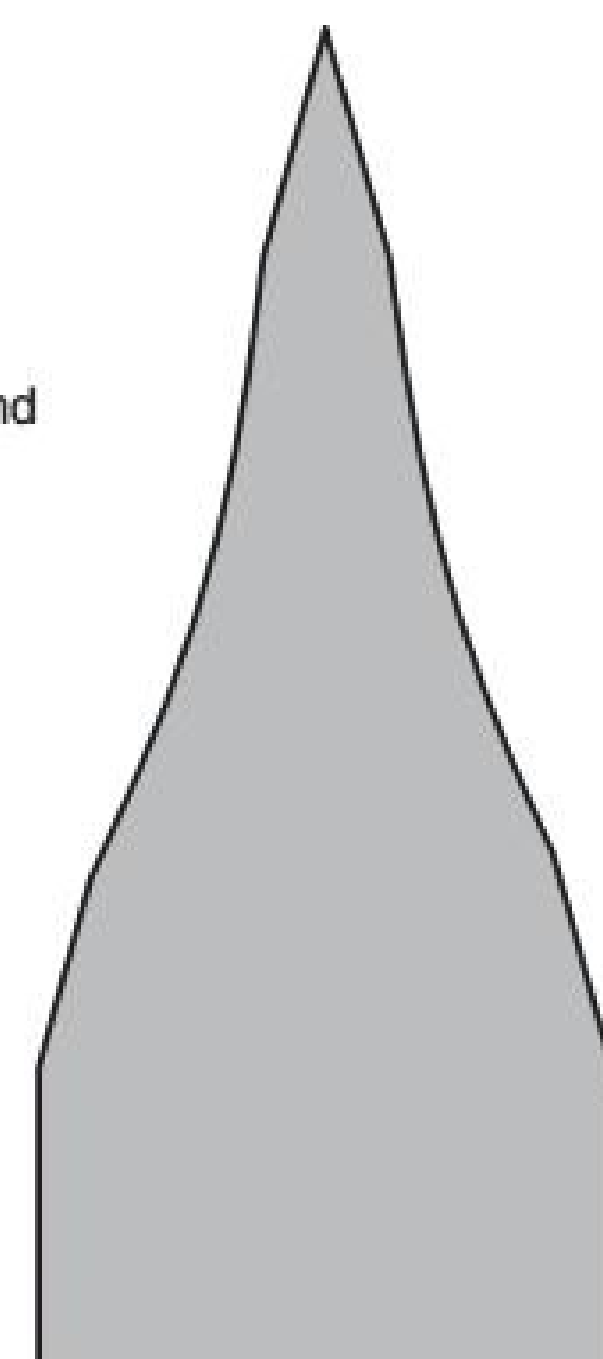
Making sharpening easier and more efficient can only be a good thing. Few people, if any, look forward to sharpening. As long as it is done well, our view is that it should be achieved as quickly and easily as possible. Carvers hone their skills by spending time carving, not sharpening.

Once we know the basic form of the bevel, the included angle needs to be looked at. There is no point spending ages achieving a hair-splitting edge ground to 20° on a chisel that will be driven into centuries-old oak burr. The included angle of the bevel needs to match the wood being cut and the force that will be used on it. A knife used to gently undercut primary feathers on a bird's wing will be better served with a more acute bevel angle than a knife used for roughing out the shape even on the same piece of wood. Generally though, 20–30° will cover the vast majority of your carving needs.

There is also the issue of the quality of the steel the edge is made from. Even if the angles are technically correct, if the edge keeps rolling or chipping, the only option is to increase the edge angle. This can be done by putting a micro or secondary bevel on the edge in some circumstances.

Fig 4

Hollow grind
with flats



Refining the edge

Once we have these bevels set to the correct form the edge will, in close-up, look like a saw tooth and those tips will quickly blunt. A finer finish will give more TPI to our saw and will cut for longer.

To work down through the grits you only need to remove steel to the depth of the scratches left by the last grit – a tiny amount of steel as long as you are replicating the same angles. If you are cutting subtly new bevel angles with each progressively finer grit, it can take ages. This is why jigs to help maintain constant angles help so much. Without this, you will often end up with a bevel consisting of multiple facets and scratches left from the coarser grits that you were unable to remove with the finer finishing grits.

The jump down to finer grits can be quite dramatic and is largely dependent on the width of the bevel being cut. A narrow bevel will consist of a small cross-section of steel and this will allow for much larger jumps in grit.

It is common to put a very narrow secondary bevel on a plane blade. This allows a jump from 1,000 grit to set the angle to an 8,000 grit water stone to put the final edge on, all achieved in a few seconds.

This is why hollow grinding, secondary bevels and micro bevels are so helpful and are often chosen when setting up the bevel form.

Micro bevels and secondary bevels also have the effect of increasing the bevel angle. This increases the strength and longevity of an edge, at some cost to clean cutting. In many instances bevel support is lost so use this option with care.

Then there is the issue of how far you take this process; how sharp does a tool really need to be?

Time spent

Hair splitting sharp can be really short lived even if you don't use the tool, the lightsabre pictured at the top of this article above actually blunted in the air – this blade would not perform the same feat when picked up a week later.

The time taken is worth considering. Good carvers look like they have really sharp tools, but it is technique, not perfect edges that count. Spend more time carving rather than sharpening; this how carvers improve.

Jigs are often looked down upon, but when appropriate, they will dramatically speed up your sharpening sequence, especially when working down through the grits and are not cheating – it just a sensible use of your time and something we actively encourage.

If you are one still one of those people that stubbornly says they enjoy sharpening, I will ask you to consider this: You have just sharpened your favourite tool,



A hollow ground knife with flats



Burr from a coarse stone



Close-up, wavy line behind the burr shows the toothy edge that needs refining

it is razor sharp and ready to go, but just as you prepare for the first cut it slips from your hand, clatters to the floor and is blunted – is this a good thing? 'For me certainly not, as a parallel

I enjoy carving but don't enjoy going straight through the bottom of the spoon bowl, it's not a chance to carve more, just wasted time, use yours wisely! ▀



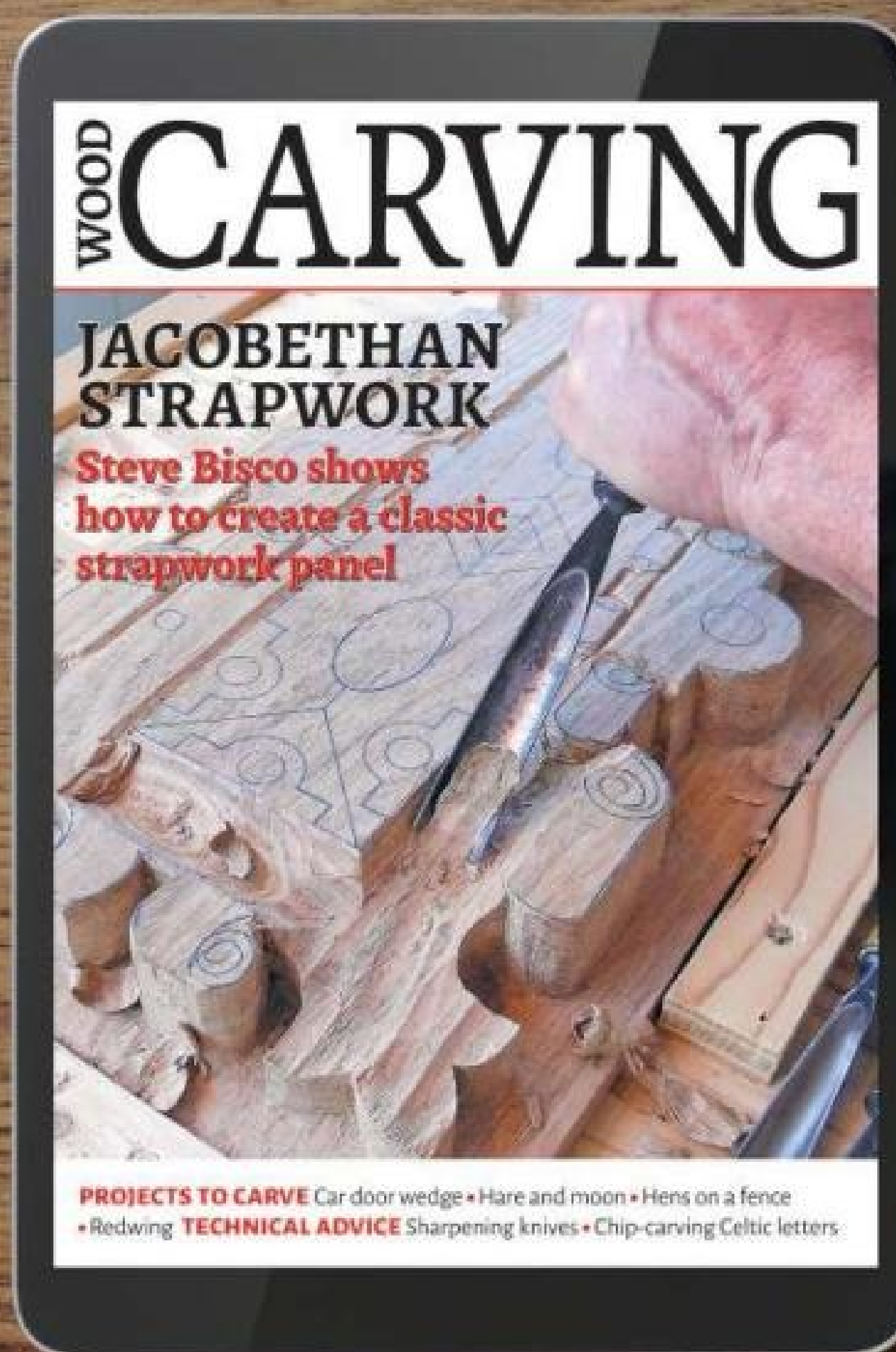
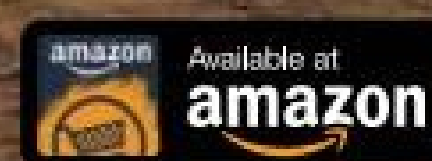
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This article is brought to you by the team at Hewn & Hone. The team comprises Nic Westermann, a blacksmith and creator of carving tools and sharpening accessories, Don Nalezty, an IT specialist and respected Kolroser and carver, Alex Yerks, an internationally renowned green woodworking teacher and kuksa carver and Adrian Lloyd, a UK-based full time craftsman, teacher and toolmaker.

