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ISSUE 77
JUNE 2003

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ANY WOOD AS LONG AS IT'S OAK

Well, I'm still not in my flat by the sea, but I do have the beginnings of a

design for my table. It is a design from a book of Shaker projects by Robert Souday. The book isn't available now, unfortunately, as it has some other good pieces as well.

The table has very clean, simple curves and is well proportioned. I like it in ash, too, as it looks light and modern, but as I have my own felled oak tree it will have to be in oak. This is a bit like a sort of Henry Ford approach: you can have any colour as long as it's black!

It also reminds me of a Barnsley table – one of which was made during the time I was there. Perhaps this is why I like it.

Rather weirdly, a similar table turned up in John Lloyd's workshop for restoration some months ago, from a Norfolk maker. It must be synchronicity or something. Both designs involve laminating the curved ends and stretcher. It is many years since I have done any laminating, so it will be fun and a challenge! If it is to be a knock-down table I will have to come up with something creative for the centre stretcher. Lots to think about, then, as I sit with a glass of wine of an evening enjoying the spring sunshine – life is hard – sigh.



Robert Souday's Shaker table in ash

PHOTOGRAPH BY KEVIN DILLEY, reproduced with permission of Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., NY, NY from Shaker-Style Wood Projects, by Robert Souday, © 1997 by Chapelle Ltd, a Sterling/Chapelle Book



Edward Barnsley table in rosewood

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE BARNESLEY WORKSHOP

Colin Eden-Eadon

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Write to us!

If you would like to write a letter for publication on our letters page – or pose a question for our panel of experts to answer in print – please do write in! We'd also love to receive photographs of your work for publication in our inspiring Readers' gallery. Or perhaps you'd like to be one of our authors? I am always happy to discuss ideas or receive articles submitted 'on spec' (make sure you enclose an s.a.e.). Drop me a line or an email to ask for our Authors' guidelines, which provide advice on writing, photography and sketches.

Write to: Colin Eden-Eadon, Editor, Furniture & Cabinetmaking, GMC Publications, 86 High Street, Lewes, Sussex BN7 1XN or email: coline@thegmcgroup.com

Woodworking is an inherently dangerous pursuit. Readers should not attempt the procedures described herein without seeking training and information on the safe use of tools and machines, and all readers should observe current safety legislation.

furniture & cabinet MAKING

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Making this beautifully simple drop-leaf kitchen table for a client's silver wedding forced Richard Stevenson to learn letter carving – and the results have opened up new horizons

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The name Ben Coopland won't mean a thing to most cabinetmakers, yet as a craftsman, and a maker of fine furniture, he should rank with the best of them. Graham Clarke looks at the life of a very private man



MAIN COVER PHOTO BY ANTHONY BAILEY/GMC

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Make an adjuster for your spokeshave designed by the master of tool-tuning himself – David Charlesworth

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Raising the Standard

Creating professional cabinet doors has never been easier, simply use a Freud Pro raised panel bit with matched rail and stile bits. The advanced design of the bits allows you to achieve perfect result door after door.



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NEWS

Contact Kate Taylor with news items, which must be received at 86 High Street, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1XN at least 12 weeks before publication cover date. Please include images wherever possible – transparencies preferably, or good prints.



Guild Mark of success for makers

Several notable furniture-makers have just received the prestigious Guild Mark from the Worshipful Company of Furniture-makers. This year's winners and many other well-known makers and manufacturers attended a ceremonial lunch at Painter's Hall in the City of London in April.

Clive Brooks and Barnaby Scott of Waywood in Oxfordshire and James Ryan and Theodore Cook of The Edward Barnsley Educational Trust in Hampshire, received the Craft Guild Mark for their fine bespoke furniture. The Company Guild Mark went to Paul and Janet Kent of Royal Oak Furniture in Grassington, Yorkshire, Stewart Linford, based in High Wycombe, and Peter Spinks of A. Harrison (Bedding) Ltd. Jim Brookman of Sheffield was also congratulated for his beautiful kitchens.

The Master, Christopher Claxton-Stephens spoke of the £50,000 a year given in bursaries and awards through the Livery Company and guest speaker Virginia Bottomley MP praised the winners for their contributions to the furniture-making industry, which is worth £1b in British exports. She added that the applied arts contribute to the spiritual wellbeing of the nation and 'illuminate our past and our future'.



Above: Royal Oak Furniture Company won a Guild Mark



Right: Stewart Linford is known for his fine chairs



Make way for the

401

Startrite has launched its latest bandsaw – the 401. It has 300mm (12in) depth of cut and a 335mm (14in) throat. It comes with many extras, including a rack and pinion tilt on the table. Micro-switches on the doors and a lockable 'on/off' switch are features that will appeal to schools and colleges. A powerful 2hp motor completes the package, which will ideally need wiring in properly, though you could use it with a 16 amp supply. It will retail at around £1,250 including VAT. Contact: Irwin (Record) on 0114 2519120.

Enter the Wood Awards

20 May is the deadline for the Wood Awards 2003. Judges want to hear from 'Anyone associated with the design, production, installation or commissioning of outstanding examples of joinery and wood structures' in the UK. The categories are: private, structural, commercial and conservation/restoration. New sponsor English Heritage joins the American Hardwood Export Council, the British Woodworking Federation, the Timber Trade Federation, 'wood for good' and others. Winners will be announced on 15 October. To enter visit www.woodawards.com or write to The Wood Awards, c/o The Carpenters' Company, Carpenters' Hall, Throgmorton Ave, London EC2N 2JJ.

LAGERFELD'S TOP NAMES SOLD IN PARIS

Eileen Gray's table with black lacquered legs

Jean-Michel Frank's 'diablo' side tables



Marcel Coard's oak table, made circa 1925, with rough-hammered surface and a black glass top

Right: Pierre Legrain's superb ebonised dressing table with large oval mirror



Below: A pair of rectangular benches by Marcel Coard (1889-1975)



Sotheby's was due to hold one of its most exciting sales in Paris to date on 15 May. The Karl Lagerfeld Collection of 20th Century Decorative Arts included works by key artists of the Modernist movement. 50 pieces were by Jean-Michel Frank (1893-1941) and collaborators such as Chanaux and Alberto and Diego Giacometti. They include his four rare 'diablo' side tables, two sheathed in vellum estimated at \$60-100,000, and two in cerused oak (pictured) estimated at \$80-120,000. There was also a rare cerused oak low table with 'pineapple' legs (\$50-80,000) and a vellum-veneered bed estimated at \$25-35,000.

Pierre Legrain (1888-1929) designed a celebrated ebonised wood and galuchat coiffeuse with a large oval mirror for the milliner Jeanne Tachard. This was on sale for around \$200-300,000.

Irish-born Eileen Gray (1878-1976) designed the oak console table with black lacquer legs in the collection early in her career and this was on sale for \$100-150,000.

Rare work by American-born, Paris-based designer Elizabeth Eyre de Lanus (1894-1996) was in the sale, including armchairs at \$40-60,000 each and a desk at \$30-50,000.

A dressing mirror and a superb chrome inkstand by Emile-Jacques Ruhlmann were also in the sale.

For details of future sales contact Sotheby's Olympia on 020 7293 6000, or visit www.sothebys.com

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF SOTHEBY'S



'New Woodworking' launched

For 35 years SIP has been designing and manufacturing high quality DIY and professional wood workshop equipment. Now, this British-based firm is launching a 'New Woodworking' range.

(No relation to GMC's New Woodworking magazine.)

SIP has been synonymous with transformer-based welding and compressed air equipment, designing and manufacturing original equipment for respected brand leaders, exporting to over 80 countries. Its products are made in the UK, Italy and the US and there is plenty of back-up for customers with 2000 distributors and 100 service agents in Britain.

To discover your local stockist, ring 01509 500500. Website: www.sip-group.com

Ask for a scholarship

Several furniture-makers have benefited from The Queen Elizabeth Scholarships, so if you are an up-and-coming maker, why not apply? Scholarships range from £2,000-£15,000 to fund study, training and practical experience for craftsmen and women. There is no age limit, but you must live and work in the UK.

Closing date is 17 July 2003 for this autumn's scholarships. Visit www.qest.org.uk or write to: The Secretary, The Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust, No. 1 Buckingham Place, London SW1E 6HR enclosing an A4 SAE with a 33p stamp.

Current Scholars include furniture-makers Jon Beer in Cambridgeshire, Richard Drayton in Dorset and Jonathan Letcher in Shropshire.



SPOTLIGHT ON LONDON

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF FURNITURE WORKS



**Designer-maker
Kevin Stamper at
Furniture Works**



**Sandler Seating will
customise designs**



**Velaton is
eco-friendly**



The first ever London Furniture Showcase was held in the new Furniture Works showroom in February, part of the London Metropolitan University. The new showroom is at 41 Commercial Road, and offers various services to furniture-makers, including access to the Frederick Parker Collection. There are also workshops for hire, a showcase window in which you can display work, meeting rooms and a library.

The first to try the new showroom were eight London furniture makers. Fine one-off pieces of furniture by designer-maker Kevin Stamper caught our eye. He is based in SouthWimbledon. Established in 1992, Kevin makes contemporary hardwood furniture to commission. He showed a sideboard and a cabinet featuring dynamic patterns made by combining squares of veneers from different wood species.

Stylish contemporary sofas and chairs marked Velaton out. This Enfield firm is proud of its young designers and eco-friendly policies. Stratford-based Farrugia Woodworking Ltd makes elegant tables and chairs to commission and elaborate fittings for homes and offices throughout Europe. Another East End firm, employing 27 people, is Sandler Seating, now celebrating 20 years in the contract furniture business. P.J. Bridgman & Co., from Enfield, supplies high quality garden furniture to 250 stockists in the UK and fulfils large contracts.

To exhibit or visit Furniture Works, ring 020 7320 1827 or email: furnitureworks@londonmet.ac.uk

**Far left: Contemporary style from Velaton
Left: Garden furniture by Bridgman & Co**

More tools by post

A 'Tools & Workshop' colour catalogue launched last October from Components Direct has been revised and re-printed due to overwhelming demand from customers. The new catalogue is 128 pages and contains extra sections on tool storage and power tools as well as the original tools and equipment, fasteners, adhesives, batteries and accessories.

Orders placed before 4pm will be despatched the same day for next day delivery. ISO9002 quality assurance systems ensure reliable customer service. The firm says the main advantage for customers is the keen pricing and the ease of ordering. For free catalogue ring 01623 788400 or visit www.comdir.co.uk



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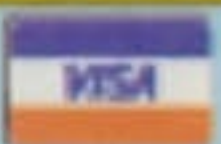


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PIVOTAL DESIGN



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANTHONY SALLERON

Victorians would not have used MDF as a base, but furniture-makers have to move with the times and the results speak for themselves

'Exotic veneers, combined with elements of the structural design from the antique table led to my idea for the Victorian-styled table'

F&C competition-winner **Nigel Churchouse** describes how he designed and made his show entry – this exotic Victorian pivot table



Nigel Churchouse won the 'Highly Commended' award in the Student category of F&C's furniture-making competition, held at the Axminster Tools 2002 show. He trained at Bridgend College, South Wales, has a City & Guilds Progression Award in Veneering and Marquetry Level 2, and is a self-taught carpenter & joiner.

This article describes the design and construction of a Victorian-style, pivot-top table. The article is divided into four stages: source of inspiration, design features and materials used, then an in-depth description of the construction leading to veneering methods and problems encountered. Finally, the finishing process is explained.

INSPIRATION

The inspiration for the project was derived from two sources. First, while studying for the City and Guilds traditional finishing qualification, I came across the work of a fellow student, who was working on an antique table. Its structural design and

aesthetic qualities appealed to me. Secondly, I met Mr Colin Dorkins, a fine cabinetmaker who had owned a successful business prior to his retirement. Throughout his career Colin had acquired a vast quantity of exotic veneers and other materials. These exotic veneers, combined with elements of the structural design from the antique table led to my idea for the Victorian-styled table.

DESIGN FEATURES

The original antique tabletop was made from 30mm- (1 1/4in-) thick solid mahogany, with a large ovolo to the circumference. The apron was made from laminated pine brickwork and veneer. The base and



Using a simple trammel to scribe the circumference of the top and apron



Applying veneer to the apron, with great difficulty, using an iron and PVA



Laying out rosewood book-matches (spot the Post-it notes)



Clamping up the tapered column

'Make the stringing from boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens*) and dyed black sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*)'

Three book-matches make up the base

column of the table were veneered pine, and finally the disc and feet were made from solid mahogany.

Rather than following traditional design and construction methods I decided to test my veneering skills by constructing most of the substrate from MDF. I covered the 30mm (1 1/4in) tabletop with book-matched Brazilian rosewood and satinwood cross-banding to the outer edge. To separate the veneers and provide protection to the edges of the tabletop, I used a combination of 3.2mm square stringing in boxwood and dyed black sycamore.

I also made the column of the table from MDF, which was laminated and shaped, then I applied book-matched rosewood veneer. In between the column and the base, I inserted a circular plate of ebonised mahogany.

CONSTRUCTION

First make the tabletop and apron. The tabletop is 30mm (1 1/4in) thick. First cut 12mm and 18mm (approx. 1/2in and 3/4in) MDF boards into 1.2mm squares, then laminate the boards together with PVA glue. To clamp the boards, lay them flat on the workbench and secure several G-clamps around the edges of the boards. To ensure an even weight distribution, place an additional heavy weight in the centre of the boards. This method worked perfectly for me.

Laminate the apron of the tabletop from three layers of 18mm MDF, then use the planer-thicknesser to reduce it down to 50 x 100mm (2 x 4in). Cut the laminated strips into eight equal sections and mitre each one to 22.5° at both ends. Place two No. 10 biscuits in each joint and clamp the apron up with ratchet straps.

PERFECTING CIRCLES

To produce the round table top, first cut a rough circular shape. You can achieve this by using a batten with pins inserted in the end to scribe a circle in the tabletop. Using a jigsaw, follow the scribed line and remove the waste material.

To produce a perfect circle, make a simple trammel out of 12mm MDF. Attach a router with a twin-flute cutter, which will do the job effectively.

The apron of the table is 50mm (1270mm) thick, which caused me a minor technical difficulty, as the router cutter was only 25mm (1in) in depth. I overcame this problem by mounting the trammel on a 50mm- (1270mm-) thick packer at its centre point. Then with the apron temporarily held in place, I trimmed both the inner and outer edge down to a depth of 25mm (1in). I then turned the apron over, and followed the earlier shaped part using a router with a 30mm bottom-guided cutter.

THE TAPERED COLUMN

Make the tapered column from 16 staves, measuring 510mm (20in) in length, tapering from 39mm (just over 1 1/2in) in width down to 29mm (just under 1 1/4in), with each having 11.25° bevels to both sides.

Each bevel has four No.10 biscuits fitted and 18mm MDF inset flush to the top and bottom. Clamp the whole column using ratchet straps.

Once the glue has dried, mount it on a lathe and turn to remove the high points.



THE BASE

The base is not constructed from MDF – instead I decided to make it from three offcut sections of 18mm (¾in) plywood, which were readily available around the workshop.

First, make a template to assist in the production of the three-point base, which consists of 85mm (3¼in) curves. Using the template and a jigsaw, cut the three layers of the 18mm ply accurately, glue and finally clamp them to form the base.

Clean the edges of the base using a drum sander, then follow with lots of hand-sanding.

PIVOT MOUNT AND RAILS

Make the pivot mount and rails from laminated MDF, as described earlier. To allow the rails to fit neatly to the table apron, make a card template to mark the curved

ends. Create the pivot mount from the MDF laminate and join it together using biscuits. A 13mm (½in) radius is run to the front edge. This allows clearance for the tabletop to pivot up to its vertical position, without rubbing the pivot base.

DISC AND FEET

Turn the disc (dividing the column and base) and the table feet out of mahogany, which you can ebonise at a later stage. Turn the disc with an ovolo to the top and a roundover to the underside.