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From the community

Here is a personal selection of websites and letters that caught the Editor's attention this month

Catch Me If You Can



I like a challenge! I also like dolphins, and have seen so many photos of them that I decided I must try to carve a pod leaping, apparently unattached, above the sea. My vision was that they would climb high from a wave on the right before curving forward and down to the left to skim the surface of the water, hopefully imparting a feeling of movement into the carving.

I bought a large piece of lime, and spent many hours researching how to achieve what appeared to be the impossible, and still end up with ten dolphins. Each was carefully undercut, taking care not to break a fin or tail, but leave just enough concealed wood to attach it to its neighbour. Most of this was carried out using just one tool, a cheap 12mm gouge bought

for me when I first started carving. Three coats of finishing oil, followed by a coat of beeswax, finished the work. However, it still lacked that little touch of magic, until I inserted black beads in the eyes.

I took up woodcarving when I retired just four years ago, and in that time have become totally addicted.

Jim Ainsley

Dear Mark,

I am writing to ask about an issue we have at woodcarving workshop. Maybe you, or one of your readers can help us out with a proper solution to carving realistic movement in water? Not the horizontal solution of wavy horizontal lines, as this obviously implicates waves or movement in the sea, river or babbling brook. We need to suggest movement in water vertically, such as a waterfall or in our case, water dropping from stones from various levels in a river or brook. We have perused the web, but in most cases the 'falling' water is either coloured or even gilded to imply water. We are interested in a way without help of colouring and gilding.

Awaiting in anticipation,

*Kind regards, Ton van Horsen
The Netherlands*

Editor's reply: Thank you very much for the letter. You are not alone with having trouble with this subject matter. I must admit that I find it tricky too. I am liaising with some carvers regarding this and will commission an article on this subject to be included at a later date.

It is interesting that we all have problems with various aspects of carving and I would like to hear from other carvers about the carving problems they have. As a result of that feedback I will generate specific articles and weave in help and solutions in relevant articles in future issues of this magazine.

Mark



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF SHUTTERSTOCK

If you have something you want your fellow carvers to know, send in your letters and stories to Mark Baker at *Woodcarving*, 86 High Street, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 1XN or email markb@thegmcgroup.com

Starting carving



Oakmeads Carving Group in Burgess Hill

Mark

I was interested to read your editorial in the recent *Woodcarving* magazine, and thought I'd offer a quick response:

Starting to carve without some assistance must be difficult. I am lucky belonging to a self-help group who freely assist each other. When talking with a prospective member recently I described the group as a 'resource' as we have tools donated from 'retired' members and our fellow carvers have a wealth of knowledge between them. There's usually someone who will offer to bandsaw out a blank for a beginner and help them start out. I encourage new carvers to start with a project that interests them. Most ideas can be tailored to the ability of the carver somehow, and we have had a number of members who

started with a more challenging project than you would have thought sensible, but with the assistance of their new friends, have completed it and are now hooked.

My only disappointment is when a new carver turned up with one of those very cheap sets of carving tools. They would take ages to get to a useable condition, and then wouldn't be worth it as the steel and tool shapes are unsuitable. The bit I hate is having to gently explain that they are going to make life more difficult than necessary, and may even put them off. Handing them an appropriate tool usually makes the point. We then try to help the beginners acquire some more appropriate tools.

I am also surprised how few carvers, who typically carve with gouges, also

use a knife. I have several knives and use them habitually alongside my gouges – I wouldn't be without them as they enable access to areas difficult to tool with gouges, and provide a quicker or better finish.

When my wife started carving she quickly realised the benefit of a small model/ornament that she could see from any direction she needed for the reference necessary to inform her next move on her project.

The common theme here is how much faster you progress with the freely given assistance of others. I highly recommend starting with a course for instruction and/or the support of a club or an experienced carver.

Regards
Chris Grace

FROM THE FORUM

Here we share with you pieces that readers have posted on our *Woodcarving* forum.

If you are interested in the possibility of your piece appearing here, or would simply like feedback and advice on your work, visit www.woodworkersinstitute.com and click on the forum button.

www.woodworkersinstitute.com/forum/tis-the-season_topic22070.html

Peter in Welland posted: Singing Santa with lantern, Ex ZZ Top, 4in high. :)

Sammysam wrote: I like that, very nice. George

Dalboy commented: I like that Pete and the aged look is amazing. What did you use to give the paintwork that effect. Seeing this reminds me to go and finish my elf that I started ages ago.

Peter in Welland posted: I use acrylic craft paints from the local \$store. There's an 'antiquing Glaze' in the line up. But most good craft or paint stores will sell the same thing. Or you can buy a Minwax Antiquing glaze. Just smother the whole thing in the glaze and then before it dries wipe it all off with a dry soft cloth. If it's not what you had in mind you can adjust it with a damp brush to remove or add some more and repeat until you get exactly what you had in mind.

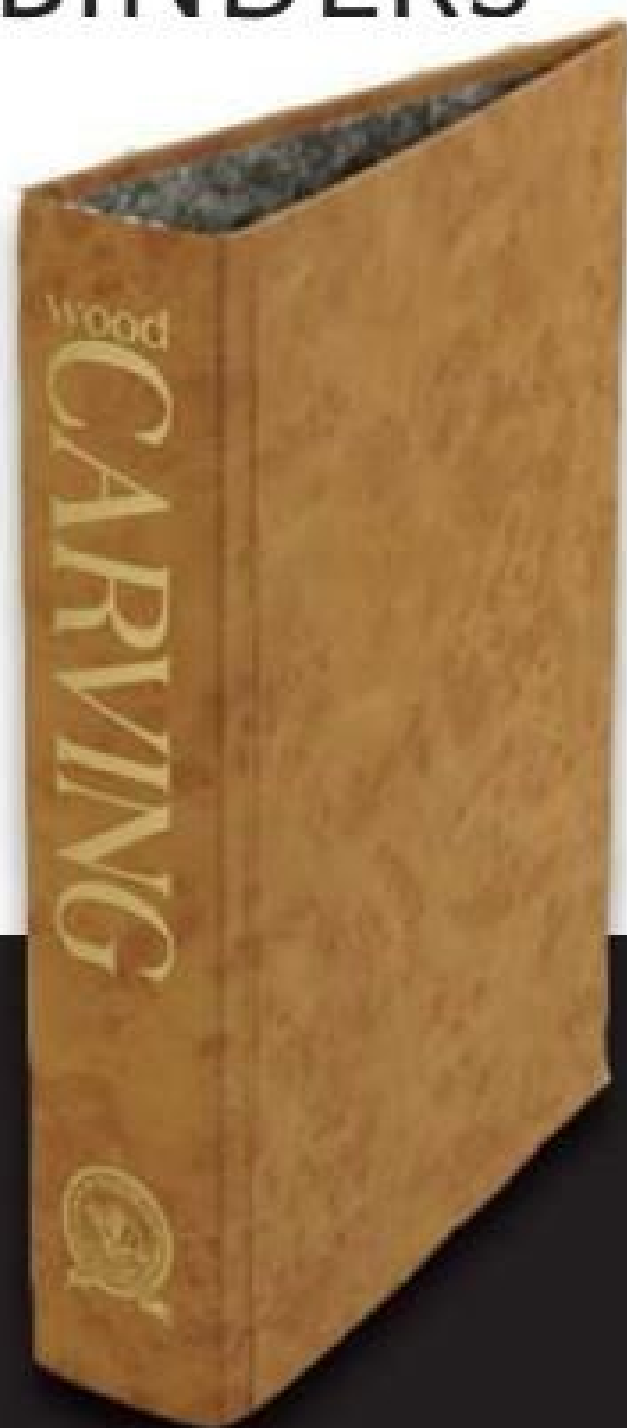
After the glaze has dried (about 30 minutes) I use Valspar spray bomb of matte acrylic lacquer to seal and protect.