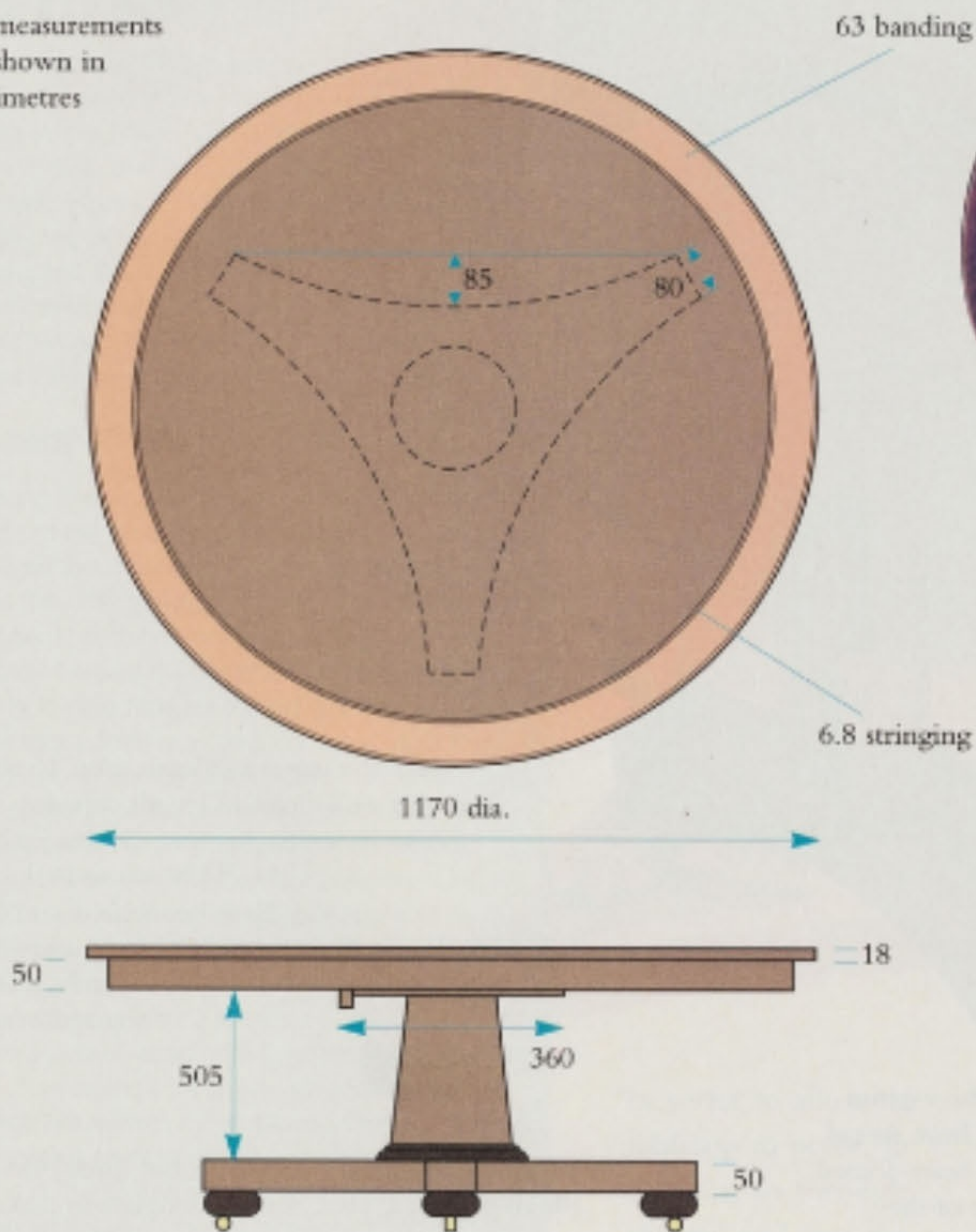
PEDESTAL

To attach the pedestal sections, hold the pivot base, the column and the three-point base together securely by a 12mm-thread bar. Cap off the bar at each end with brass domed nuts and washers. To prevent rotation of the sections, fit 8mm dowels to each section, without gluing.



Cleaning the excess veneer using an edging jig and a twin-fluted plunge cutter

All measurements are shown in millimetres



The underside, showing the fittings and frame

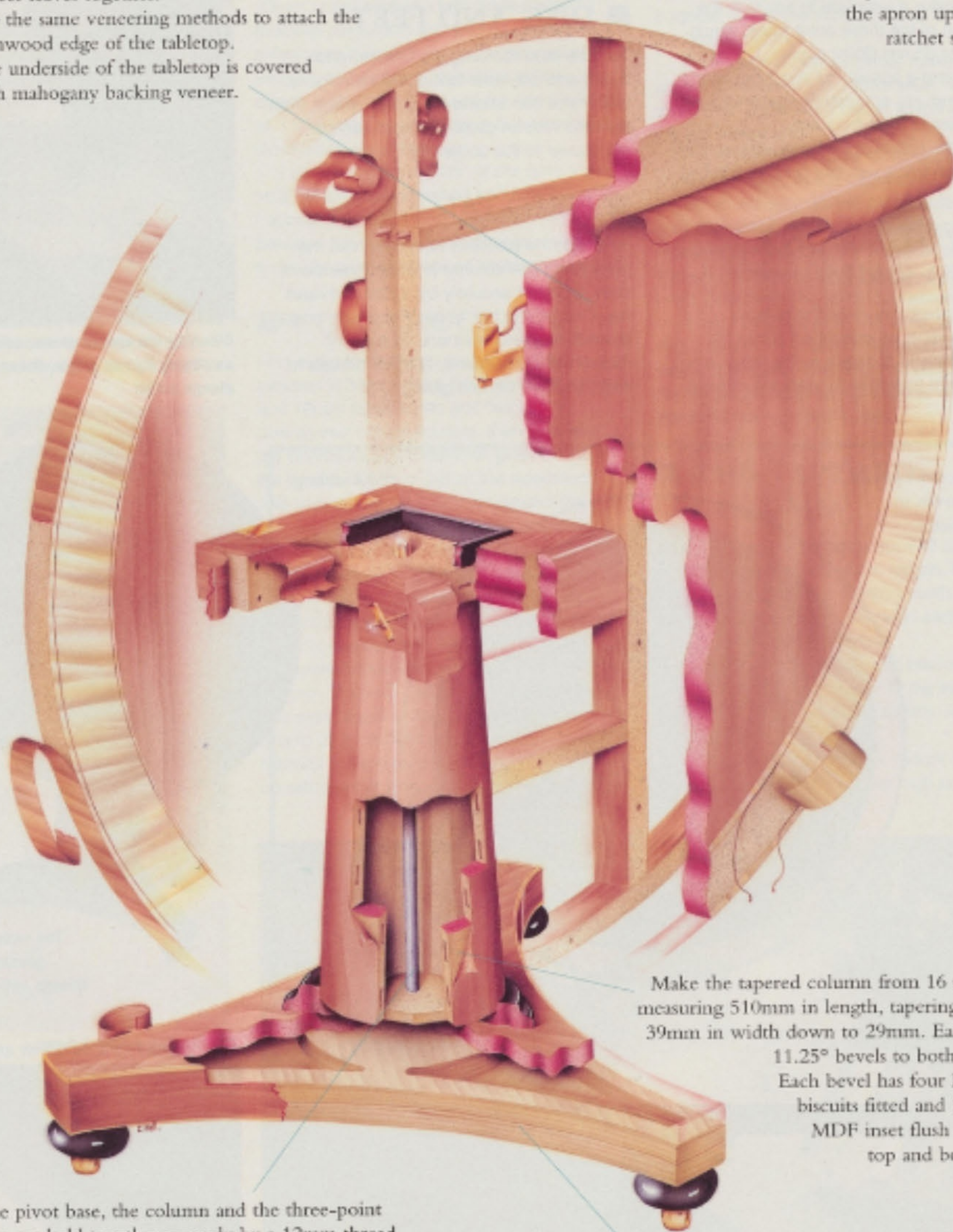
The figuring on the column



Lay six veneers out on the workbench forming a book-match pattern. Attach Post-it notes to the veneer leaves to keep them in the correct order. Cut the veneers, allowing a 25mm overhang. Once cut, use low-tack vinyl tape to secure the veneer leaves together.

Use the same veneering methods to attach the satinwood edge of the tabletop. The underside of the tabletop is covered with mahogany backing veneer.

Laminate the apron of the tabletop from three layers of 18mm MDF, which is then thickened down to 50 x 100mm. Cut the laminated strips into eight equal sections and mitre each one to 22.5° at both ends. Place two No. 10 biscuits in each joint and clamp the apron up with ratchet straps.



Make the tapered column from 16 staves, measuring 510mm in length, tapering from 39mm in width down to 29mm. Each has 11.25° bevels to both sides. Each bevel has four No.10 biscuits fitted and 18mm MDF inset flush to the top and bottom.

The pivot base, the column and the three-point base are held together securely by a 12mm thread bar. Cap the bar off at each end with brass-domed nuts and washers. To prevent rotation of the sections, dry fit 8mm dowels to each section.

The base is not made from MDF, but three offcuts of 18mm plywood. First, make a template to make the three-point base, which consists of 85mm curves.

BOOK-MATCHING VENEERS

TABLETOP

Lay six veneers out on the workbench, forming a book-matched pattern. Attach Post-it notes (small sheets of self-adhesive paper) to the veneer leaves to keep them in the correct order. Cut the veneers, allowing a 25mm (1in) overhang. Once cut, use low-tack vinyl tape to secure the veneer leaves together.

Apply urea formaldehyde glue to the MDF tabletop and place the veneer leaves in position. Place the tabletop in a heated press. The press I used belongs to a friend, which made the job much easier as it was an outstanding piece of equipment.

Use the same veneering methods to attach the satinwood edge of the tabletop.

Cover the underside of the tabletop with mahogany backing veneer. Lay this using PVA glue and a domestic iron. Using a router, fitted with a bottom bearing-guided cutter, trim the excess veneers flush.

BASE AND PIVOT MOUNT

The three points of the base each receive a pair of book-matches – this allows the design pattern to meet in the centre of the base. Lay the veneers with PVA glue, then place a sheet of polyurethane over them. Finally use numerous clamps to press and affix the veneers securely.

I adopted the method of using the sheet of polyurethane and clamps after I realised that the use of PVA and the heat from a domestic iron caused the rosewood veneer to curl and split.

COLUMN IS A CHALLENGE

Veneering the column is one of the most difficult aspects of the veneering project. I book-matched the leaves around the column and tapered them so that they fitted well around the column's shape.

Initially I fixed the veneers using a contact adhesive. I wiped the surfaces of the veneers with acetone to help remove the natural oils. I applied the contact adhesive in the usual way, and then placed the veneers on the column. Unfortunately, some sections of the veneers appeared to have very 'oily areas' which prevented the veneers bonding effectively. The non-adhered sections had to be cut open with a scalpel and additional adhesive inserted. Obviously, this was very time-consuming so an alternative method was required to attach the remaining leaves.

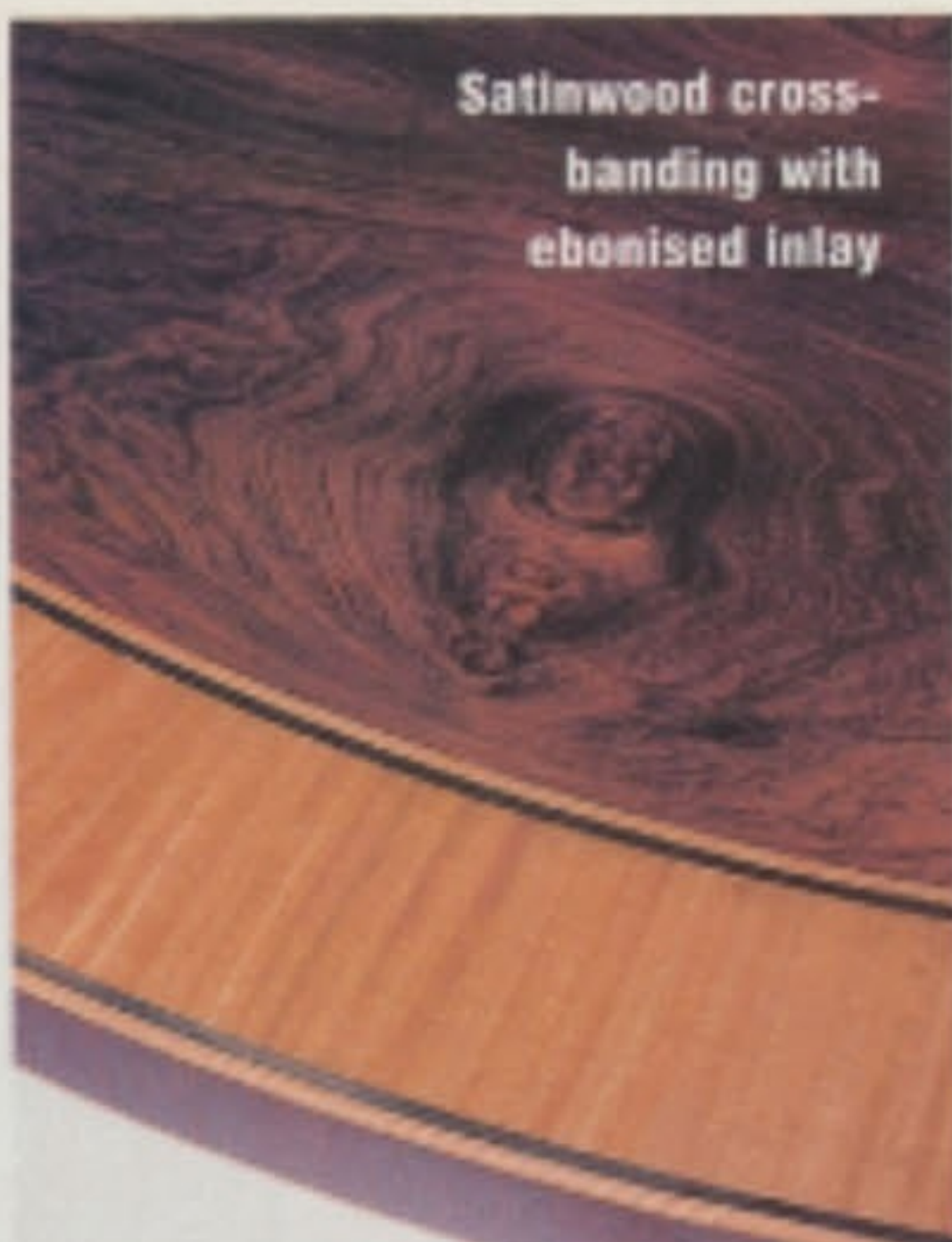
After some investigation I decided to use an air press. This method involved using PVA glue and the matched leaves. I then placed the column in the air press, using a cradle to help secure the column in the centre of the press. The end results were excellent and I would highly recommend this method for similar future projects.



'In order to allow the tabletop to pivot, fit sash screws through the rail and into the pivot base'

The gloriously rich colour and figure of the Brazilian rosewood tabletop

Satinwood cross-banding with ebonised inlay



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CROSS-BANDING

It was difficult to select the most appropriate tools and methods to remove the existing sections of rosewood, and to apply the satinwood cross-banding around the edge of the tabletop. Should I use a trammel or an edge guide?

The use of a trammel would require fixing at its centre, which could cause marking to the tabletop. I could have used double-sided adhesive tape as an alternative but neither appealed to me. Therefore I decided to use an edge guide, which involved making a triangular base-plate for the router.

To do this, attach two bearings, with an inside diameter of 10mm, to the slots with M10 countersunk bolts and wing nuts. The slots allow width of cut adjustment and you can incorporate an old wooden doorknob as a handgrip.

Because I had removed the rosewood veneer from the tabletop, I had to attach compensatory strips of veneer to the underside of the edge jig. I used double-sided adhesive tape to fix the veneer strips.

To allow the cross-banding to follow the curve of the tabletop, cut the satinwood into pieces 50mm (2in) wide. Apply PVA glue to the section, then place the small pieces of satinwood in position with a slight overlap. Use a sharp scalpel and a steel straightedge to cut off the excess waste, and then use a domestic iron to set the PVA glue.

STRINGING

Make the stringing from boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens*) and dyed black sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*). To inset the stringing to the outer edge of the table, use a router and a bearing-guided rebate cutter.

To form the groove for the stringing between rosewood and satinwood, use the edge guide. Adjust the bearings and use a 6.4mm twin-flute cutter to form the groove for the stringing.

FITTING THE HARDWARE

In order to allow the tabletop to pivot, fit sash screws through the rail and into the pivot base. Set the sash screws in at 45° from the top front edge of the pivot base.

Attach a banjo catch to the underside of the tabletop. When the table is lowered down into a receiver on the pivot base, this triggers the spring action lock. The catch is simply unlocked by pulling on the handle.

To affix the brass castors drill holes into the ebonised feet of the table and screw the castors in until tight. In addition the base plate has provision for three brass countersunk screws.

FINISHING

The first stage of finishing the table involves trying to fill the rosewood grain. After numerous unsuccessful attempts to perfect a colour match, I decided to flood the grain with a sanding sealer. This was a very slow and laborious process but the end results were outstanding.

To do this, apply six topcoats of polish. I used Fiddes tabletop polish, which contains melamine and is fairly durable. Apply each coat with a mop, and when dry cut it back using 320 grit paper. Cut the final coat back using a 'wet and dry' paper up to 1200 grit.

Leave this for several weeks to harden, and then burnish the whole table using Liberol Burnishing Cream.

EBONISE THE FEET

Dye the mahogany disc, situated between the column and base, and the table feet black with a spirit-based stain. Using a mop, apply several coats of black shellac polish. Leave to harden for several weeks, and then cut the surface back using 'wet and dry' paper up to 1200 grit. Burnish the disc and feet with 0000 wire wool and finish with Liberol black wax.



The boxwood stringing around the base

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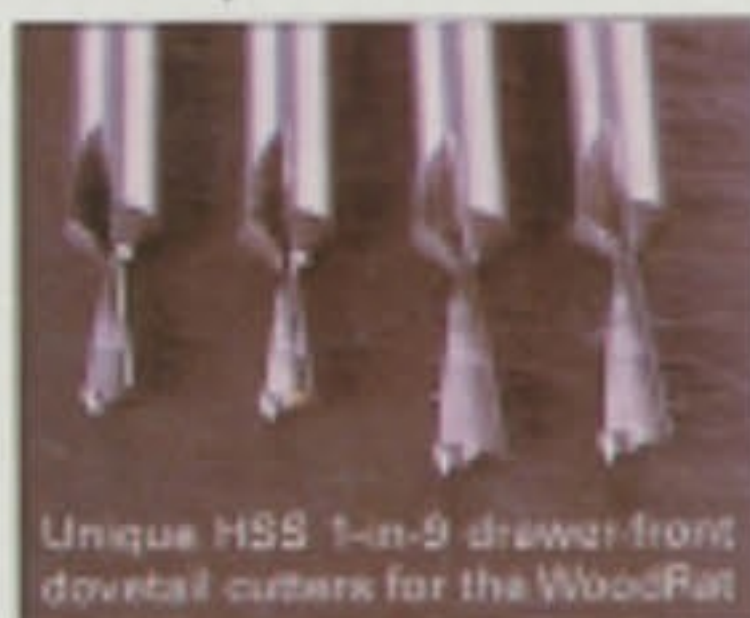
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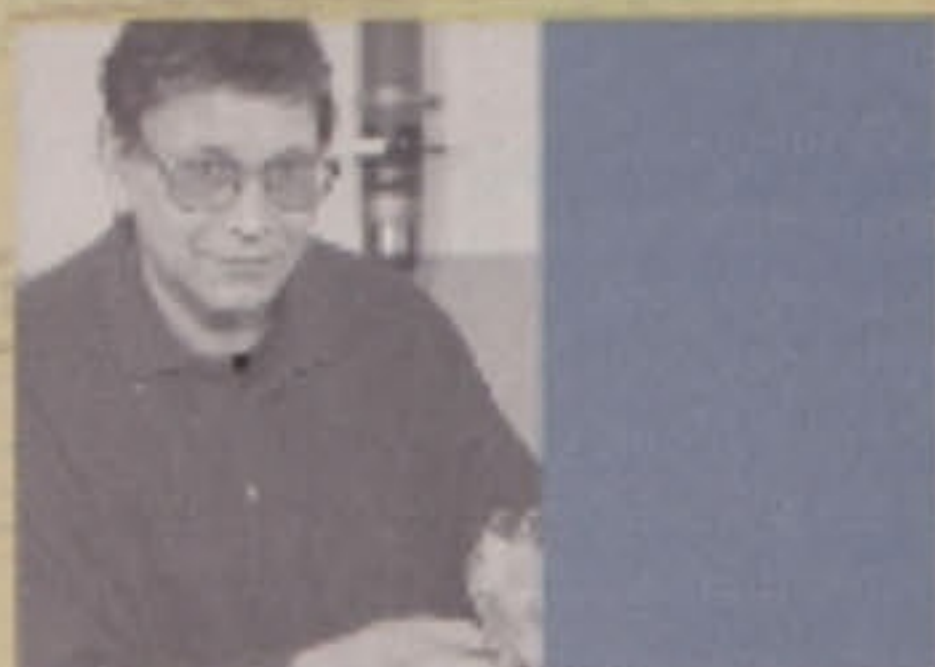
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Joints for the 21st century

This month **Robert Ingham** examines joints for stability and end grain orientation – and explores coopering for furniture-making

Careful selection and orientation of grain is an important consideration in both the aesthetic composition and the future stability of a piece of furniture. It is disturbing, to say the least, if the stiles of a framed door show the grain leaning to one side, causing the piece to look unstable.

Equally important is the potential for distortion if edge-jointed boards that comprise the width of a tabletop are not assembled with the end grain arranged to cancel out the combined effect of timber movement. Simply put, the boards need to be flipped so that the annual rings alternate from one board to the next. Any diagram illustrating this arrangement usually shows the end grain with the annual rings centred in each board. In practice, it is likely that this will not be the case but the principle of alternating the crown side up on one board and down on the next should not be ignored.

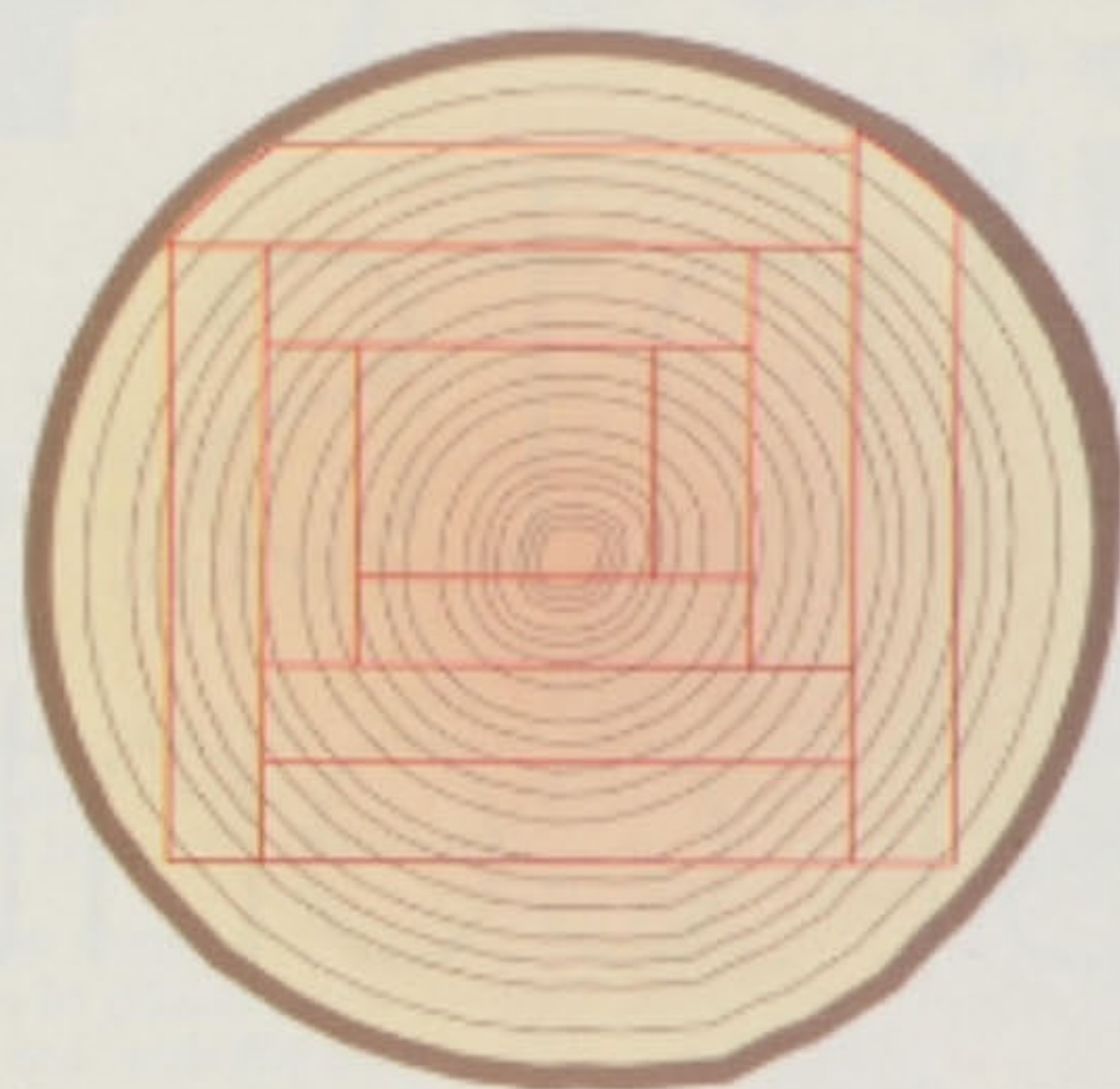
■ IMPORTED TIMBER

This problem is further accentuated by the fact that most square-edged, kiln-dried timber that is available today, particularly if it is imported from overseas, is converted by a sequential cutting system. The result is that each board is a crown-cut board. This is not a problem with through or quarter-sawn boards. When these sequentially sawn boards are assembled with the crown appearing on all boards on one surface, the combined movement will result in an emphasis of the curve of each board. What is happening is the result of the wrap-around force that holds the annual rings together when the log is released after sawing. While the boards are drying the annual rings try to straighten out, resulting in a hollowing of the crown or outer curve of the annual rings.



Robert coopering

DRAWINGS BY SIMON RIDDWAY



Left: Sequential sawing of logs produces square edges but crown-cut boards

Below: Crown-cut board: the wood cups from outer curve of annual rings



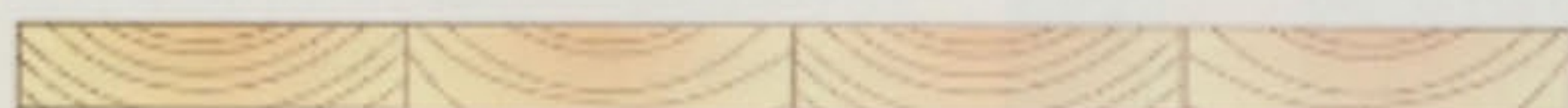
■ USE NARROW BOARDS

The problem of distortion can be lessened if crown-cut boards are reduced in width so the effects of movement are shared between narrower pieces. A good example of this is the stability that is achieved from the narrow core strips of block board or that of solid wood kitchen worktops. Unfortunately, the visual result is that of a busy surface of many strips and many edge joints and this could compromise the aesthetic effect that wider boards and the more recognised character of timber grain produces.

■ DRAWERS

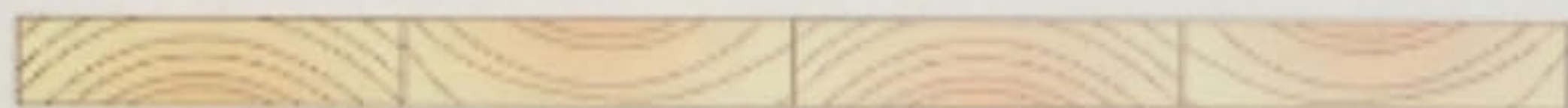
While on the subject of stability and creating wider boards, as I mentioned earlier, I apply this principle to drawer sides, backs and fronts. It seems very difficult to source commercially prepared timber that is thin enough for drawer sides in a material that is both stable and has good wear-resisting properties. I prefer to use hard maple for making drawers and the thinnest boards available are 25mm (1 in) thick. Re-sawing these into appropriate thicknesses for making drawers results in so much distortion, both in the cross-section and the length, that there is so much waste and loss of dimensions as to render the exercise a failure. I use 50 or 75mm (2 or 3 in) thick boards and saw them up into strips parallel to the edge of the board and glue them together using edge joints. I use the masking tape method I described earlier to hold the strips together while the glue sets, with the assembly held for a few minutes in cramps to squeeze out any excess glue. The resultant board is the equivalent of quarter-sawn timber with all the stability that this implies.

Grain orientation



Combined timber settlement accentuates the distorted curve

Although distortion will take place, this combination appears to cancel out the effect of settlement



Profiled components sawn and awaiting a skim with a plane



Joints assembled and taped on the outer surface of the curve

■ COOPERED EDGE JOINTS

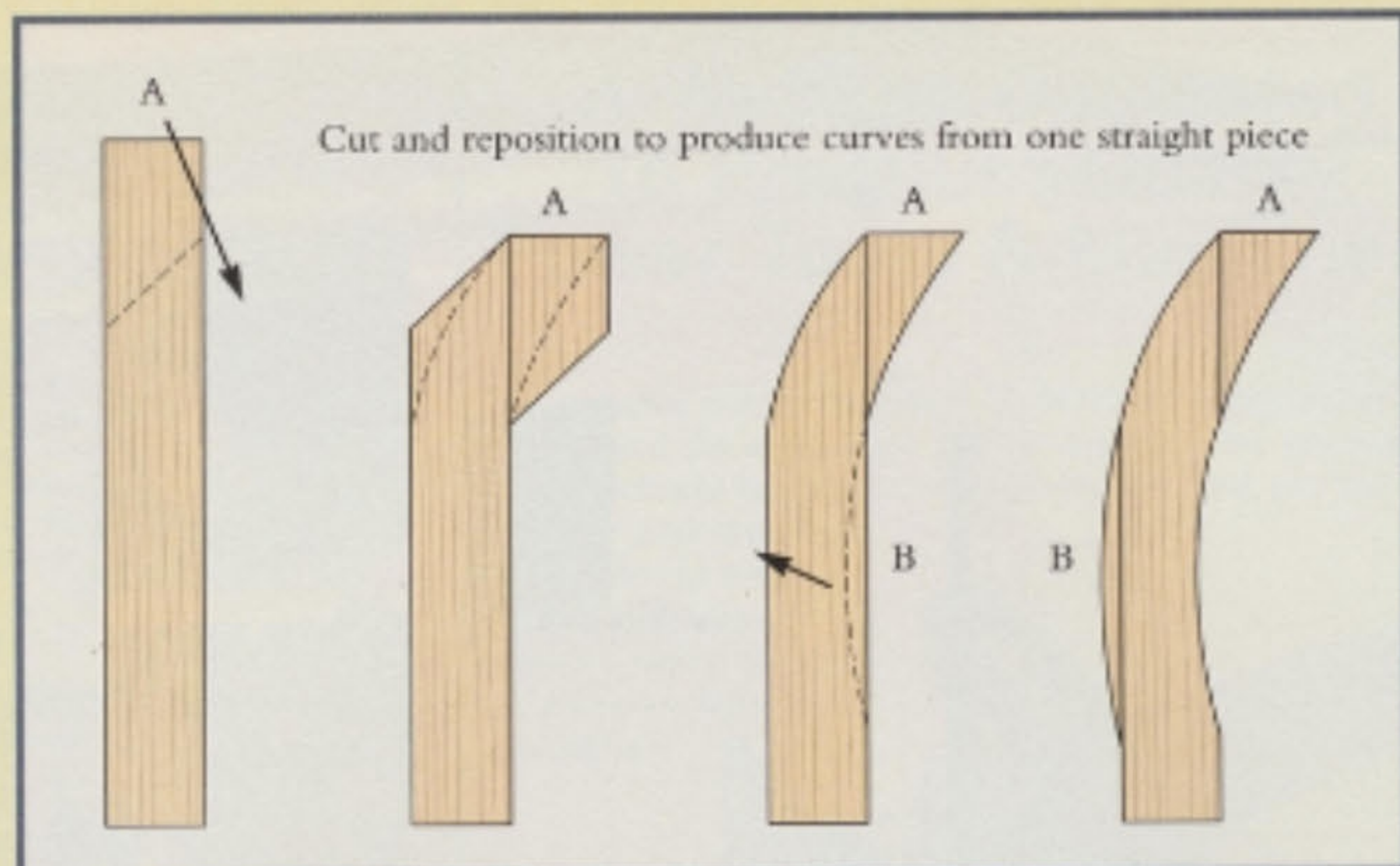
Coopering requires curved cross-sections – a particularly challenging application of edge joints. The most obvious example is that of barrel making and it is from this trade that the joint gets its name. In barrel making, however, the strips have both an angled cross-section and a curved taper in the length, resulting in the characteristic form of a barrel when assembled.

Coopering lends itself very well to the formation of a variety of curved forms – from gentle curves for chair seats to cylinders for columns. In general, this type of curved work has largely been replaced by laminating, particularly if strength is coupled with a thin section that needs to resist twisting. If, however, the result needs to embody the representation of solid timber, then coopered joints are the answer.