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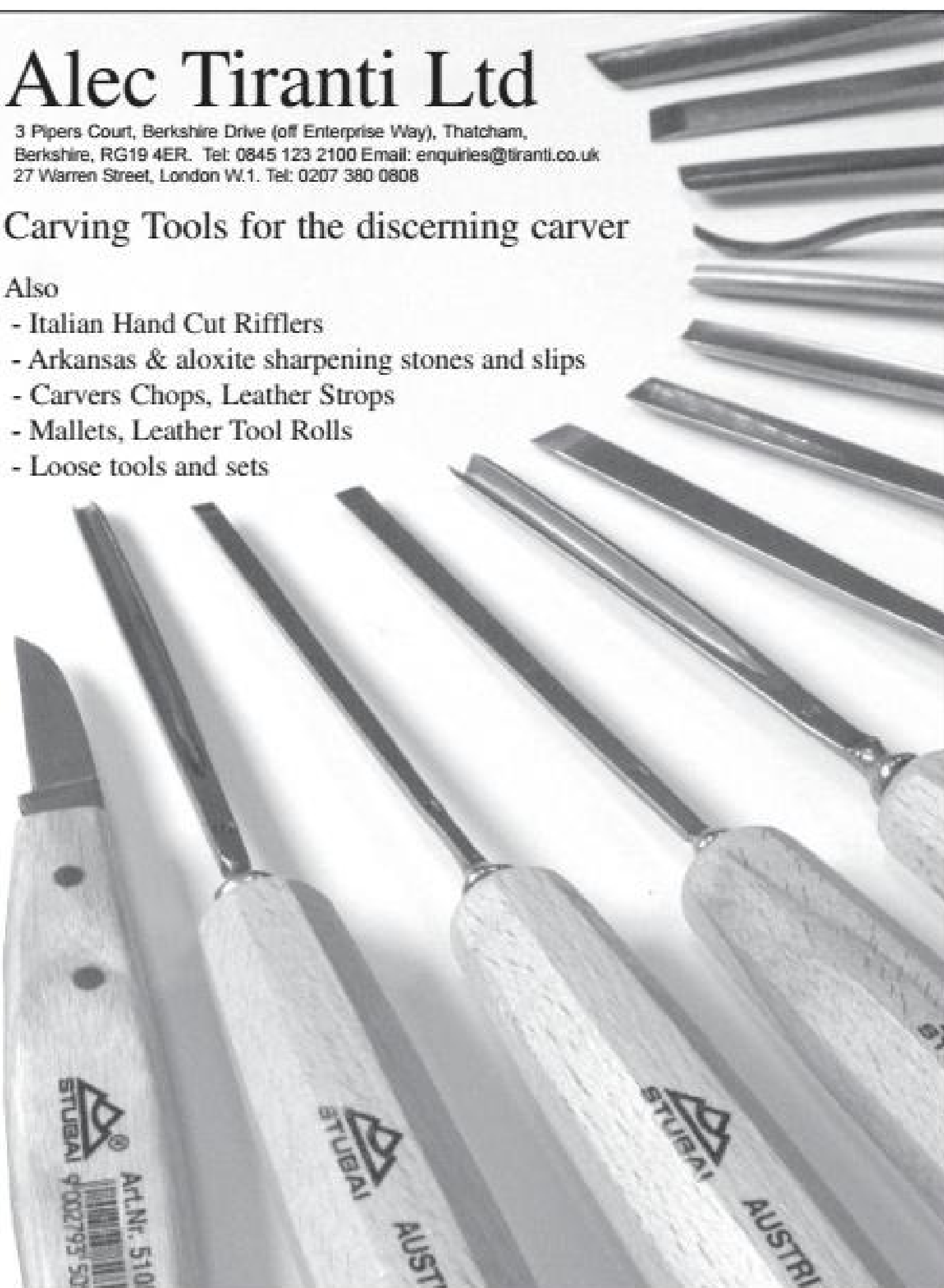
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The Celtic alphabet

Murray Taylor gives you a brief history of the origins of the Celtic alphabet; plus carving the letters and project ideas

The origins of what we now describe as the Celtic alphabet go back into the mists of time and was generally associated with the origins of Celtic manuscript art. St. Columba, who was born in Ireland around AD520, was possibly the most influential person in the history of Celtic art.

It would appear that following a dispute with the king of Ireland in AD563 regarding a copyright dispute he went to Iona off the west coast of Scotland where he set up a monastery. It is from here that his work spread far and wide.

During the period between the 6th and 8th centuries various manuscripts were produced, namely *The Book of Kells* and *The Book of Durrow*, both now held in Trinity College, Dublin, and the *Lindisfarne Gospels* held by the British Library in London, these manuscripts provide us with remarkable images of Celtic calligraphy and many excellent images of these works can be viewed on-line.

As the Roman Empire grew, so it influenced the cultural art of areas that it dominated. However in certain areas where the Romans did not rule completely, they managed to retain a lot of their original

art. In Wales, Scotland, Ireland, the Isle of Man, Cornwall and Brittany, for example,

they managed to keep their old traditions and continued to develop their art.



A page from St. Matthew's Gospel, *Book of Kells*



An initial letter from the *Book of Kells*

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE UK

The Celtic alphabet

The original Celtic alphabet was in lower case with upper-case letters being highly decorated and presented in an illuminated form. As the alphabet spread into what are known as the Celtic countries, it developed to suit the needs of each. In the Welsh language, for example, the letters J, K, Q, V, X and Z do not exist, but the modern Celtic alphabet is adapted to cover the generally accepted 26 letters in both upper and lower case.

If you examine the form of the letters in the upper and lower case it will be seen that in general they fall into two groups; those formed of circular shapes with straight elements and those that are almost completely circular.

The stages of carving the letters are completed using the basic chip-carving knives and small gouges to clean up the curved sections.

Unlike the carving of other fonts, I find it easier to carve the Celtic font by working each individual letter from left to right.



A decorative letter 'N'



A decorative letter with intertwined serpents



Hand-drawn lower-case alphabet



Hand-drawn upper-case alphabet



Examples of the stages of carving lower-case letters

CARVER'S NOTE: If you find it difficult to carve the letters neatly you could try a pair of magnifying glasses. The ones shown here have the additional refinement of an LED light. Glasses like these can easily be found online.



Magnifying glasses

Sampler board

As in all my articles, I do not give specific instructions for projects but rather put forward ideas that could be a project. In this case it is going to be the carving of the lower-case Celtic font as a sampler with a Celtic style border.



The sampler drawn onto a lime board



Piercing the corner motifs using a scrollsaw



If you don't have access to a scrollsaw, you could always use a good old-fashioned fretsaw at the kitchen table



Carving the lower-case sampler



The finished lower-case sampler



The upper-case Celtic font

Carving a house sign

The next idea for a project is a house sign. In this case it is a commonly seen sign in Wales, it is the word 'cartref', which means 'home', but you could of course choose any house name or make it a room sign, a welcome sign or anything that takes your fancy.

You may have noticed in the third picture of carving the lower-case sampler that the 'S' has been carved releasing just one chip. This is achieved by first cutting the two stop-cuts and then running the knife each side of the letter whilst swivelling the holding board.

I must admit that it does take a lot of practice, but the result is a really smooth letter which makes all the difference to the appearance of your work.

CARVER'S NOTE: If you are having trouble holding your work you might try a simple swivel board, holding your piece of work with stops and wedges



The 'cartref' sign drawn out and pierced



The sign completed, sealed and waxed



A love spoon with an old Welsh love poem in Celticscript, the meaning of which is:

'As long as the sea is salty and as long as my hair grows
As long as my heart beats within my breast
I will be faithful unto you'



Another love-spoon with Celtic lettering saying 'Cymru gwlad y gân' meaning 'Wales land of song'. The musical notes are the first line of the welsh national anthem.