Sawing up crown-cut board for drawer sides. The result is a quarter-sawn effect, producing stability after edge jointing



Wood re-sawn parallel to face results in major distortion and instability



GLUING UP

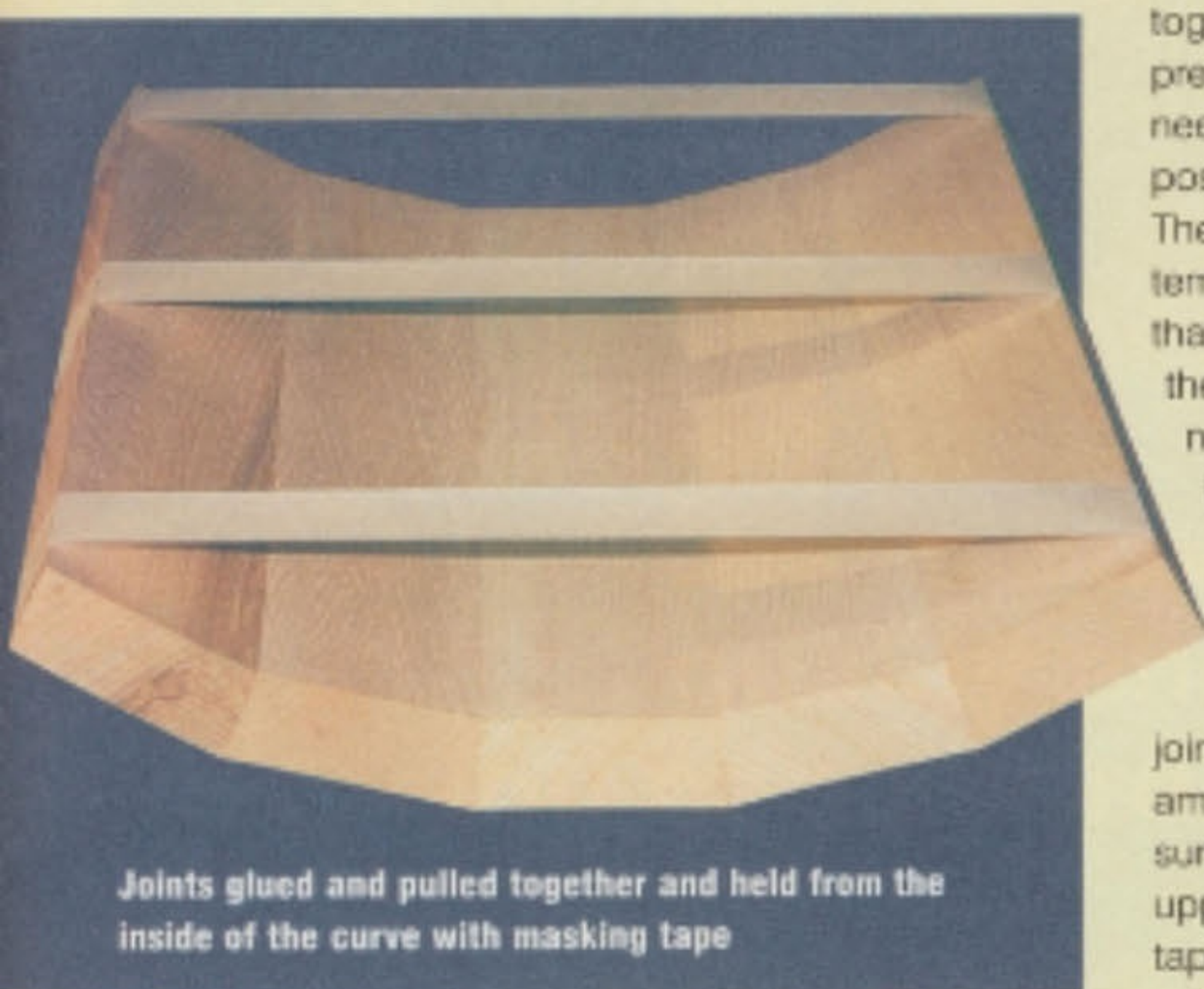
If your combination of components to be glued together has surfaces that will respond to clamp pressure are not at 90° to the clamp shoes, you will need supplementary clamping blocks, fixed in position to resist sliding due to the ramped effect. The most effective way to achieve this is to temporarily glue the blocks onto the component so that the pressure face is parallel to the clamp shoe. If the angled force is not too great then a layer of newspaper glued in between will enable the block to be sheared away quite easily after the glue has set. All this requires a lot of extra work but in some circumstances it is the only way.

I use masking tape to hold coopered sections together for gluing-up. As with square-edge joints, using masking tape for coopered joints is amazingly strong. Lay the components on a flat surface with the outside of the coopered curve uppermost and apply strips of stretched masking tape at intervals across the pieces.

For small sections 25mm (1in) tape is strong enough but for larger sections scale up to 50mm (2in) wide. Then run a strip of tape along the joint to prevent any excess glue being squeezed out from this side. Carefully turn the assembly over and let one piece at a time hang over the edge of your bench and apply a line of glue to one face of each joint. Spread the glue with a comb spreader and move on to the next joint. The open assembly time of the glue determines the number of joints that can be glued before the faces can be closed and strips of masking tape are stretched across the inside curved void that is created by this action.

If you are making coopered joints to produce a container or tube it would be best to glue up half the sections at a time and then assemble these two to produce the enclosed assembly.

There are router cutters available for coopering. The angles are carefully machined to provide combinations for hexagonal and octagonal sections. As with the self-location cutters for straight edge joints they are quite expensive and the joint quality varies according to the condition of the cutters. If this is the option you choose I strongly recommend a skim with a plane before gluing the joints.



Joints glued and pulled together and held from the inside of the curve with masking tape

COOPERED CURVES

To determine the width of the strips necessary, draw the cross-section of the curve. Narrow strips need less final shaping if a smooth curve is necessary and in some circumstances can actually be left as flat facets that add to the character of the piece. Wide strips need fewer joints but may require extra thickness to produce a satisfactory curve. A drawing will help to sort out this question. It will also enable you to work out the angle of the mating surfaces of the joints.

Once this has been established, consider the method of cutting the angle. Without doubt, the tilting arbor facility of a circular saw is the ideal way to cut these angles. The surfaces produced should be true enough to require little more than a couple of shavings from a well-set plane to produce a good edge joint. If the work involves a large number of components the edges could be planed by machine with the fence set over to accommodate the angle.

My preference however, is to do this with a hand plane, for the reasons I mentioned earlier – that of opening up the grain that could perhaps be compressed by machining.



Cooper-jointed
seat on a stool

■ LEG JOINTS

Some time ago I designed and made a chair that had a side elevation profile of the back leg with a curve in the upper part. The option for laminating, which would have excluded short grain was inappropriate as the curve was too tight for the laminations to be formed round it. I weighed up the risk of failure from short grain, which is the bane of curves and solid, and decided that it would not be a serious problem, so I decided to use solid wood and cut out the profile. I looked at the drawing and realised that for a set of six dining chairs I would be discarding a lot of timber. To prevent this I used the inner cut-away portion of the curve and glued it on to the outer face. Voila! I could achieve this from a straight piece of wood with little or no significant loss of grain match. Once again the glue-up was achieved with masking tape and a few minutes of pressure in a bench vice.

■ NO STRESS

To sum up, edge joints, or face-to-face joints, with the grain of each piece running in the same direction, are extremely strong as they are assembled in such a way that there is no stress from differential movement. With modern glues and good preparation of surfaces there should not be any loss of strength and the two pieces on either side of the joint can be expected to behave as one.

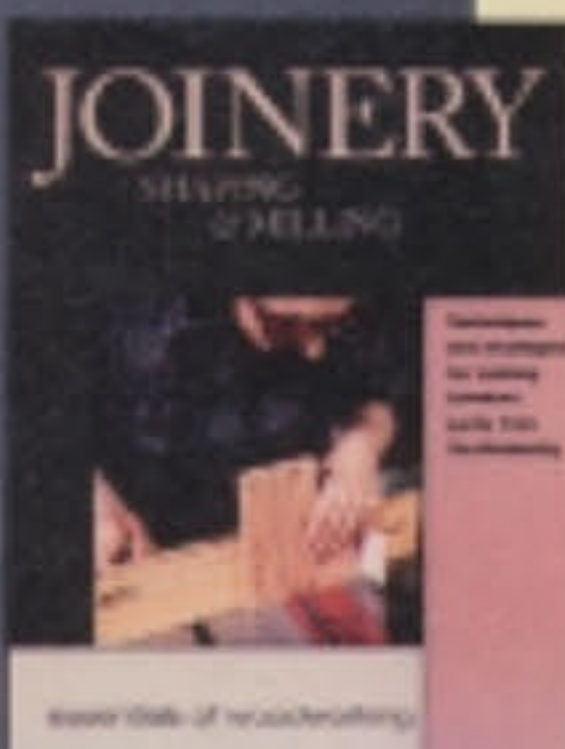
■ FURTHER READING

Complete Illustrated Guide to Joinery by Gary Rogowski, £34.95, Taunton, ISBN 1 56158 401 0. All the standard methods of making joints, plus variations for varying skill levels. Hardback, 320 pages.

The Complete Illustrated Guide to Furniture & Cabinet Construction, by Andy Rae, £31.95, Taunton, ISBN 1 56158 402 9. This is a valuable step-by-step alphabetical guide to furniture construction techniques. Colour hardback, 272 pages.

Joinery, Shaping and Milling – Best of Fine Woodworking, £14.95, Taunton, ISBN 1 56158 305 7. The book covers smoothing, flattening and edging, making curved pieces, milling complex shapes and making mortices, tenons, dovetails and other joints. Colour paperback, 208 pages.

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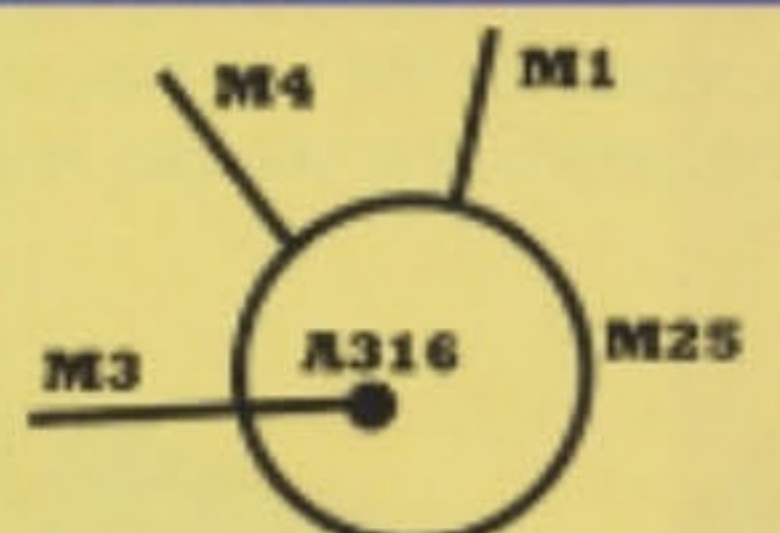
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Are **BIG** bandsaws worth the cash...

...and can they cut it?

Mark Constanduros and Roger Smith get to grips with one of Startrite's finest and biggest – The 601S – over six months of hard furniture-making

The opportunity to do a thorough test of one of the latest bandsaws from Startrite was one not to miss. Most of us have had experience of one at some point or other. For me I always used a Startrite 312, which was a brilliant machine, so I was hoping for great things from this monster. Roger and I were keen to opt for a decent size machine that could cope with deeping hardwood boards that were frequently used in laminated work. The 601S seemed a natural choice.

Firstly this bandsaw isn't strictly made by Startrite, but by an Italian firm with a Startrite badge on it. Startrite ships them in to this country, checks them over, adds a few of its little extras and sticks its name on the box. So we'll see if it lives up to the Startrite reputation of solid, well-built saws.

The test of its life

This bandsaw is by no means cheap, but if you were setting up a workshop and you could only afford one saw then you would have to consider either a big bandsaw or a circular rip saw. Which one would be the most flexible? That is the question you'd have to ask yourself.

My choice would be the bandsaw as it offers the most flexibility. So, take this machine – which needs three-phase power – is the motor more than capable of doing all jobs? To find out, we were going to give it the test of its life! The machine would be part of our workshop activity for a minimum of three months, during which time the two of us were going to use it and see whether it was ultimately going home or staying put.

Its sheer size suggests that this bandsaw means business, so we lined up a number of jobs between us to test it to the full. But before using it we had to set the machine up – and we will come to that bit in a second.

Roger and the 601S
in action – it's a
big machine!





Full view –
it looks
smaller here



The heavyweight fence,
with an equally
substantial bar



The switch gear, which
we found confusing!

'The other thing
that would be
nice on a
machine of this
size is a rack and
pinion adjustment
on the fence –
but would
customers want
to pay for it?'

General build

First impressions were that this was a sturdy machine more than capable of deep cuts.

The general build quality was okay, though some modifications were required. The plastic insert in the cast iron table is rather nasty because it locates on an imprecise taper and hence fits badly. We had to modify it before we could use it.

The machine has a pressed steel frame with a cast iron bed, which is large enough to support most things. The blade wheels run smoothly and are made from cast steel. All the handles are made from a fairly durable plastic. All the guides run on bearings. A fence made of aluminium extrusion is also included.

Blade guides

The blade guides allow for accurate set-up and blade location. The blade is easy enough to put on, but in my opinion the guides were just too over-the-top on the adjustment possibilities. It actually took two of us to get them set right on arrival and even then, when we changed from the biggest blade to the smallest blade, we had to adjust the guides numerous times to ensure it ran correctly. You see you can adjust the wheels on the brass screw thread and also on the hex key blocks at the back. These, in turn, are bolted on to the depth adjuster. This just seemed unnecessary and I didn't like it at all.

When the blade is on the top and bottom wheel, it is a fixed position, so why have adjusting blocks and adjusting screws for that one setting? Adjusting screws would have been ample.

Roger encountered one problem with the back thrust bearing. This seized up and, despite promises, a replacement was never sent. Luckily Roger was able to refurbish it using a metalwork lathe, but does this bode well for after-sales service?

Extraction

With a machine of this size the extraction facility is of great use and, as we found out, when it really got going the amount of sawdust was phenomenal. But it did work relatively well and any dust that is removed from the atmosphere must be a benefit. The only thing is that your extractor would have to have quite good suction, especially when you are 'deeping' timbers.

Switches

The switches really did confuse us for a while as there are a few options, no doubt EU regulated, but it is bizarre!

Firstly, you can only switch the machine on with the key selecting the right position. With the position selected you can then remove the key and switch the saw on and off, using the buttons as many times as you like. Surely you should only be able to switch the machine on with the key and then be unable to remove it until you switch off? Also, in the 'off' position, shouldn't you take the key out, so nobody else can use it? Admittedly you can isolate the machine by a padlock, but what a palaver!

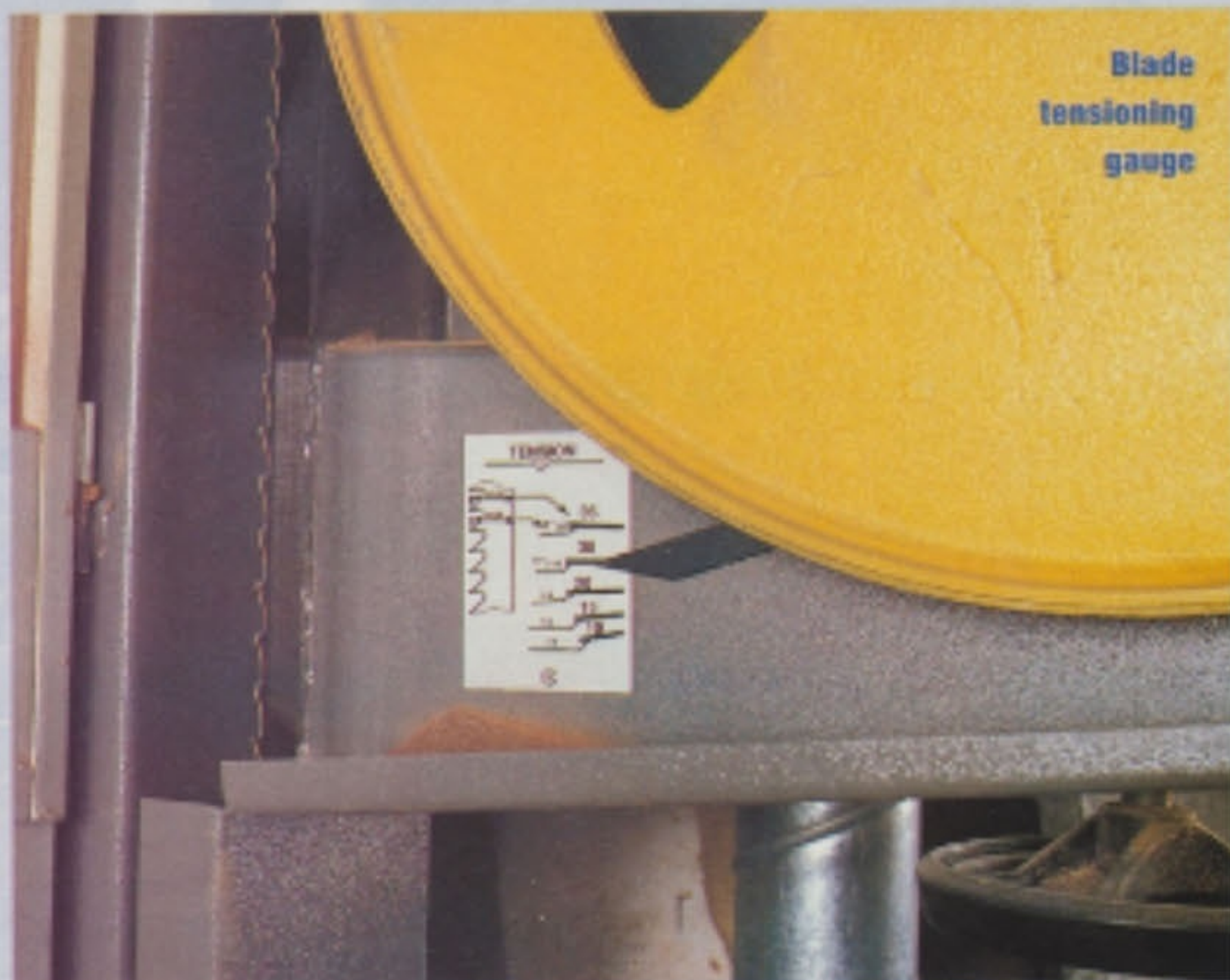
To switch the saw off, you can either turn the key or push the big red 'off' button. Turning the key to the extreme right can override the motor braking, allowing you to turn the wheel for blade alignment. However, if you leave the key in that position, the motor heater cuts in. Are motor heaters necessary in this country?

All this sounds logical, except that the key ignition is like a safety switch... but when the machine was running you could take the key out and switch the saw on and off as many times as you liked. In the 'off' position you cannot remove the key. Confused? Well, I was too!

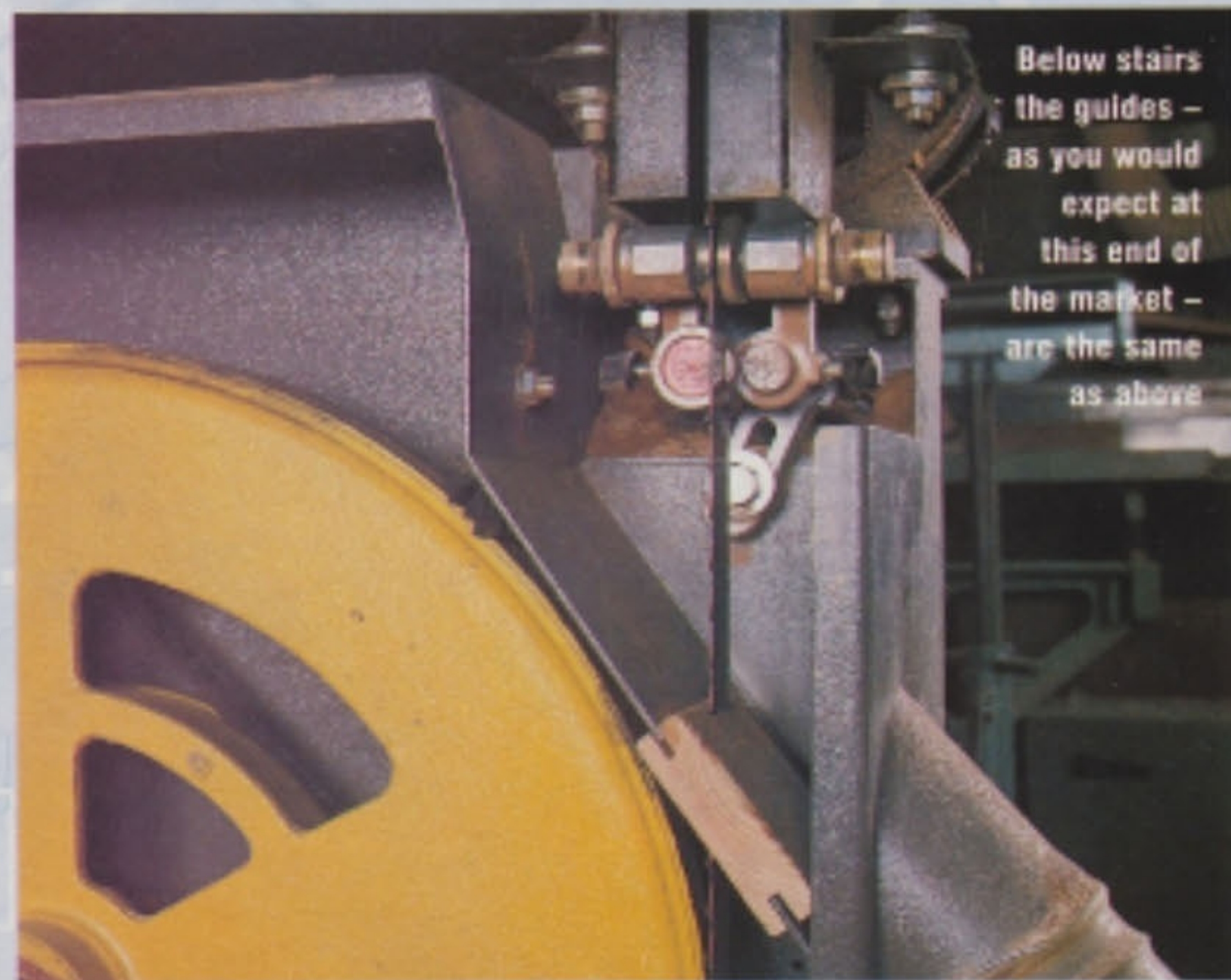
Guide fence

The fence is sturdy, but why they make bandsaws for left-handed users, I don't know. The old machine has the fence on the right of the blade, which Roger prefers, I have no real preference just as long as it is deep enough. Circular saws have the fence on the right, so why not bandsaws, I wonder?

As is de rigueur these days with guide fences, they are all made from extruded aluminium on a steel block, sliding up and down a bar. As always, they seem to be fitted with a knob to loosen and tighten in place. Why a knob? A lever handle would be better, easier to hold to tighten and loosen and you don't graze your knuckles on any sharp edges. The other thing that would be nice on a machine of this size is a rack and pinion adjustment on the fence – but would customers want to pay for it? Basically it did the job.



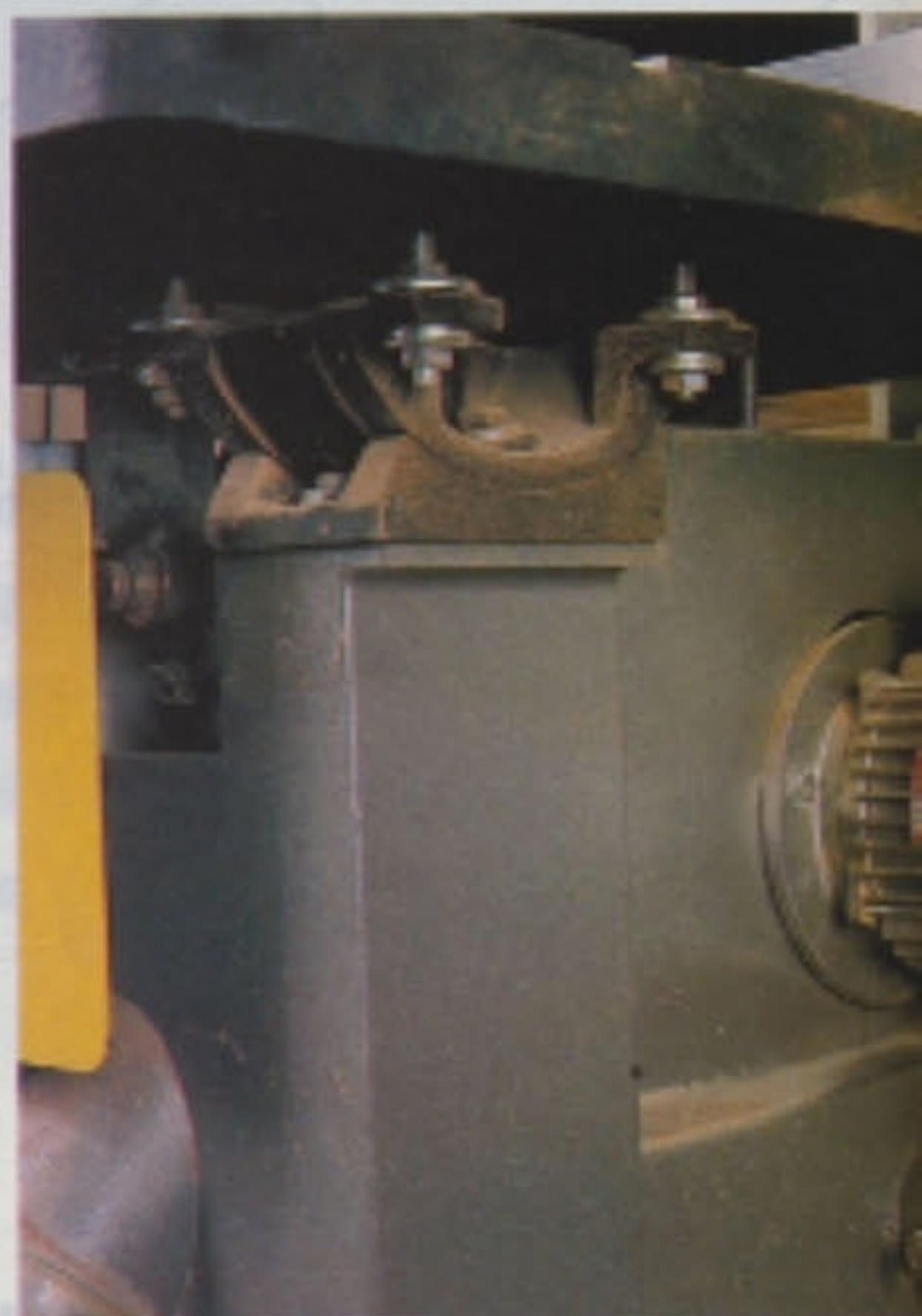
Blade
tensioning
gauge



Below stairs
the guides –
as you would
expect at
this end of
the market –
are the same
as above



Guard
and
guides





Roger deep ripping –
note the beefy guide mountings



Under
the table

'We use it regularly for all jobs, to the point that I do not know how we would cope without it! Now makers in other workshops know we have it, they come down to use it'

Facts & figures

Model	Startrite bandsaw 601S
Table size	600 x 800mm
Depth of cut	350mm
Width of cut	580mm
Motor	2.2kw/3hp
Height under guides	350mm
Max. blade width	35mm
Price	£2,212.25 (inc. VAT)

Contact

Startrite Machines, Parkway Works,
Sheffield S9 3BL
Tel: 0114 2519102
Email: info@startrite.co.uk
Website: www.startrite.co.uk



Mark using
the 601 for
more 'refined'
work – cutting
dovetails

General use

I used this bandsaw a lot, but not really on major jobs. This was Roger's department as he had a specific task for the machine – 'deeping'. He happened to have a lot of saw-cut veneers to produce, which is where the bandsaw came into its own. But when it came to cutting a large quantity of oak, on a couple of occasions, the motor cut out through overheating. Fortunately it didn't take long to cool down and we could restart the machine – but don't expect to cut through 300mm (almost 12in) timber for long periods, even with a new blade.

For my jobs the saw did a good job as long as you had the appropriate blade. You can cut dovetails on it as well as saw up a 125mm (5in) chunk of oak. It was very good at doing any job I threw at it.

The verdict

We have now had the saw for at least six months and it has become an accepted member of the workshop. We use it regularly for all jobs, to the point that I do not know how we would cope without it! Now makers in other workshops know we have it, they come down to use it.

In my opinion it is a good saw. It costs a lot of money, but if you are buying one saw then this one is worth considering. Roger had a look round the Woodmex Exhibition at the NEC and thought it held up well against the opposition. Sadly, everything has to be built to a price and the 601 is no exception.

It has its faults, like everything, and we have picked out some of our gripes. I think a little more attention to detail, such as the plastic mouth guard around the blade, wouldn't go amiss if you are paying this kind of money. This guard plays an important part in protecting your work and I feel it is just not acceptable. (Startrite, take note!) So will it stay in our workshop, or will it go...? I think it will stay, despite our niggles. You learn to live with them and as it is good at what it does and is already in the workshop and we can't be bothered to try and get it out, then it will stay... Well, Roger hopes he will be able to buy it, is more to the point! That, I trust, counts as an overall recommendation and endorsement of the Startrite 601S.

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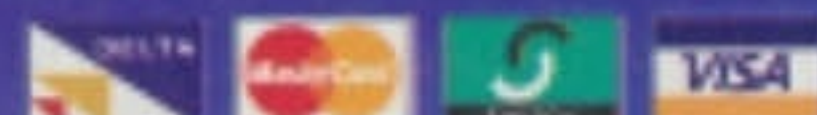
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Does anyone have
a picture of
Ben Coopland?
We'd like to bring
this great Arts &
Crafts cabinetmaker
out of the shadows

OUT OF THE SHADOWS

The name Ben Coopland won't mean a thing to most cabinetmakers, yet as a craftsman, and a maker of fine furniture, he should rank with the best of them.

Graham Clarke looks at the life of a very private man

His prowess as one of our finest cabinetmakers is not in question, yet nobody has really heard of him. The accuracy and detail in his work attracted attention from a reigning monarch, and university dons, yet his name doesn't figure in any published works. We couldn't even locate any photographs of this modest man in the local paper archives or from local residents. Ben Coopland is an enigma.



Far left: Harry Lawton with Ben's amazing wooden 'crystals'



Left: A characteristically styled bureau – note the excellent use of contrasting grains in the timbers



Far left: Ben's speciality – corner cupboards. The cupboards display his great craftsmanship and an eye for matching the wildest grained timber

Below: This settle illustrates Ben's simple style. Note the expertly carved arm posts that contrast with the straight, clean and crisp lines of the piece



The reason he isn't used as a course reference, and also the reason very few people have heard of him, is due almost entirely to his private nature and his humility. Also, he died 40 years ago and naturally memories fade.

The village of Grindleford, in the heart of the Derbyshire Peak District, was home to this mysterious character, and only a handful of the older inhabitants can just about remember him. He was, they say, like the typical village craftsman of his era – a long white apron, waistcoat with pocket watch, moustache and round wire-framed spectacles.

But just who was this paragon of fine woodwork, and what is his story?

■ Gold medallist

To discover more about the man, I visited Derbyshire and met up with Harry Lawton (the father of cabinetmaker Andrew, featured in last month's issue). Now in his 80s, retired woodwork teacher Harry is one of the few people alive who can remember Ben, and perhaps the only survivor who can claim to be a close friend of the old man.

It was all down to a chance meeting in 1952. Harry and his wife were enjoying a country walk in the Peak District when they bumped in to Ben. The two men hit it off instantly. They were kindred spirits, sharing a love of cabinetmaking and similar ideals.

"Ben and his wife Bella never had children," says Harry, "and I rather think that I became a surrogate son".

Ben Taylor-Coopland, to give him his full name, was born during the 1890s, somewhere in the Stockport area of what is now Greater Manchester.



This design was ahead of its time, having the two sets of drawers set at 90° to each other, highlighted by a series of offset drawer handles

Nothing is known of his childhood years.

As a teenager he trained in cabinetmaking at a local technical institute. He obviously had a tremendous gift for the subject because in 1909 he became a coveted City and Guild of London Institute Gold Medallist. Examinations for this title had been held throughout the country, and Ben beat his contemporaries with his masterful skills. Few have ever achieved such a high standard.

Ben was eventually offered a job in the carpentry shop of Thomas Chapman, in the village of Grindleford. He obviously felt at home there, and during the 1920s he acquired a plot of land at the southern end of the village, on which he was soon to establish his own business.

With characteristic enterprise, ingenuity and determination, Ben not only built his own workshop and storeroom but also, wherever possible, equipped it himself.

On a sturdy wooden framework he mounted a circular saw that was driven by a belt and spindle. He devised attachments to hold removable drill bits and router bits he'd made himself for mortices and mouldings.

He made his own hand tools expertly, including a variety of planes, spokeshaves, set and T-squares. To complete his self-sufficiency, he also made himself a handcart for transport, and ladders for the outside jobs. It wasn't long before Ben became established as the village's 'joiner and cabinetmaker'.

In his heyday, from the late 1920s to the early 40s, Ben offered a full range of services. He would tackle anything from large-scale jobs – such as barn and house roofs, rustic garden furniture, farm gates, etc. – through to the most intricate of fine furniture, together with a promise to "...carefully repair Antique and Modern Furniture".

The majority of his work was obtained locally through word of mouth and by exhibiting at local shows – including those of the nearby town of Bakewell and the sprawling city of Derby. At these events he liked to display his worth with prices that were a little out of the ordinary, but never outlandish.

Although Ben's services did not come cheaply, he was never short of work, as his customers were

Ben's versatility is illustrated by these reproduction pieces, made to customers' requirements



Church furniture – note the cross on the back

assured of a thorough craftsman's job, carried out to the best of his abilities. Word of his prowess spread, and he was able to send his work to customers nationwide, via the local railway station.

■ By Royal Appointment

"It was in the making of high quality furniture that Ben really excelled," Harry says. "He used traditional English oak, American black walnut, yew, ash and elm to produce elegant and stylish pieces. The construction was always sound, with joints being the simplest and most appropriate for the job. They were never skimped, and nor were they for effect only."

Ben's style, obviously influenced by the Arts and Crafts Movement championed by Ernest Gimson and



Above: Ben's workshop, which Andrew has now rebuilt

Left: Ben also undertook restoration work

"He was, they say, like the typical village craftsman of his era – a long white apron, waistcoat with pocket watch, moustache and round wire-framed spectacles"

Left: Another of Ben's reproduction-style pieces



"I suspect Ben simply wanted for others the same level of satisfaction and inner peace that he had himself enjoyed," Harry says

the Barnsley brothers, was simple, with straight, clean lines, contrasting with subtle curves and delicate craftsmanship.

One of the highlights of Ben's life occurred at the Royal Show at Derby during the 1930s. His display of work on the Rural Industries stand caught the eye of a passing monarch, King George V, who complimented him on his exceptional craftsmanship. The King remembered the outstanding woodworker from Derbyshire and later instructed the Duke of Windsor (who was then the Prince of Wales) to visit the Grindleford workshop during a tour of the county.

He kept abreast of the latest developments and trends with annual visits to the Red Rose Guild of Craftsmen Exhibition at the Whitworth Gallery in Manchester, and through a small but eminent circle of close friends, including renowned makers like Romney Green and Harry Norris of Lancaster.

Ben's work displayed a wonderful feeling and eye for the timber. The rare black and white photographs of a bureau and corner cupboards (his speciality) illustrate a sense for matching and contrasting even the wildest of grain to produce a visually pleasing effect.