The Claddagh wall plaque



The wall plaque in a frame

As I live in Wales I have concentrated so far on designs of a Welsh nature, so now let's look at a design idea from another Celtic country. In this idea for a project I am going incorporate the lettering into a Claddagh design.

In the design the heart represents love, the hands friendship and the crown loyalty. The original design is said to have originated in a small fishing village called Claddagh in Galway.

As a jeweller I was called upon many times to make Claddagh rings and pendants, but in this example, it is a wall plaque. The hands of the Claddagh extend to join up in the knot and support the central heart. I have kept the carving down to a minimum so that it is

a good exercise for beginners, but this could easily be changed to suit different skill levels

My project ideas are open ended and designed to give food for thought upon which you can develop your own ideas and designs, for example, the simple wall plaque could be elevated by simply putting it on a backing board and framing.

Some cup hooks at the bottom of the frame would give you a key-hanger or you could suspend a notepad. It is easy to see how these simple ideas can lead you onto more ambitious projects. So, I hope this article will serve to activate your creativity.

At the end of my last article I said that I would show you another way of carving

letters, so this time let's take a look at carving below the surface of the wood. This is known as 'intaglio' work and it opens up a new dimension to our lettering. First, the letters are drawn onto the wood as shown.



The letters drawn on to the wood



Cutting down to the baseline with a knife



Using a very shallow gouge to start removing waste



Using a dog-leg chisel to finish the letter



The finished name

The outline of each letter is cut down to near the lower level, taking care not to over-cut into what will eventually be the surface level. When this has been done around the whole letter you can start to carve down with a shallow gouge of suitable width, being careful not to chip the surface level. When nearly at the required depth go around the outline with a knife once more. Then finish the 'bottom' of the letter with a dog-leg chisel, but be careful not to let the corners of the chisel dig in. In this example I have carved the Welsh name 'Cerys', which could be used as a name plate for a door, on a trinket-box lid or on a slide for a pencil box.

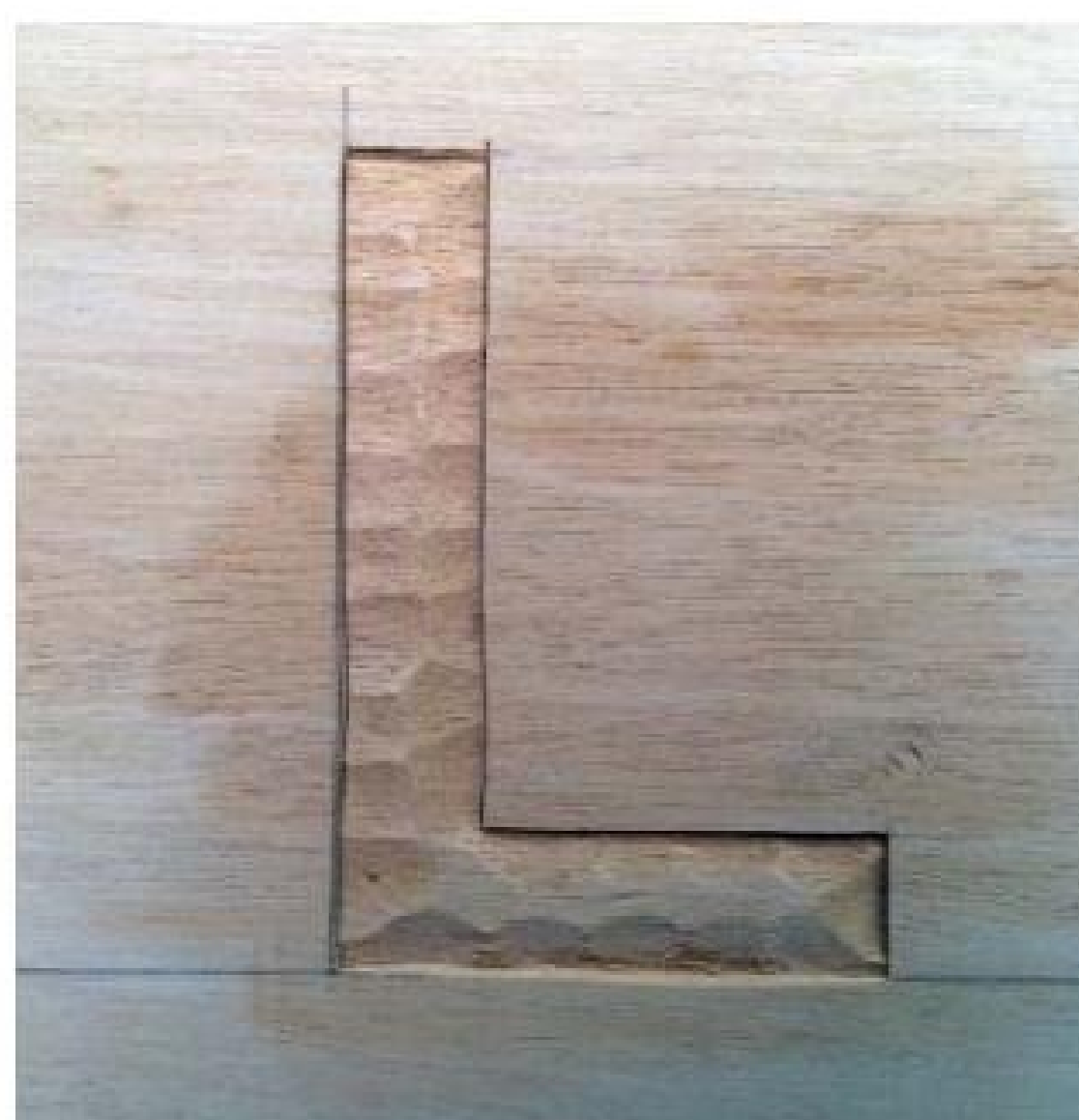
The letters I have carved in this example are 30mm high but you could of course, use this method for much larger work. If you do decide to carve larger letters, and especially if you want to use harder woods, you will need to cut down with a chisel and mallet as shown.

The rest of the process is just the same as with the smaller letters, but using gouges of a suitable size. You could enhance this style of lettering by texturing the lower level with a punch or perhaps painting.

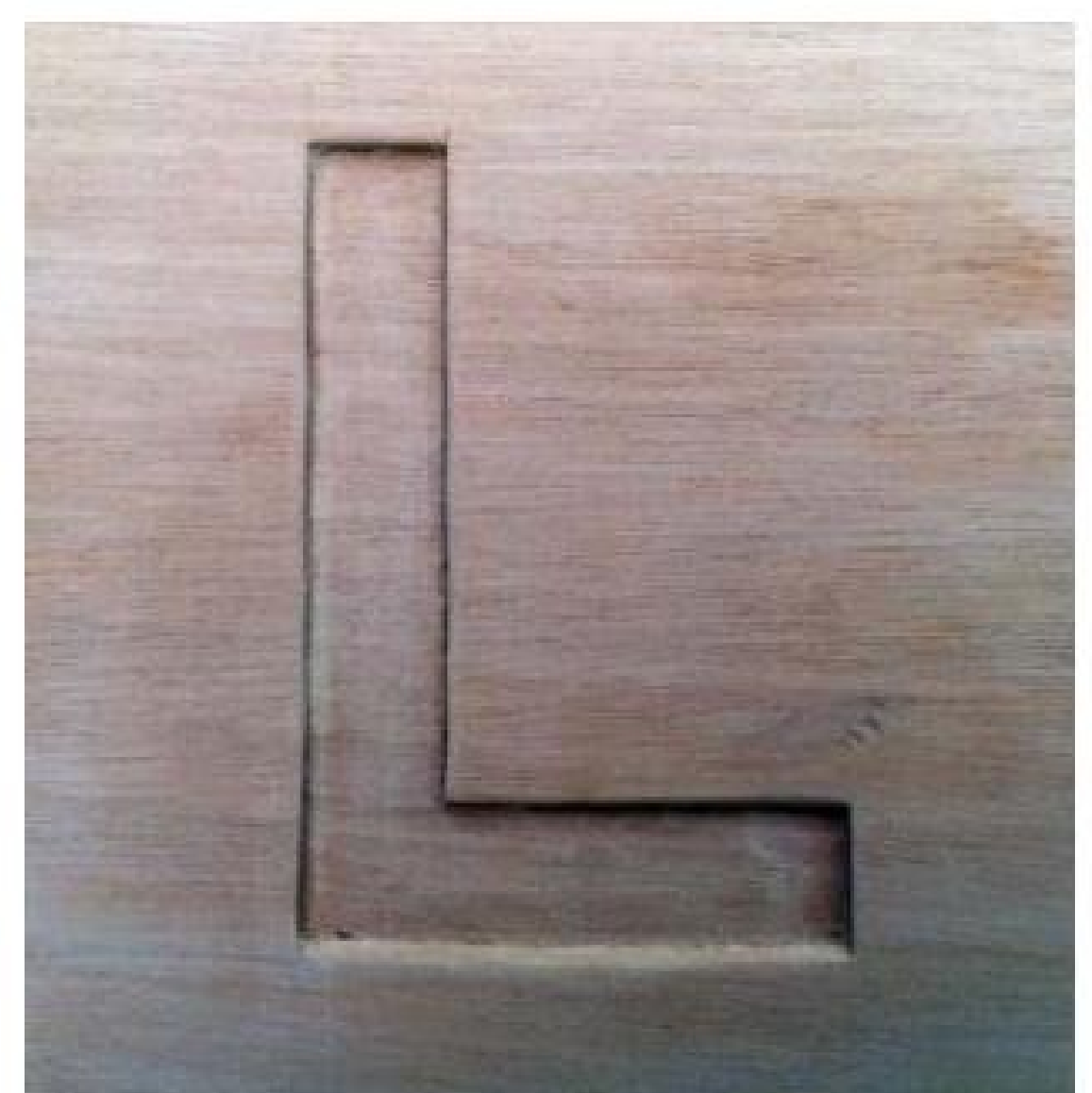
Try to develop your own ideas and techniques and remember not to carve when you are tired. Keep your tools sharp and 'practice, practice, practice'. ▶



Cutting down with a chisel



The roughing-out stage



The finished letter at approximately 100mm high

NEXT MONTH I will be looking at some Art Nouveau fonts and the design of monograms and cyphers.

Our contributors



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A step by step guide

By John Roberts

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Dog's-head market stick

In this extract from *Stickmaking Handbook* Andrew Jones & Clive George carve a dog's head

Acquiring the wood

There are many woods which are suitable for carving, some more exotic and, therefore, more expensive than others. Good timber merchants should have a reasonable variety, but it is likely that you will have to purchase a decent-size block in order to extract the much smaller piece you require. Do not be tempted into paying too much for your first attempt at carving.

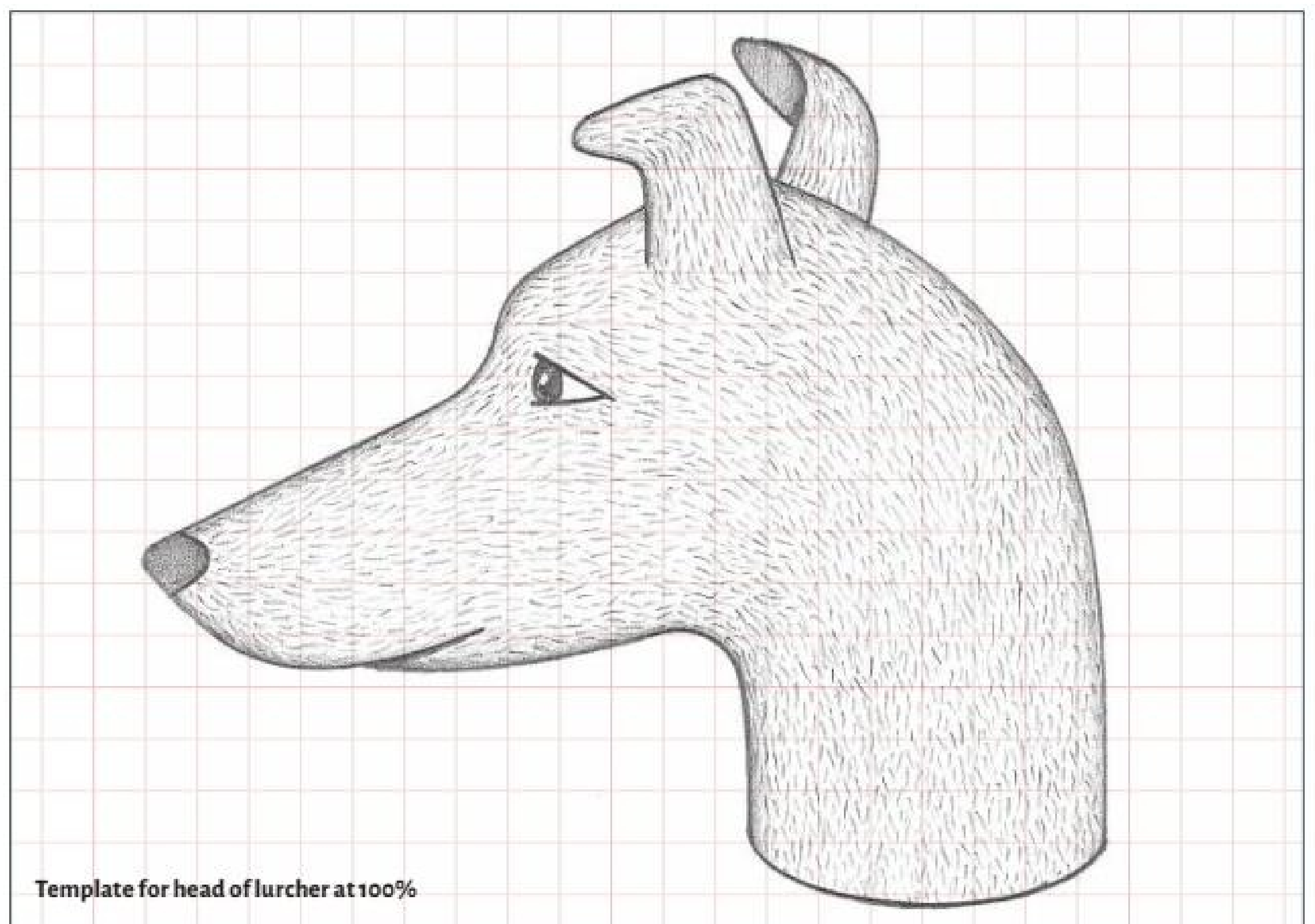
It is possible, of course, to obtain wood from other sources. Whenever trees are being felled or branches cut back, there are opportunities to acquire good-quality wood in usable quantities at a reasonable, if any, cost. The only problem, apart from transportation, is that freshly cut wood has to be properly seasoned before it can be worked and this calls for a degree of patience. While it is perfectly possible to carve handles from most woods, when it comes to finely detailed carvings, such as dogs' or birds' heads, many woods are quite unsuitable, particularly for the beginner. Woods for carving must be clean and close-grained, free of knots and with no evident flaws – shakes (splits) – other than surface blemishes. I prefer them to be light in colour if they are to be painted. I have used sycamore, elm, beech and ash to good effect, but my favourite for carving handles is lime. This is a light-coloured wood with a close, even grain, which carves easily and is generally available. I recommend it for subjects such as animals' and birds' heads.



Carved from lime and joined to shank with horn collar

Carving a dog's head

The dog's head we are going to make here is carved from a suitable block of wood, then shanked in the usual way. Having acquired your block of wood, check it carefully for any flaws and irregularities, and avoid these, if there are any, when you cut out the piece which you are going to carve. To produce a dog's head you will need to start with a block of about $4\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{1}{2}$ in (114 x 89 x 38mm), these dimensions being subject to the breed of dog you wish to reproduce. The dog chosen as a model for this exercise is a Lurcher. Officially a greyhound/collie cross, many mongrels are conveniently but inaccurately described as Lurchers. This works in our favour because, if we don't get the features absolutely right, we can attribute the variations to the pedigree of the model we were using rather than any failings in our skills as carvers.



Template for head of lurcher at 100%

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY CLIVE GEORGE



The outline is transferred to the wood, incorporating an area for a workable shank in the neck



The outline can be cut out roughly at first before carefully following the lines



Removing the waste from the sides of the head

Cutting out the blank

Our first step is to produce a line drawing of the head of our subject to the size we want the finished carving to be. Keep it simple because this is going to be used only as a preliminary cutting guide. You may find it helpful to make a reference model out of clay or Plasticine so that you can adjust the features – particularly the set of the ears – before you start to carve the wood.

Transfer the drawing you have made to the block of wood using carbon paper, ensuring that you have positioned it so you have an adequate fixing point for the shank in the area of the dog's neck. Cut around the outline with a coping saw, bow saw or electric bandsaw. At first, you may be happier making these cuts in two stages, the first following the outline only approximately to remove most of the waste, and the second following the pencil line more accurately. Make sure you don't cut into the outline; as always, it is easier to take material off than it is to replace it.

Having cut out the head, measure and mark a centreline, in pencil, right around the head and neck. This line will help you to keep the features in balance and in the correct position on either side of the dog's head as your carving progresses.