He was prepared to experiment, too, and some of his designs were ahead of their time. An example is the writing desk with the two sets of drawers set at 90° to each other and their series of offset handles.

As with the best craftsmen, Ben was able to satisfy most customers' requests, even if it meant forsaking his natural style.

"Another of his great strengths was his unerring accuracy," Harry explains. "He planed all of his timber by hand, so making the remarkable crispness, straightness and perfect jointing in his work even more praiseworthy."

It was for this reason that Ben was commissioned by the Professor of Crystallography at Sheffield University to produce solid wooden shapes with 8, 12 and 24 perfectly angled flat faces (to represent mineral crystals). "They are wonderful items," says Harry, "and I'm blown if I can see how he made them."

"The King remembered the outstanding woodworker from Derbyshire and later instructed the Duke of Windsor (who was then the Prince of Wales) to visit the Grindleford workshop during a tour of the county"

Ben
Coopland's
plaque

■ Devoted couple

Ben and Bella lived in the stone-built Goatscliffe Cottage, just across the road from his workshop. They were a devoted couple, both enjoying ballroom dancing and their annual adventure, via train and ferry, to the Isle of Man TT races.

Ben also contributed to the community life, serving the village football club as both secretary and treasurer.

He was a highly intelligent and well-read man, and he held firm views. But he was also extremely mild in manner and utterance, with even the most forgivable expletives being alien to him. Though he was unassuming and slow to make friends, he regularly attended the local Unitarian Church and was a lover of stimulating conversation.

He was a Socialist and had serious misgivings about the capitalist system in which he himself had flourished. It had, he maintained, serious flaws that he wished to see changed. Though not a communist, he admired Karl Marx for making a serious attempt to examine the causes of human deprivation and misery.

These views made him sympathise with George Bernard Shaw's reformist fight against hypocrisy, cant and injustices. "I suspect Ben simply wanted for others the same level of satisfaction and inner peace that he had himself enjoyed," Harry says.

Ben died in 1964, a few years after his wife. He had no relatives – apart from one distant cousin he'd never met. It was a quiet passing, with no pomp, and just a few mourners.

■ Tradition maintained

Some time later Harry Lawton was able to purchase Ben's old workshops. As we reported in last month's issue of *F&C*, these buildings have been masterfully rebuilt and modernised by Harry's son Andrew. He now makes fine pieces for discerning customers – just like Ben. The proud tradition of excellent handmade furniture produced by the craftsmen of Grindleford has been maintained.

Ben Coopland's skills warrant national recognition, and apart from a brush with Royalty over 70 years ago, it is quite possibly here and now, in this issue of *F&C*, that the matter has finally been addressed. ■

This chair, made by Ben, is displayed in the workshop's showroom area alongside Andrew's own work

B.T. COOPLAND JOINER & CABINET MAKER

■ Face from the past

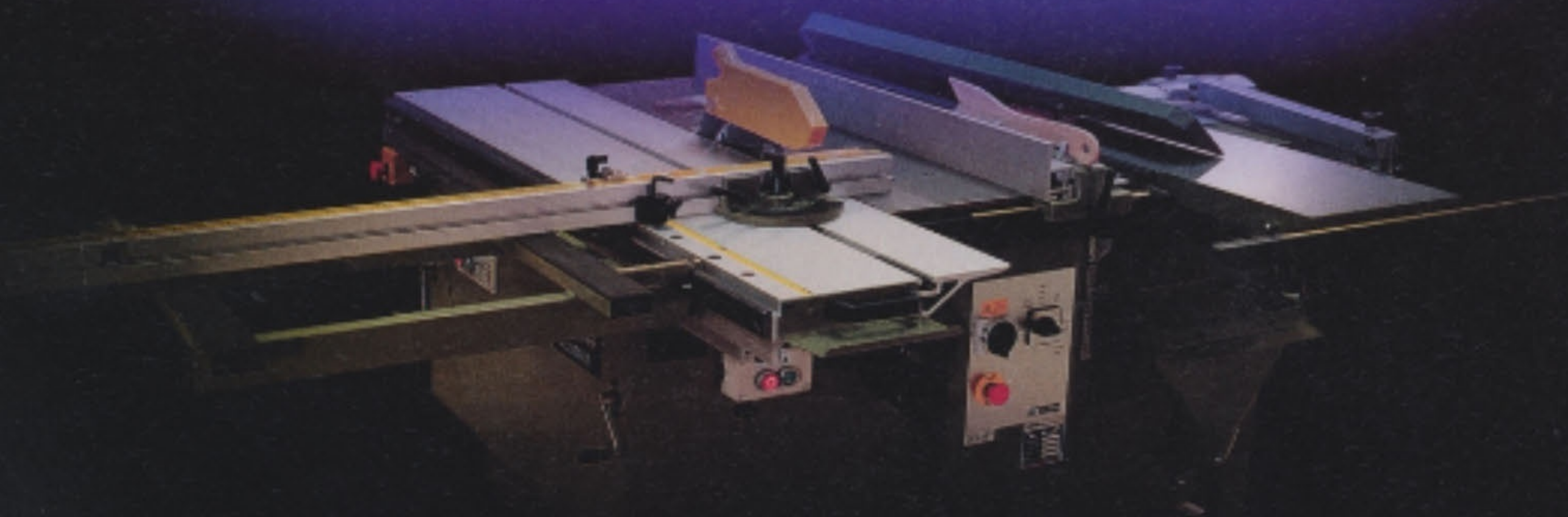
Editor's note: *F&C* would like to thank Harry and Andrew Lawton and local craftsman C. Peacock for all their valuable help in the preparation of this feature. If any reader has a photograph, sketch or painting of Ben, we would love to publish it and bring his face out of the shadows at last. Ed.



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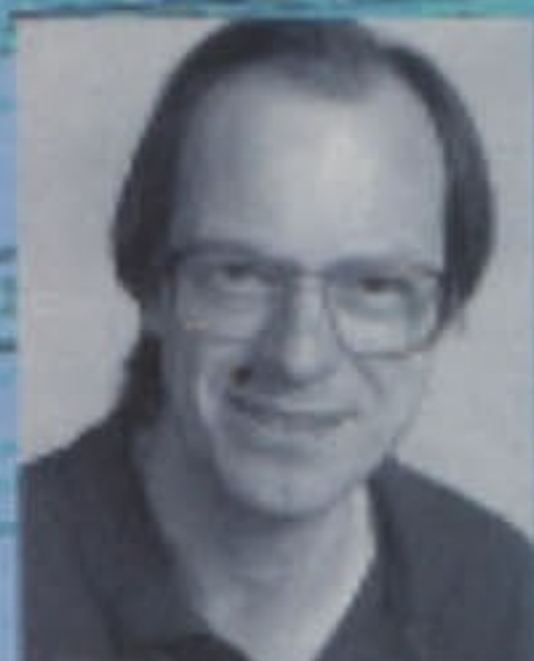
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Michael Huntley, formerly head of Sotheby's workshops at Billingshurst, undertakes commissions and is a consultant for various national projects. He is also a writer and is building his own timber-framed house. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacturers & Commerce

On the Continent, from 1850 to 1900, chairs continued to emulate grand designs from the past, says Michael Huntley. But by 1890, style-setters in Britain were switching their affections to Art Nouveau

A CONTINENT APART

The first photograph shows a fine carved oak Venetian armchair, circa 1860. The carving is in the 17th century manner after Andrea Brustolon (born 1662). The figures sitting on the back of the arms are cherubs and the front supports are Moors. This is an example of the 'historical' style of chair.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF SOTHEBY'S



A Boule salon suite is shown on the left. Notice that the chairs are *Boule* and *Contra-boule*. This refers to the fact that the two skins of brass and tortoiseshell have been swapped over on each chair. What was made of brass on the right-hand chair is tortoiseshell on the left-hand chair and vice-versa. The brass inlay and the faces on the canapé are typical of the original Boule period, circa 1700.

Another carved Italian chair is shown here. This throne-like chair was made circa 1870 and has carved gilt wood surmounted by cherubs, boldly scrolled legs and claw feet. The Italians had a very bold and vibrant style of carving. Although this piece is 19th century the motifs have their origins in much earlier times



This shows a French canapé, made circa 1870. This is giltwood in Louis XVI style. The art of chair making never really died out in France and such frames are still being made today. The covering is silk damask.



A matched salon suite in mahogany, made circa 1870 to 1880, is shown, left. This is a Louis XVI design, see *F&C* No. 46. The only way to tell later chairs from original ones is to look at the timber and the methods of construction. 19th-century chairs have crisper edges, were designed for springs, have more machining of the timber, usually use poorer quality timber, have castors, use metal mounts and just generally 'look' as if they belong to the 19th century!



Now here is something different. This is an Italian grotto suite, made circa 1880. The shell-like chairs are made for use in a grotto or other garden setting. These are carved, painted, silvered and parcel-gilt. When you consider the limitations of animal glue, which is what was used, it is remarkable that these chairs have survived. Perhaps it is down to careful timber selection and jointing. However, the garden for which they were made probably had lots of under-gardeners to carry them in out of the damp!



Here is another pair of Italian 'Renaissance' chairs, made circa 1880. They are part ebony and part ebonised. The backs are set with hard stones and inlaid with tortoiseshell. The central panel is of ivory, engraved with figures after Salvatore Rosa, an Italian painter (1615-1673). The seats are similarly decorated.



This French salon suite was made circa 1880 of carved and gilded beech in Louis XVI style. The same remarks regarding the differentiation between 18th-century originals and 19th-century copies as I made earlier apply here. In the 19th century making copies, using traditional methods, was not regarded as 'faking it', as we might regard it today! This suite was made in the spirit of acceptance and acknowledgement that the design and the techniques were good and were worth preserving. Such techniques are still preserved and taught today, in French furniture colleges. Their students are not urged to search for new seating designs, as ours are. They are first taught the traditional methods, including how to use and properly sharpen hand tools! The result appears to be that the French have a better and healthier hand-made furniture tradition than we do. In *F&C* No. 16 I reported on the *École Boulle* in Paris and discovered that before students learn how to cut marquetry (using piercing saw blades that they make themselves), they spend an entire year learning to make traditional chairs by hand.



Here is a French gilt bronze and mahogany salon suite in Empire style, circa 1880. Once again this pays homage to an earlier style, relying on the inspiration of Jacob and Desmaller (see *F&C* No. 61 and *F&C* No. 62).

The Orient influenced French (and thus European) design during this period and in the 1870s Asian art began to appear in French exhibitions and art shops. The most unusual day bed, shown here, was made by Gabriel Viardot and is dated 1887. Viardot specialised in exotic furniture and advertised himself as a 'maker of furniture in the Chinese and Japanese genre'. This piece literally looks 'fantastic'. It is made in the form of a Buddhist Chinese demon and though you have to admire the carving, it does look very uncomfortable! Furniture based on Oriental designs did make its mark in Europe, as indeed it had done for many centuries. But – with the exception of hardwood Chinese chairs – seat furniture didn't really translate well to Europe because chairs were not common in Asia. What came out of this Oriental inspiration was the Japanese-based furniture of E.W. Godwin in England and the Art Nouveau movement in Europe



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Finally we return to more conventional seating with the ubiquitous Aubusson suite (right) and the chunkier bergères (bottom right). Aubusson is a town in France that has given its name to a type of tapestry. People erroneously refer to needlepoint as tapestry and vice versa. Tapestry is, in fact, not made with a needle but the pattern is woven as part of the fabric on a loom. The picture is made within the fabric and looks like embroidery but is not applied to the fabric with a needle. Embroidery is applied to the fabric. Tapestries had been made at Aubusson on handlooms for hundreds of years. The tapestries shown here are made with the aid of machines. The resultant reduction in manufacturing costs meant that tapestry that was once the preserve of royalty and aristocrats could be applied to furniture made for the middle classes. These frames are made in a vaguely 18th-century style, are badly carved and badly gilded and have mass-produced tapestries fitted. They are really the epitome of the nadir of the French furniture trade



These bergères are also poorly made. They are vaguely in an Empire style but the carved faces of the caryatids supporting the arms are third rate. Again, a great design has become debased. Don't forget, though, that in 1890 when these were made, the rich and famous were not buying Empire and Louis XVI furniture, they were buying Art Nouveau

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PROJECT

GARRICK'S BENCH

PHOTOGRAPHED BY SCOTT WYKA



PHOTOGRAPHED BY THE AUTHOR

A piece like this needs a lot of hand shaping, which can be fun as well as hard work

The lady had seen some work in a gallery while on holiday in Cornwall and phoned me on returning home. She needed a bench to sit beneath a large oil painting in her hall and asked for something 'fairly classical, elegant and feminine'. There was a fixed budget, which was fine, and she kindly sent me some photos of the hall and accurate dimensions of the layout and painting.

It was clear from the outset that I was dealing with someone who was fairly particular about things. This is my favourite sort of customer. Someone who knows what they like but also wants guidance and suggestions. The making is that bit more fulfilling when a good relationship exists between client and maker. The photographs she sent were very useful as they showed some of her other artefacts, which the bench was to complement.



Scott Woyka is a fifth-generation woodworker. Although he trained as an aeronautic engineer, he could not resist returning to work with wood. He has been running a workshop for four years in the harbour town of Falmouth in Cornwall and produces furniture to commission, mostly to his own designs.

Scott Woyka lifts the curtain to reveal his dramatic bench with scrolled sides, made for the home of the founder of Garrick's Theatre

HITTING THE SPOT

My first design proposals, which took the form of perspective drawings, led to some discussion, but I hadn't really hit the spot, so to speak. Back to the drawing board for another Sunday afternoon. In the end, we went back to the original drawings, which had 'grown on' the customer in the meantime. I stressed the point that even perspective drawings

don't really give a full picture of the intended work as they are still only two-dimensional. There did have to be an element of faith.

ELM AND ASH

I phoned my first choice of timber yard to check the availability of the thick elm (*Ulmus* spp.). The foreman told me the 100mm (4in) was getting a bit low, which normally means it's down to the dregs. However, they did have some 125mm (5in) stuff coming out of the kiln shortly. When I went up to have a look the elm had just come out of the kiln that morning and was still warm. It felt a bit like going to the baker's early in the morning. I must admit that the timber I saw wasn't great. It was full of defects and shakes, but out of maybe a dozen boards, there was one that was up to the job. Turning over these big boards is a most enjoyable way to pass the time, struggling against their weight and peering over their lengths to discover the wonderful grain. I then sifted through a pile of ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) boards and found one with a lovely olive streak for the seat.

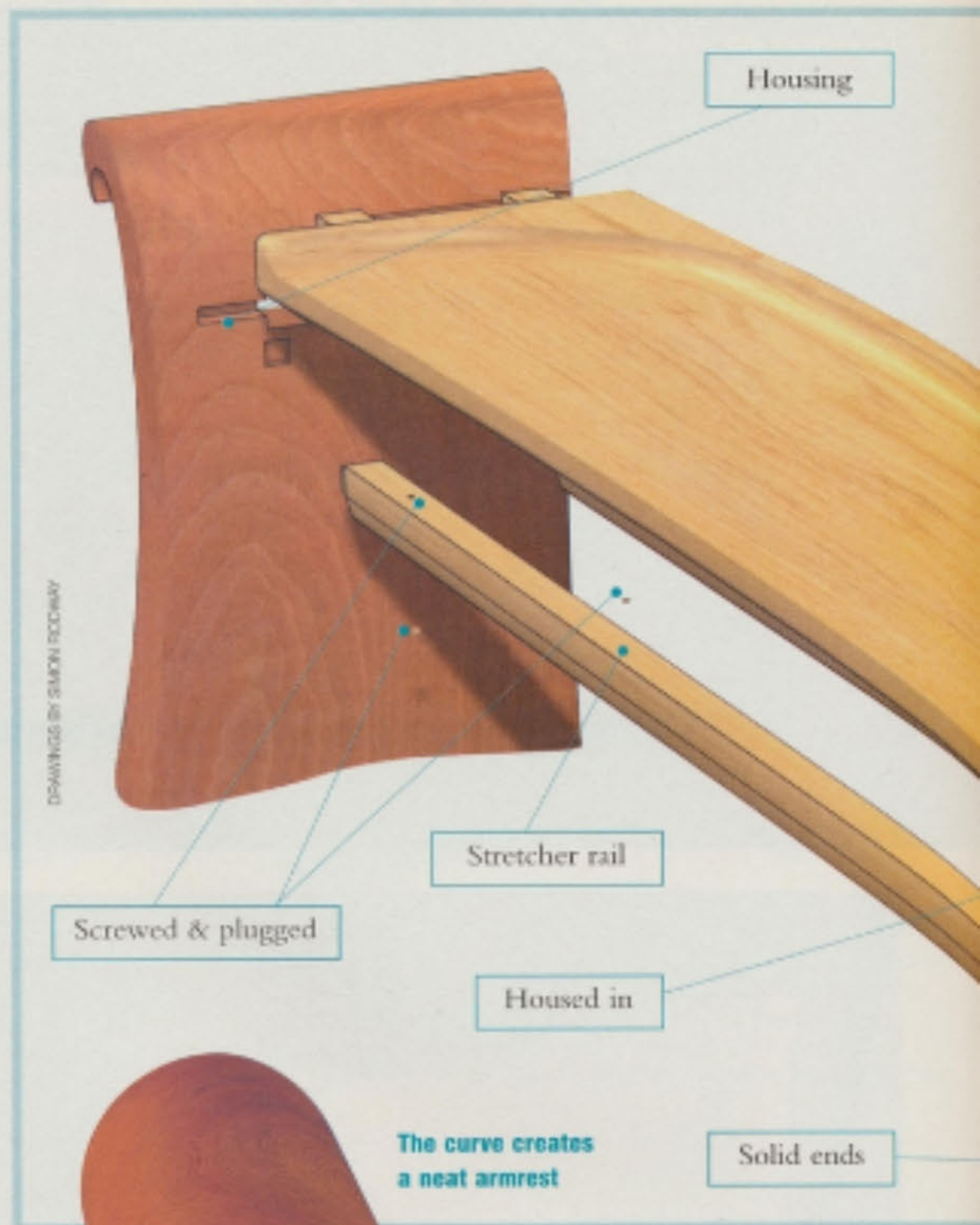
Back at the ranch, I sawed the boards roughly to size and gave them a quick plane and thickness. I now set them aside for about a month before the making. I was glad to have this time because I thought the elm, even though it was kiln-dried, might still have a considerable differential in the moisture content throughout the board due to its thickness. Having just come out of the kiln it would need to stabilise a little.