The next step is to remove any waste from both sides of the head. To do so, draw two pencil lines from the nose towards the forehead on the upper surface of the carving to provide a realistic plan view.

It is critical that these lines are equidistant from the centreline and mirror each other in order to maintain the balance of the head from now on. Set the head at a comfortable angle in the vice and carefully saw along these lines. Either side of the neck, take a line from the cheekbone to the bottom of the neck to give a realistic shape and remove these areas of waste as well. Use a coping saw to create a gap between the ears for the crown of the head, which should by now be starting to look like that of a dog.

Refining the shape

Start to carve by taking off the square edges left by the saw cuts with a sharp knife so that the flat surfaces start to merge into more rounded contours. I generally use a craft knife



Refer constantly to your model while working on the facial details

with a range of replaceable blades which have different-shaped cutting edges. To introduce detail, eye sockets, nose, cheekbones, mouth and ears should now be developed, with constant reference to your model. From now on it's a question of attempting to replicate nature, but on a smaller scale – no easy task.

Continue the shaping process with a series of small rasps or files until you are completely satisfied with the conformation and balance of the head, then remove any rasp marks with fine abrasive paper.

Fixing the eyes

Now is the time to set the eyes in place. While it is possible to make the eyes yourself, I recommend that you buy them ready-made. The size needed will be determined by the animal you are modelling; for this lurcher, $\frac{3}{16}$ in (4mm) eyes were used. Before gluing them in, try them in the sockets dry, or hold them in place with a small piece of clay or putty.



The blank with waste removed from the sides of the neck and head

This will provide the opportunity to make any necessary adjustments. It is vital that the eyes are set level with each other and are equidistant from the centre of the nose. If they are not, the finished product will be spoiled.

When you are happy, fix them in place with a small blob of clear liquid glue, making sure that they are both looking in the same direction – avoid a squint at all costs.

The head can be painted now or after some additional detail has been scribed in. You can buy scribes (used in metalwork to scratch marks in metal), but the arm of a broken compass or even a zin (51mm) masonry nail ground to a sharp point and stuck into a cork is equally effective. A modeller's scalpel is also useful. If you do decide to include further detail, be careful not to overdo it. The surface should not be scratched too deeply or too frequently – to do so risks removing small nicks from the surface and this will spoil the effect you are trying to achieve.

Painting

To paint the head, start with a coat of sanding sealer – this will provide good adhesion for the subsequent layers of paint. Use whatever medium you are comfortable with to apply the colours – acrylics, oils, watercolours or felt-tip pens can all be used effectively. Colour the lightest areas first, and build up the darker colours as you go, finishing with any areas which need highlighting, such as the line of the mouth or the inside of the ears.

Finishing

When you are satisfied with the effect you have produced, set the head aside to dry, then apply two coats of varnish for protection before fixing the shank in the usual way.

Because this head has been carved with the ears in a cocked position, it will not be comfortable to use as a handle for a walking stick. The shank, therefore, needs to be long enough for it to become a market stick which will be held, in use, around the area of the dog's neck. After shanking and fitting a ferrule, two additional coats of varnish should be applied to finish the stick.

Making ears from horn

One of the problems with any kind of carving is that the more detailed it is, the more vulnerable it becomes. This is especially so with sticks intended for practical use as opposed to simply being hung on the wall for display. In this stick, it is evident that the cocked ears, if they are to be realistic, are quite thin and therefore susceptible to



Ensure that the eyes are both facing the same direction when you fix them in position

damage at the point where they bend. If they are damaged and you need to replace them – or, indeed, if you wish to prevent such a risk in the first place – the ears can be fashioned from a thin slice of horn and glued in position.

While some purists might shudder at the thought, I see nothing wrong with such a practice: it will preclude entry in an 'all wood' class at a show, but so what? If you wish to try this method, or need to effect a repair, cut a flat piece of horn to shape and size, but make it $\frac{1}{4}$ in (6mm) longer than required at the end where it will join the head. Clamp it lightly in a vice, heat with a hot-air gun and, while hot, use long-nosed pliers to



A textured effect resembling dog hair can be created with careful scribing

bend it into the desired shape. Position this ear on the head and mark around the base with a pencil. Cut a $\frac{1}{4}$ in (6mm) deep slot to accommodate the ear, and adjust for fit.

Drill a hole in the base of the ear to take a $\frac{3}{4}$ in (19mm) panel pin, with the head nipped off, then drill a corresponding hole in the slot in the head. The pin will act as a reinforcing dowel, adding strength to the ear.

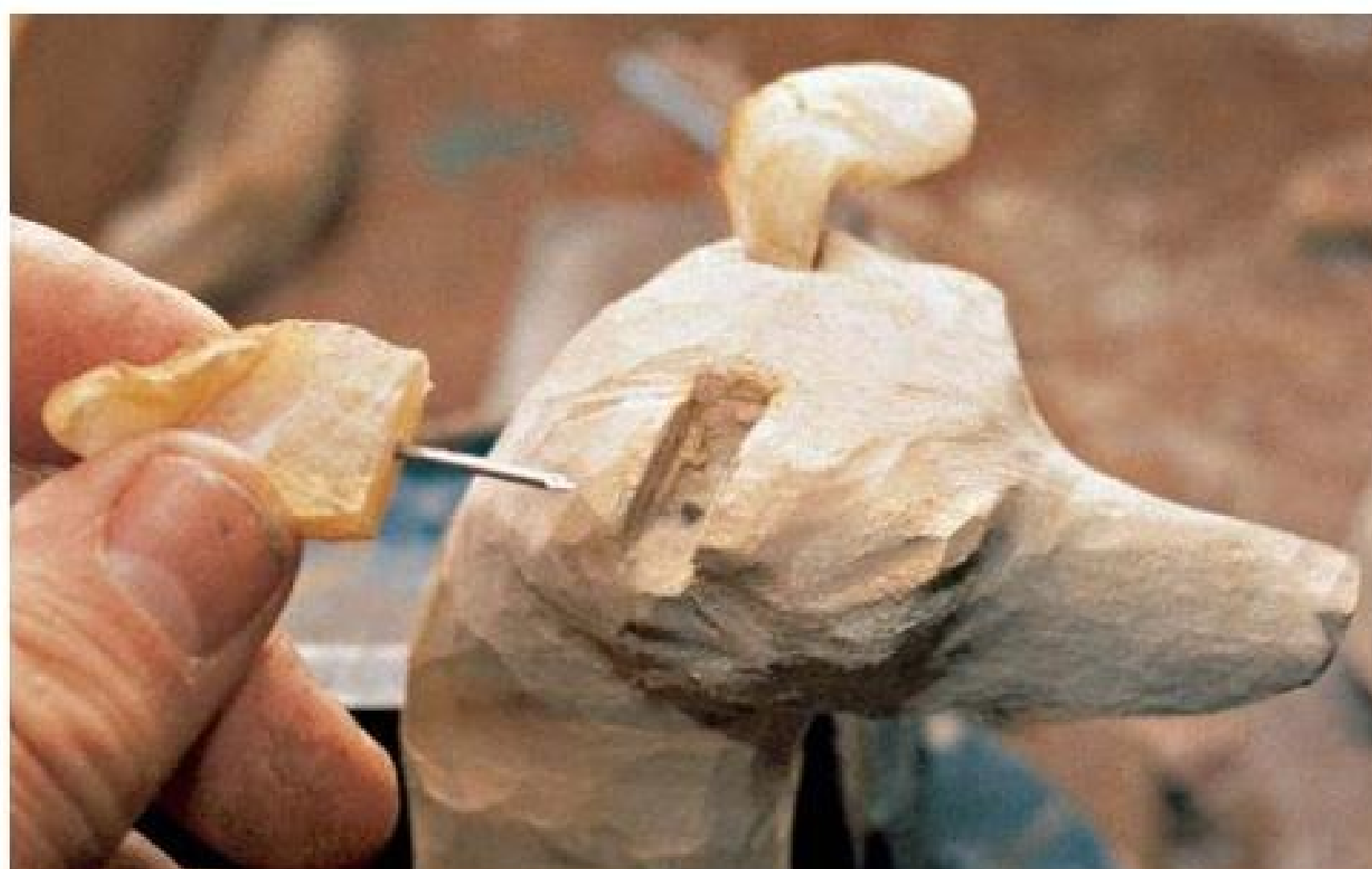
Use epoxy glue to fix the ear in place and fill any visible gaps with plastic filler. When set, sand down the filler and the area where the ears are joined to the head, and the head is ready for colouring. On completion, it is difficult to tell that the ear has been added on. ▶



Heat the horn with a hot-air gun ...



... before bending the ear to shape with pliers



The ears are positioned with a pin 'dowel', which also adds strength to the ear



Fix the ear with epoxy glue and sand smooth

Next issue...

On sale 25 April

Step-by-step guide to carving an abstract Celtic-style raven



How to carve a classic vase of fruit and flowers

Murray Taylor explores chip carving three more fonts
and provides some project ideas for you

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On Test: Mark Baker tries out a new swan-neck bowl gouge

Nic Westermann recently introduced some swan-neck bowl gouges for use when making deep bowls, kuksa and such like. I was sent the 50mm blade, which is approximately 160mm long minus the tang.

Three sizes are available 50, 70 and 100mm. These three measurements equate to the diameter of the ball the cutting edge is formed on when forging.

Nic Westerman comments the website: 'The relatively small radius of this blade makes the cut quite aggressive but a smooth finish is still achievable on smaller bowls and Kuksa, alternatively a scalloped finish can be left to good effect. Not designed to be struck. Supplied with a forged, tapered ferrule.'

On receipt of the tool I spoke to Nic and found out that the steel used is EN31, which is called a bearing steel, which has a high carbon and chrome content which makes it suitable for taking a ultra-fine edge and excellent edge retention. I must admit that looking the blade and handling it, it is beautifully forged, and the curved underneath bevel and the polished internal curve of the tool is superbly done. I tested the cutting edge on tissue paper and it cut it with ease. So it is ultra sharp when delivered.

Using the tool

Since the tool come unhandled, but with a ferrule to fit on the front of a handle, I set about roughly turning a handle. I turned one about 340mm long. I created the right size tenon to accept the ferrule and a stepped hole in the end to accept the tapered share tang. I then secured the blade into the handle and set about trying the blade on a carved bowl in dry spalted eucalyptus and green beech.

In the wet wood, the blade cut like a dream, and it is worth noting that depending on how deep the bowl is and how thick the wall is, one can lever off the side wall to make a cut too, the curve on the shaft helps with this.

Cutting dry wood was harder and the edge didn't last as long, but it lasted a long time and



PHOTOGRAPHS BY SARAH BAKER

gave beautiful cuts even on the punky soft bits, especially when using slicing shearing cuts.

Conclusion

The blade is easy to use and is beautifully designed for its intended use of cutting deep bowls, cups and certain types of tracery too. I found that the blade fitted into the handle length I tuned create a perfect union of control and leverage if required.

The edge retention is great and it is easy to maintain the cutting edge by using of a soft polishing mop loaded with ultra-fine abrasive compound. If you can see your face in the polished surfaces clearly it is sharp

enough. If you are venturing into hand carving this type of work I can wholeheartedly recommend exploring one of these tools.

Price: £66.00 each blade

Contact: Nic Westermann

Web: www.nicwestermann.co.uk



Arbortech Mini Carver

Australian company Arbortech has launched its new Mini Carver. This new and updated mini carver now offers variable speed, vibration reduction and improved sanding , as well as the ability to hook up to dust extraction during the sanding process.

The addition of a six variable speed setting, ranging from 6000-18000rpm, means users can adjust the speed of their carving and sanding to suit their needs.

The sanding function has been improved with the addition of a flexible rubber backing pad. This pad will sit behind the sanding disc to add robustness and flexibility which will increase the life of the sanding disc, resulting in a lower replacement rate. It will also help the sanding discs mould more easily to the timber.

The Mini Carver will come with a dust extraction attachment which can be fitted to the tool and connected to a vacuum hose during sanding operations. And the new and improved motor plus the addition of a vibration reducing handle will add further comfort and ergonomics for users. This new version has a quieter and smoother motor as well as a vibration reduction handle which we think our customers will appreciate very much.

The new Mini Carver will come with Arbortech's top tungsten carbide tipped carving blade – the



Mini Industrial Blade and is supplied with a tool bag, mini industrial blade, sanding discs, rubber sanding pad and dust extraction attachment. More accessories are available online.

Price: £219.95
Contact: Brimarc Tools & Machinery
Web: www.brimarc.com

New Axminster Craft Machines

Axminster Tools & Machinery have recently launched their new range of Craft machines. The new range replaces Axminster's Hobby Series and is aimed at the discerning home user and have enhanced features not normally found on machines at this level.

Within the range, you will find new lathes, bandsaws, scroll saws, a table saw, sanders and grinders as well as some of the existing Hobby machines which have transitioned into the Craft range. All come with a three-year warranty covering parts and labour.

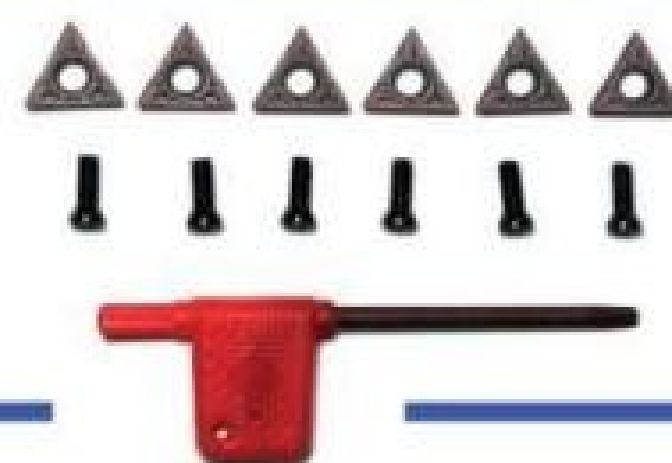
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Conversion chart
2mm (5/64in)
3mm (1/8in)
4mm (5/32in)
6mm (1/4in)
7mm (9/32in)
8mm (5/16in)
9mm (11/32in)
10mm (3/8in)
11mm (7/16in)
12mm (1/2in)
13mm (1/2in)
14mm (9/16in)
15mm (3/16in)
16mm (5/8in)
17mm (11/16in)
18mm (23/32in)
19mm (3/4in)
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25mm (1in)
30mm (1 1/8in)
32mm (1 1/4in)
35mm (1 3/8in)
38mm (1 1/2in)
40mm (1 5/8in)
45mm (1 3/4in)
50mm (2in)
55mm (2 1/8-2 1/4in)
60mm (2 3/8in)
63mm (2 1/2in)
65mm (2 5/8in)
70mm (2 3/4in)
75mm (3in)
80mm (3 1/8in)
85mm (3 1/4in)
90mm (3 1/2in)
93mm (3 2/3in)
95mm (3 3/4in)
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115mm (4 1/2in)
120mm (4 3/4in)
125mm (5in)
130mm (5 1/8in)
135mm (5 1/4in)
140mm (5 1/2in)
145mm (5 3/4in)
150mm (6in)
155mm (6 1/8in)
160mm (6 1/4in)
165mm (6 1/2in)
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178mm (6 7/8in)
180mm (7in)
185mm (7 1/4in)
190mm (7 1/2in)
195mm (7 3/4in)
200mm (8in)
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405mm (16in)
510mm (20in)
610mm (24in)
710mm (28in)
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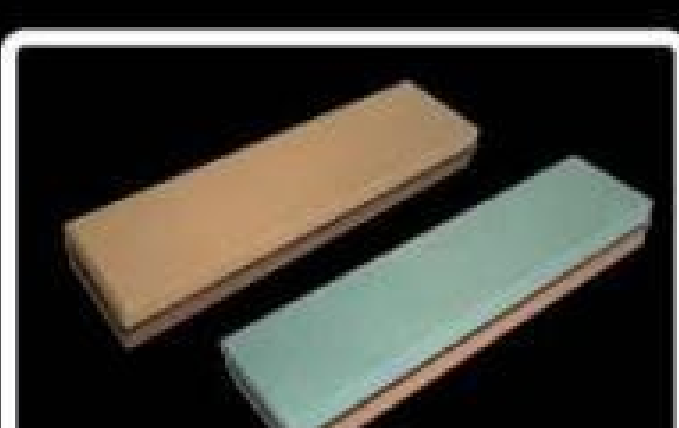
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Duomo di Milano

This month we examine the history of Milan's cathedral



Milan's Duomo is one of the largest cathedrals in the world, with a history stretching back over seven centuries.

In 1386 Archbishop Antonio da Saluzzo began plans for a new cathedral to be dedicated to St Mary of the Nativity. Incredibly, the construction was not completed until 1900 when the stained glass windows and ornamental elements were finished. This extended history is reflected in the design, which features a mixture of different styles, although the Gothic style predominates. The cathedral's exterior was designed in the Lombard Gothic style and Candoglia marble was used instead of terracotta brickwork. This choice of material meant that engineers, architects, sculptors and stone-cutters with specialist skills had to be hired from across Europe.