MORTICES BY HAND

To begin the making cut the mortices in the elm to receive the seat. Because of their position, I couldn't do it on my morticer so had to do it the old-fashioned way. Drill most of the waste out then chop through the 120mm deep mortice. They have to remain perfect through the entire depth as there will be through-wedged tenons and obviously, it has to be neat when sawing the profile. You only need to cut the mortices about 55mm (approx. 2¼in) deep as this will be the final thickness of the elm in this section. However, making the hole right through allows you to check it for square properly. Cut the mortices for the seat supports at this stage and a 13mm (½in) wide housing nearly the full width of the seat.

LEGS NEED A TEMPLATE

Draw the profile of the legs on some ply to produce a template. I found this involved some fiddling about with the various radii until it was about right. After marking out the profile on the legs, get the bandsaw ready to cut them out. My bandsaw only cuts about 10in under the guides but I figured I could remove the guides and cut the full 14in (355mm). I made up an improvised guide block – basically a block of wood with a saw cut in it that I clamped in place within the bandsaw frame. I dripped some oil on it to make sure things would run smoothly. I also put a fresh blade in for this operation. While I would not recommend



Checking mortices for square



Routing the shoulders

PHOTOGRAPH BY BOB BERRY

'The bench is named after Garrick, who was the theatre manager who brought Shakespeare to fame and in whose house it now lives'

The legs have a double curve as well as a gentle hollow on the feet



PHOTOGRAPH BY BOB BERRY

Solid seat

Through wedged tenons

doing this at home, it did go remarkably well. I kept the feed down to a snail's pace and the blade stayed right on line. The last bit under the curl of the armrest was a little tricky but turned out okay. To clean this part up I turned a 38mm cylinder on the lathe about 17in long and wrapped 80 grit sandpaper around it. With the lathe switched on, I carefully put the curl of the leg up to the sanding cylinder. This took a little while to get the hang of but it really worked quite well.

TENONS & SHOULDERS

After all this hard work on the poor legs, let them rest for a while to get used to their new shape. Time to set to work on the ash. First of all, draw on the radii for the front and back edge – but don't take off the waste until later. Mark out the tenon positions and the 13mm tongue. Cut the tenons on the bandsaw. Cut the shoulders of the tongue with the router against a straightedge. Drill some 4mm holes in the tenons where the kerfs will end.

I found this a little tricky on the pillar drill due to accessibility but I had an extra long 4mm drill and that made it all possible.

Now cut the kerfs on the bandsaw. With the tenons out of the way you can saw the curves on the front and back edges.

ELLIPSE FOR THE SEAT

For the seat shape, first I made an ellipse shape, marking it out with a piece of string between two nails at the foci. (The wood with the nails in would later be removed). However, this made the seating at each end quite restricted so I ended up doing it more or less by eye. I made the curve at each end a little fuller for adequate parking space!

The waste I removed with quite a variety of tools. I started on the drill press with a 40mm diameter Forstner bit. This gives quite quick waste removal and the depth can be monitored carefully. I then switched to an Arbortech and then on to spokeshaves, scrapers and sandpaper. There was one knot in the seat area that was a little unsightly. It didn't go all the way through to the bottom, so I was praying it might disappear as I removed wood. And that's exactly what it did.

ASH RAILS

The rails, or bearers, were cut from 2in ash. Having cut the tenons, I curved the bottom edge to taper up towards each leg. I also softened their edges with an elliptical moulding on the router table.

I also decided to screw up through these into the seat for added strength. I first drilled a 10mm hole, which would later receive a plug, then a 5mm pilot hole.

Now it is time to finish off the legs. They still need a fair bit of shaping with the usual spokeshaves and a microplane. When I did it, the flat area, which would receive the seat, was no longer flat, so I clamped them down to the bench and flattened them with my jointer.



An original approach to sanding a curve



Cramped up – note cut outs on the block for wedges

■ DRY ASSEMBLY

A dry assembly is essential to see how the glue-up will go. The bottom of the seat may no longer be flat, having had so much wood removed from the top. The rails will force it flat which will introduce some tension to the structure. I decided this was a bonus as it would help keep everything in its place. Use two sash cramps and make up some curved blocks the width of the legs. The curves in these blocks will help distribute the pressure evenly. Glue some cork to these to protect the wood.

Start the sequence for the glue-up by fixing both seat and bearers to one leg. Then put the other leg on. Push the seat and rails together so that the rails will go into their mortices. It is one of those jobs where another pair of hands would be useful and quite a lot of tapping is required. Put in the wedges and the screws and plugs up through the rails.

Once out of the clamps, clean up the end of the tenons and wedges and the plugs. Four coats of Danish Oil later, it is finished.

■ THEATRICAL HOME

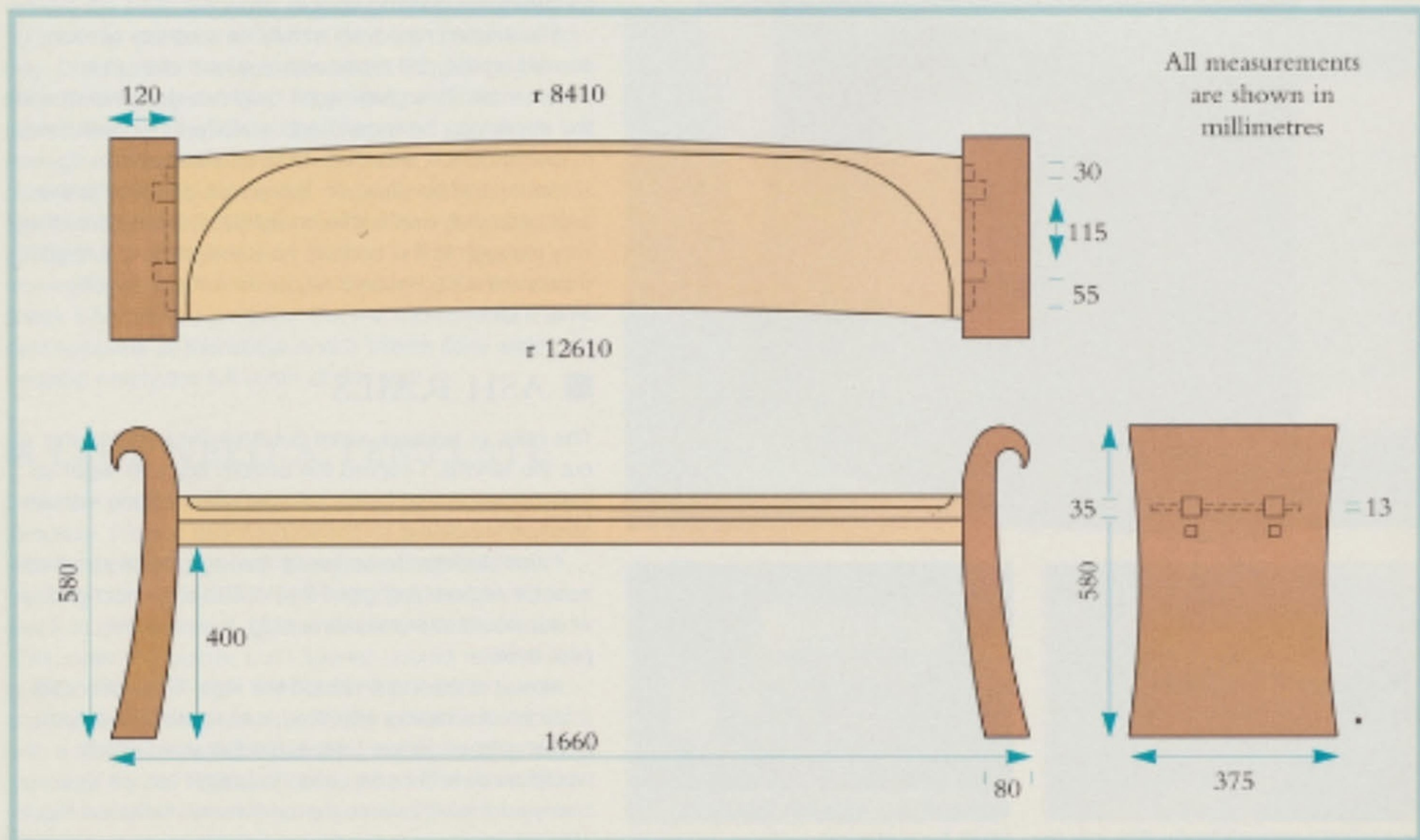
I chose to send this piece by carrier but have since been up to its home to see about the next job. It not only looked quite good in situ but has apparently been quite useful at Christmas time for extra seating. The bench is named after Garrick, who was the theatre manager who brought Shakespeare to fame and in whose house it now lives. While I was there the lady kindly showed me her bed, which was a most wonderful French Art Nouveau piece with superb carved scrolls. How did they do it in those days? ■

Wedged tenons



Two rails support the seat

PHOTOGRAPH BY BOB BOSTON



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Richard Jones is a cabinetmaker who spent nine years teaching MA students of Furniture Design & Craft at Herriot Watt University in Edinburgh. He now lives in the USA, specialising in designing and making fine contemporary pieces as well as antique restoration

Oaken *sheen*

Richard Jones advises on finishing techniques for open-grained timber – particularly oak this month, and walnut next month

There are quite a few options for finishing open-pored or open-grained timbers such as mahogany, walnut, chestnut, oak and ash. Finishing might include staining, and/or dyeing, grain filling and polishing, or polishing alone with none of the other techniques included in the process. I have a couple of routines that work particularly well – a quite striking effect used on white oak and a typical approach for walnut. First, we'll look at oak.

ROUND-UP OF STRATEGIES

The highlighted open-grain patterns of much oaken Arts and Crafts style furniture from the late 1800s and early 20th century play a significant part in the attractiveness of the style for many people. A lot of the original Arts and Crafts pieces were fumed dark with industrial strength ammonia – extremely nasty stuff. It's not surprising that a lot of workers turn to pigment stains and dyes to get an acceptable colour.

Quite a common method for finishing open-grained timbers is to use an oil-based pigment stain that settles in, accumulates in, and emphasises the open grain. Polishing it in some way completes the task. The result is especially noticeable in timbers such as the oaks, ash and chestnut – you can see the open grain pattern and if you run your fingers over it you feel it. A modification of this is to follow the stain with a clear barrier wash coat of thin polish and a dark glaze. Glazes are heavily pigmented formulations in oil or water, used to settle in and further highlight the openness of the grain and to enhance the colour of the dye or stain.

Another method is to start by dyeing the timber. Dyes have (effectively) no significant solid pigments to settle into the pores and they dry clear, without occluding the grain. Again, you can leave the grain open and polish it, but it's also fairly common to apply a glaze and then polish. Another option is to completely fill the grain so that the final surface is uniformly flat, which is not the same as having a matte finish. Another choice is to half fill the grain so that after applying the polish the final look is somewhere between the two extremes. Filling the grain is widespread practice with mahogany and walnut – especially for tabletops.

This bed has harewood panels





Apply the grain filler using a rag



Burnish with hessian across the grain to remove excess plaster



Hand sand dry filler with grain



Tools and materials for filling grain

MULTI-LAYERED FILLER

Today, most people think of grain filler as something proprietary, ready-mixed, in a can. It is generally used to blend with the background colour, whether dyed, stained or natural. Another way to fill the grain is to apply multiple layers of polish, cutting back hard between coats so that eventually the open grain is semi-filled or completely choked with the polish. I've found that you can use French polish (shellac) and nitrocellulose lacquers to fill the grain because you can build them up layer upon layer.

On the other hand, filling the grain with a sprayed acid catalysed lacquer, or a catalysed varnish, can present difficulties. The manufacturers recommend the final combined coat thickness of these finishing products should not exceed 5ml. This generally means spraying a maximum of three coats if you are merely de-nibbing between applications with something like 400 grit paper. If you sand back hard between coats you can achieve the recommended 4-5mm dry thickness. Excessive coating weight of the products usually results in cracking, which might look like 'Chinese writing'. This fault typically shows up six or 12 months after application – not good! Another problem I sometimes have with using pre- and post-catalysed types of lacquers over unfilled open-grained timbers is that air trapped in the open pores sometimes forces its way up through the partially cured film, resulting in pinholes or bubbles. Prevent this in the first instance by applying a primer in the form of a thinned-out wash coat. Another option is to add 'retardant' to give trapped air a chance to escape. I'm always reluctant to add much retardant because retarded drying polish can remain imprint-soft for days!

AN OAK TREATMENT

A slightly unusual treatment for an American white oak panel is to stain the timber, then fill the grain with a contrasting grain-filler prior to completing the polishing job. You can use any dye or stain to achieve the background colour, but in the following process there is a wrinkle.

The base colour is achieved by staining with green copperas – ferrous sulphate. Green copperas used as an agent in timber staining is neither a (pigment) stain, nor a dye. It reacts chemically with the timber. It reacts with the tannin in white oak, mahogany, walnut and cherry, and in white oaks the result is anything from a pale grey to a Royal Airforce Blue, depending

on the strength at application and the timber species.

Of the open-grained timbers, it is used most often with oak. Interestingly, green copperas also reacts with both sycamore and maple, turning these timbers into hawthorn or greywood. I'm not sure why it reacts, because neither species is high in tannin. Incidentally, red oaks don't seem to react well to green copperas.

GREEN COPPERAS

Green copperas comes as yellowish green crystals and the chemical is poisonous, so avoid ingesting the stuff. Regarding strength, first add a heaped teaspoonful of the crystals into about a pint or half a litre of water and stir it up to produce a muddy-looking liquid. This is a fairly weak solution. Take a brush, dip it in and put a stripe of the liquid onto an offcut of prepared timber. Nothing seems to happen at first, but as the liquid dries the colour develops. Let the stain dry fully to see how strong the colour change is and adjust the strength from there. It's best to apply some polish over the test area to judge the final outcome. Oil-based alkyd varnishes tend to add a yellowish or amber cast, whereas nitrocellulose lacquer, water-based finishes and shellacs don't. All finishes modify the final colour a little so it's a good idea to experiment before committing yourself.

After planing, scraping and sanding an oak panel until it is 'polish-ready', drive four screws into the underside to act as supports. Because the stain is water-based, raise the grain on both sides, starting on the bottom, using a cloth well dampened with hot water. Next, flip the top to rest on the screw heads to raise the grain on the top face. After the timber is thoroughly dry, lightly sand all faces by hand with 240 grit abrasive paper – just enough to knock the fuzz off. Don't sand it harder or the stain will raise the grain again. Now blow all faces and edges with compressed air to remove dust from the open grain – fine-bristled brushes work quite well, too.

START UNDERNEATH

To apply the stain, start on the underside. With cheap, wide, throwaway bristle brushes, quickly apply the stain, starting from the middle and working towards the ends and over the edges. Water stains will sometimes fail to penetrate properly into all the cracks and crevices of open-grained timbers because of water's surface tension. The bristles help break the surface tension and force the stain into the grain. Follow up the stain application by wiping over the surface in the direction of the grain with white cotton rags to ensure an even coat. This should take no more than a few minutes, so if the panel is large, an assistant is a boon.

At this point, flip the slab and stain the top. Start from the ends and the sides and work towards the middle. In doing the underside first, inevitably some of the stain will run onto the top surface, so starting at the outside edges and working in helps eliminate tide marks by keeping a 'wet edge' going. After two or three minutes the surface should be flooded. Follow up with cotton rags, wiping the edges, ends and 80-100 mm (3-4in) in from the edge along the underside.

Leave the stain to dry thoroughly, perhaps overnight.



Apply naphtha to the surface to highlight areas not filled properly



Shine a light from a low angle to reveal unfilled grain and other flaws



The table top when finished



Next month:

Richard will be discussing filling the grain of walnut and final finishing.

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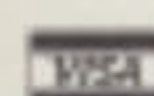
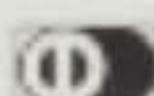
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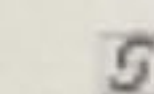
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The question is, should a furniture restorer allow the idea of spraying furniture to enter his head? Or, perhaps more importantly, should a furniture restorer allow the idea of spraying antique furniture to enter his head without being sent to seek psychiatric help!