Work on the façade began in 1683, although the design was not finalised until 1790 and the construction was not completed until 1813. The façade has a

typically Lombard-style gabled top and pillars that divide it into five parts, the main and lateral doors, and the four windows of the upper register. There are three large lancet windows in the three central parts and a gallery with a sloping Lombard band.

The façade underwent extensive cleaning and renovation from 2003 to 2009, which helped reveal the original pink, white and light-grey shades of the Candoglia marble.

The bronze doors, a detail of which is shown on the right, were added during the 20th century. The doors' floral Gothic-style reliefs were carved by Lodovico Pogliaghi and depict stories from the life of Mary.

The cathedral's 135 ornamental spires and pinnacles are what make the building instantly recognisable. These spires are typical of the Gothic style as they signify a reaching towards heavens. Milan cathedral's spires are highly ornate and are decorated with more than 1800 statues, as well as niches and carvings.

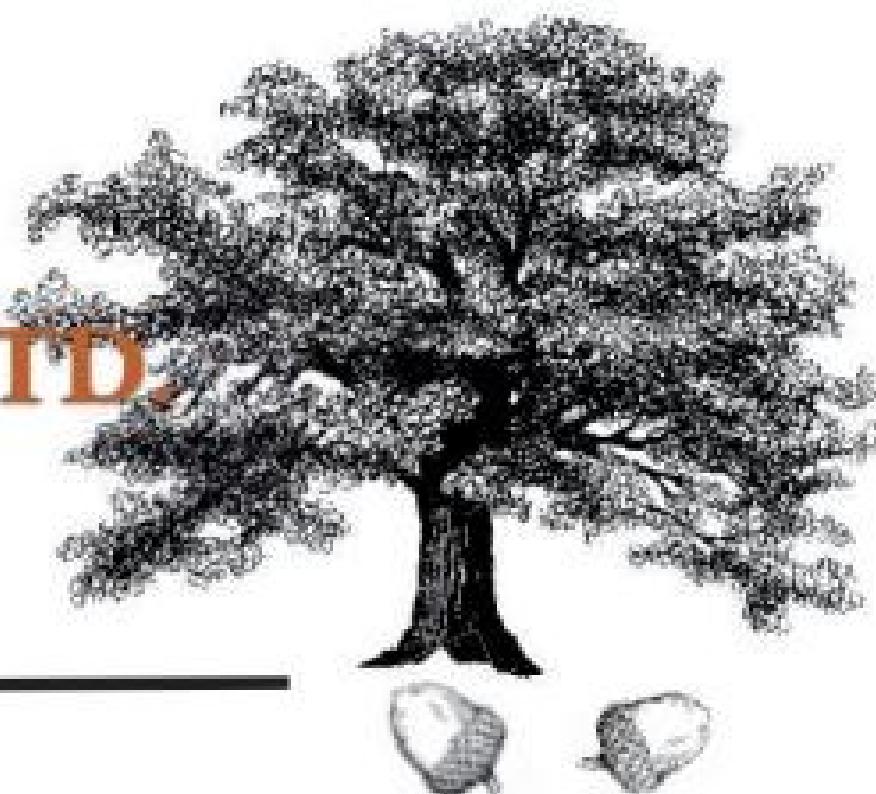


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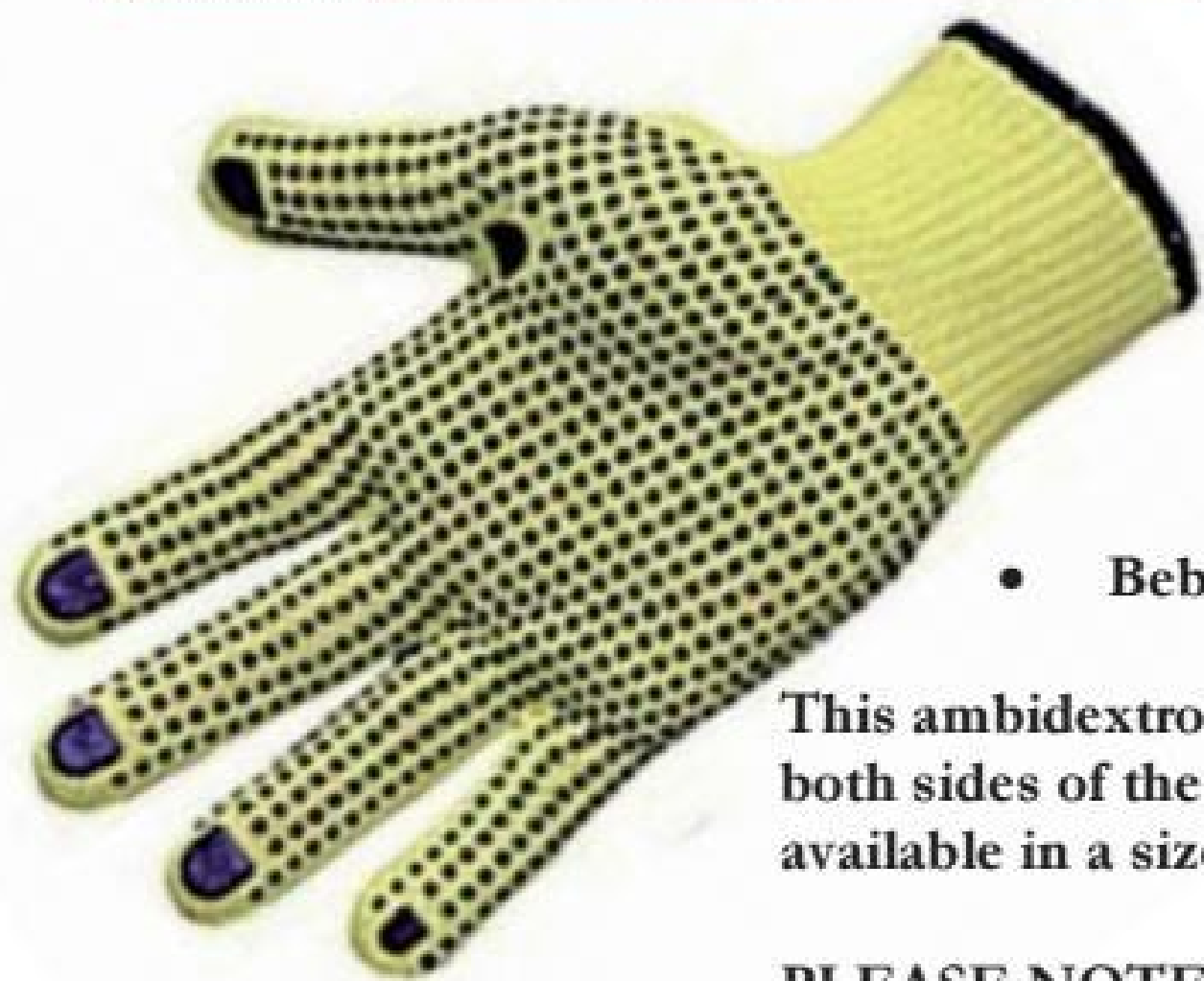
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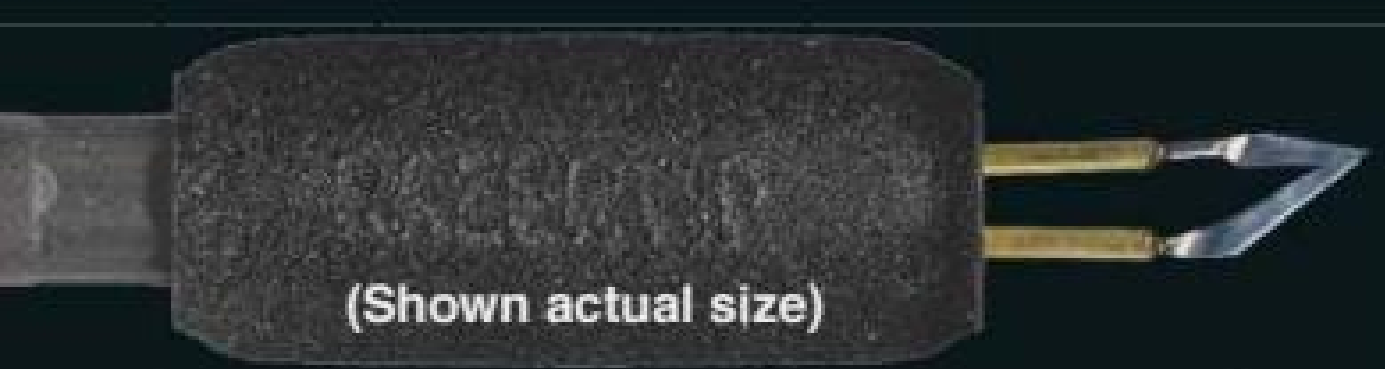
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