We all know that for a furniture restorer to be taken seriously he should have grey hair, sport a good covering of facial hair, wear half-rim specs and smoke a pipe. I'm not entirely sure what the perceived image of the female restorer is – not the same as the boys one would hope, but this is not really a subject I feel brave enough to tackle for fear of bitter reprisals! The polishing equipment that the furniture restorer is expected to use, traditionally consists of wads of cotton wool covered in bits of old shirt and an array of old washing up liquid bottles filled with various sticky concoctions and flammable liquids. So the very thought of a furniture restorer clutching a piece of high-tech equipment like a spray gun would be troubling enough, but if he were to actually use it to spray modern lacquer over a piece of antique furniture, his days would surely be numbered!

Shake up your ethics

But is this notion actually so very horrifying? After all, what is the real difference between spray polishing and French polishing and what are the ethical considerations of re-polishing?

Well, to begin with, the technique of French polishing didn't even come into existence until about 1820. But this didn't stop restorers refinishing an awful lot of earlier furniture with French polish in the 19th Century, mainly because it was fashionable. So there is a good chance that the polish that you find on pre-Victorian antique furniture is not the original finish. Also, in the course of what is now several hundred years, accidents happen and finishes get damaged and replaced with a finishing system that was deemed to be appropriate or acceptable at that time. Bearing in mind that the current preoccupation with conservation is a relatively recent phenomena, all sorts of polishes might have been used over the years. So our aim to preserve original surfaces and finishes might be a little misguided, as it is often a moot point as to how original any particular finish actually is!

Examine the process

Looking at the technique of French polishing, what is actually happening during this process? A lacquer, 'shellac', which is a natural substance dissolved in methanol, is applied to a surface by hand with a pad. The beauty of the French polishing system being that the surface film can be built up quickly because it hardens very quickly, but as each successive coat is applied it slightly dissolves the previous layer to give perfect bonding between coats. Once there is enough material on the surface you can cut it back, if necessary, with a fine abrasive paper to get rid of any unwelcome additions to the surface film, like dust, fluff or hair. Then you can remove the scratches by 'pulling over' the surface with a pad and some methanol. This process, which re-dissolves just the very top bit of the surface film, not only removes the scratches, but also, by the use of pressure, pushes the finish into the grain of the wood to fill the grain and has a burnishing effect, to give a high shine. So, in essence, the French polishing process consists of applying a finish and then manipulating it by re-dissolving it slightly. The whole process is done by hand, and the use of a pad means that the resulting surface doesn't have any nasty brush marks or spraying imperfections, and is consequently very flat and shiny!

Do restorers and spraying mix?

PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR

Should spray

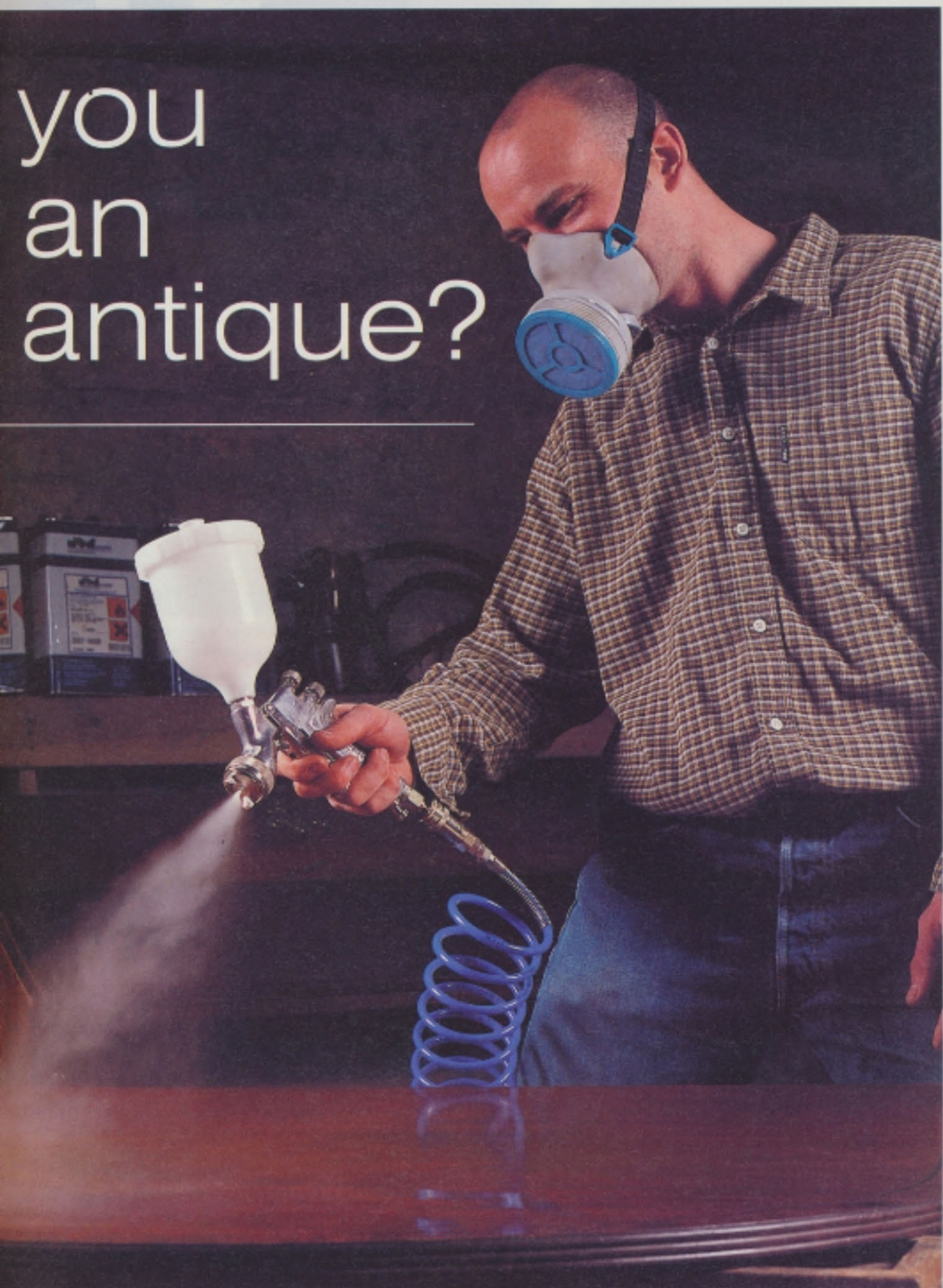
Restorer John Lloyd argues the case for a bit of judicious spraying to preserve your antique furniture



John Lloyd trained with Bruce Luckhurst and gained a City & Guilds silver medal in Furniture Advanced Crafts. He now has his own workshop on Ditchling Common, Sussex, where he restores and copies mainly traditional furniture. John is a full member of the British Antique Furniture Restorers' Association (BAFRA). He now runs courses from his workshop.

Tel: 01444 480388. Website: www.johnlloydfinefurniture.co.uk

you
an
antique?



PHOTOGRAPH BY ANTHONY RAYLEVAGE

Getting the 'look'

Now let's compare this with a spray system. I'm not going to look at spraying in general, but specifically spraying something that could give the right look – i.e. a similar look to a French polished surface that might be appropriate for an antique. It is possible, of course, to spray shellac, but the other option is to use a pre-catalyzed cellulose lacquer. So the technique this time is to build up the surface film, as before, but this time with a spray gun instead of a pad. If the coats are applied thinly they harden quickly, which means that you can apply several coats quite quickly and as each successive coat slightly dissolves the previous layer so there is no problem with bonding and no need to abrade between coats. Once you reach the desired thickness of finish, you can cut out any imperfections in the surface by using an abrasive paper. Then you can remove any scratches by 'pulling over' the surface with a pad and something that slightly dissolves the surface film. In the case of a pre-cat lacquer, this would be 'pull over' solution. As before, this process not only removes the scratches, it can also fill the grain and because a pad is being used, the resulting surface is nice and smooth and shiny. So, it's not so different to French polish, really!

On the 'plus' side

The benefits of spraying are, of course, that it is very quick, which means that you can polish large surfaces like dining tables with little fuss and a minimum of arm and backache. Pre-cat lacquer has the major benefit that it is more durable than shellac and it hardens more quickly than shellac. For someone who is familiar with the French polishing process, any inadequacies in spraying technique – of which I have many – can be dealt with by cutting back and pulling over. So, for the novice sprayer, like me, the act of spraying is merely a way of getting a fairly even layer of polish onto a surface quickly. Any inadequacies can then be dealt with using a technique that I am a little more at home with.

On the 'minus' side

Of course there are always disadvantages to anything and for spraying lacquer it is the fact that cellulose is highly flammable and toxic, which means that you need an explosion-proof spray booth and a respirator. It is possible to spray outside, to gain the necessary ventilation, but this also means that spraying operations are susceptible to the vagaries of the weather and the finish is likely to include dust, insects and airborne rubbish!

To enter the world of spraying can be very expensive, as spray booths don't come cheap and take up a good deal of space. Then there is also the cost of the spray equipment to consider. If, like me, you already have some hand polishing skills and you wish to go the pre-cat cellulose lacquer route, then the quality of the spray equipment is not critical.

As soon as you start to delve into the mysterious world of spraying you will quickly realize that it can get a bit technical. People start talking to you about air cap and fluid tip sizes and then there are the two types of spray system – conventional compressed air and the more modern HVLP.

Compressing reasons

The conventional system uses a standard compressor and a conventional gun and the air goes through the gun at a moderate volume and a high pressure. HVLP means 'High Volume, Low Pressure' which again refers to the air going through the gun.



Conventional spray set-up, using a compressor with moderate volume and high pressure



One disadvantage of this set-up is over-spray, caused by the finish bouncing off the surface, due to the higher pressure



The Apollo Hobby Plus set-up



Testing the spray pattern

SPRAY PATTERN



1 For spraying up and down



2 For spraying side to side

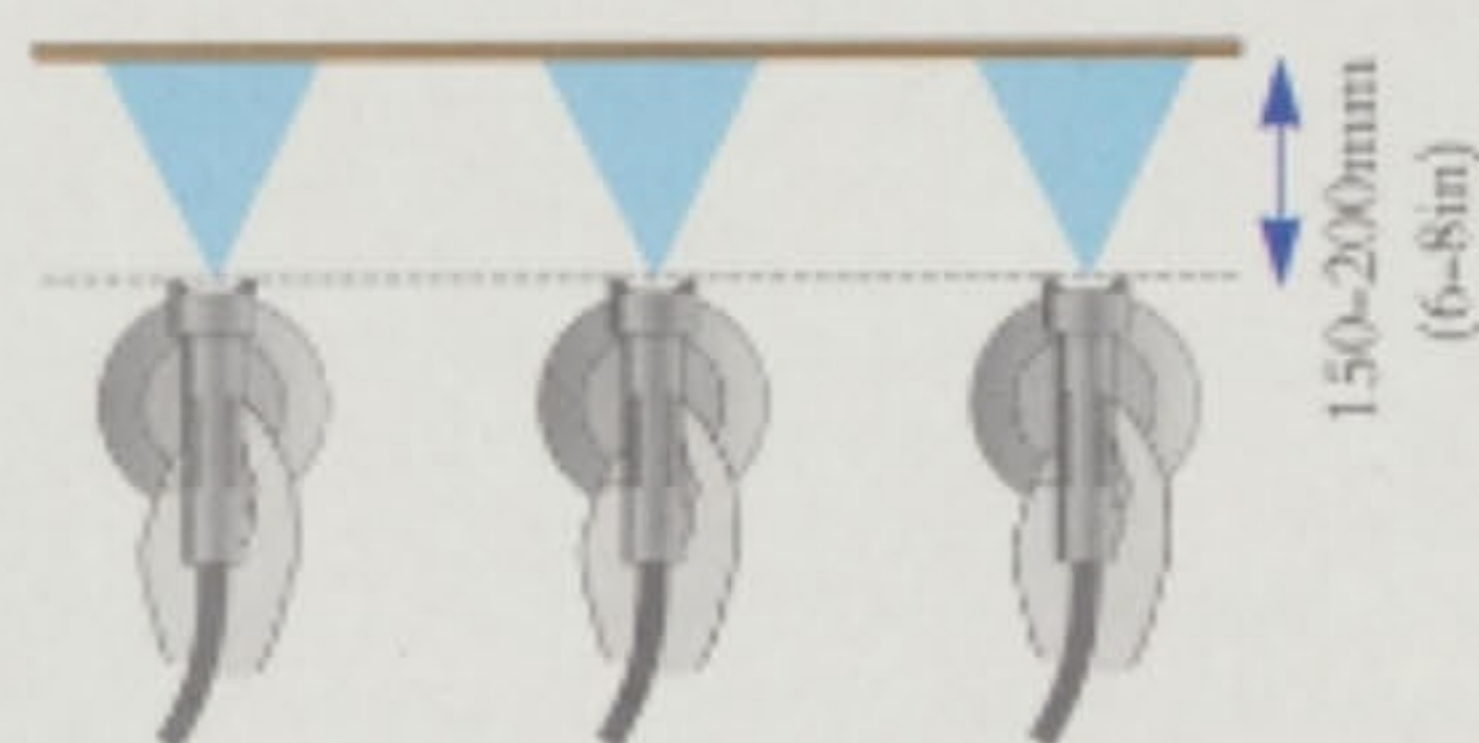


3 For spraying small objects and fine work

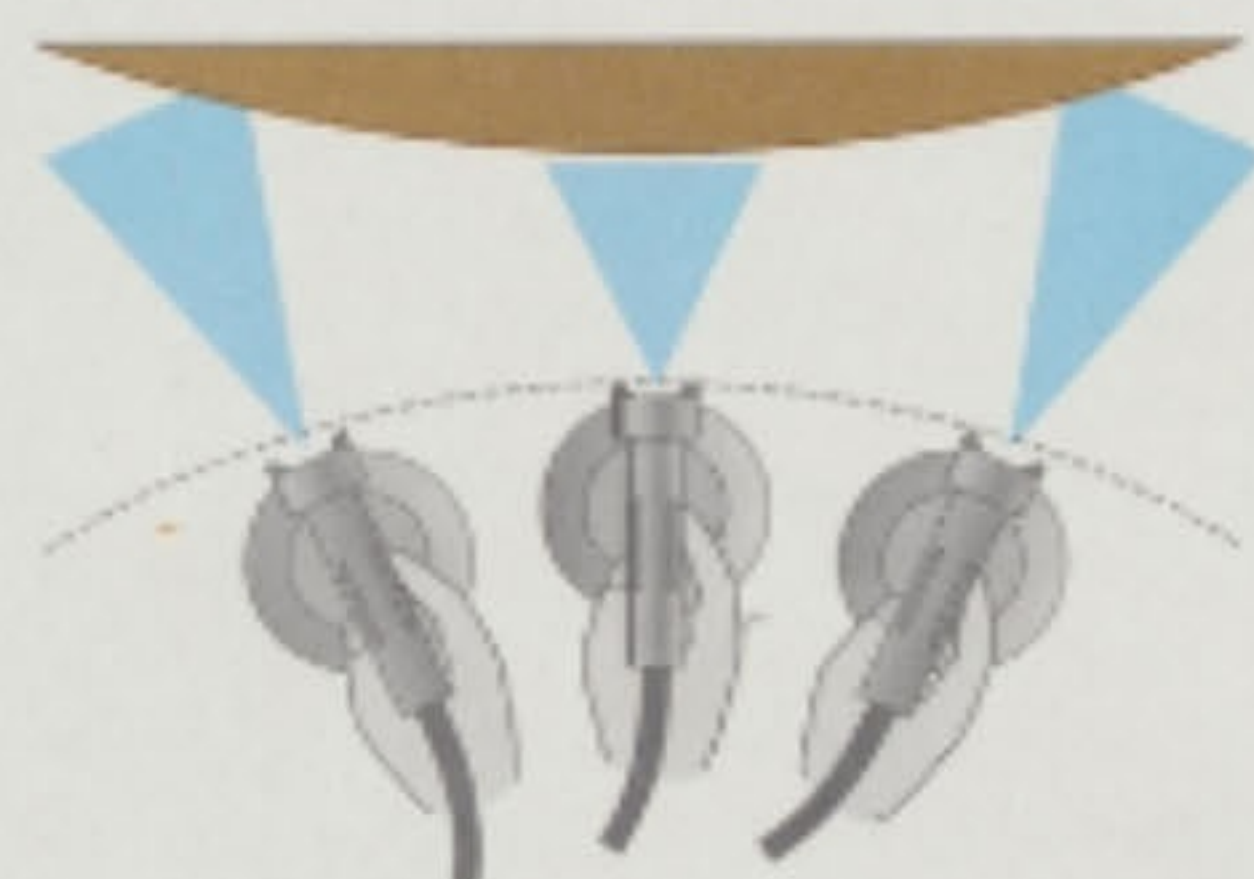


The shape is determined by the three different positions of the air cap. To select the spray pattern turn the air cap to one of the positions

SPRAY PAINTING TECHNIQUES



RIGHT



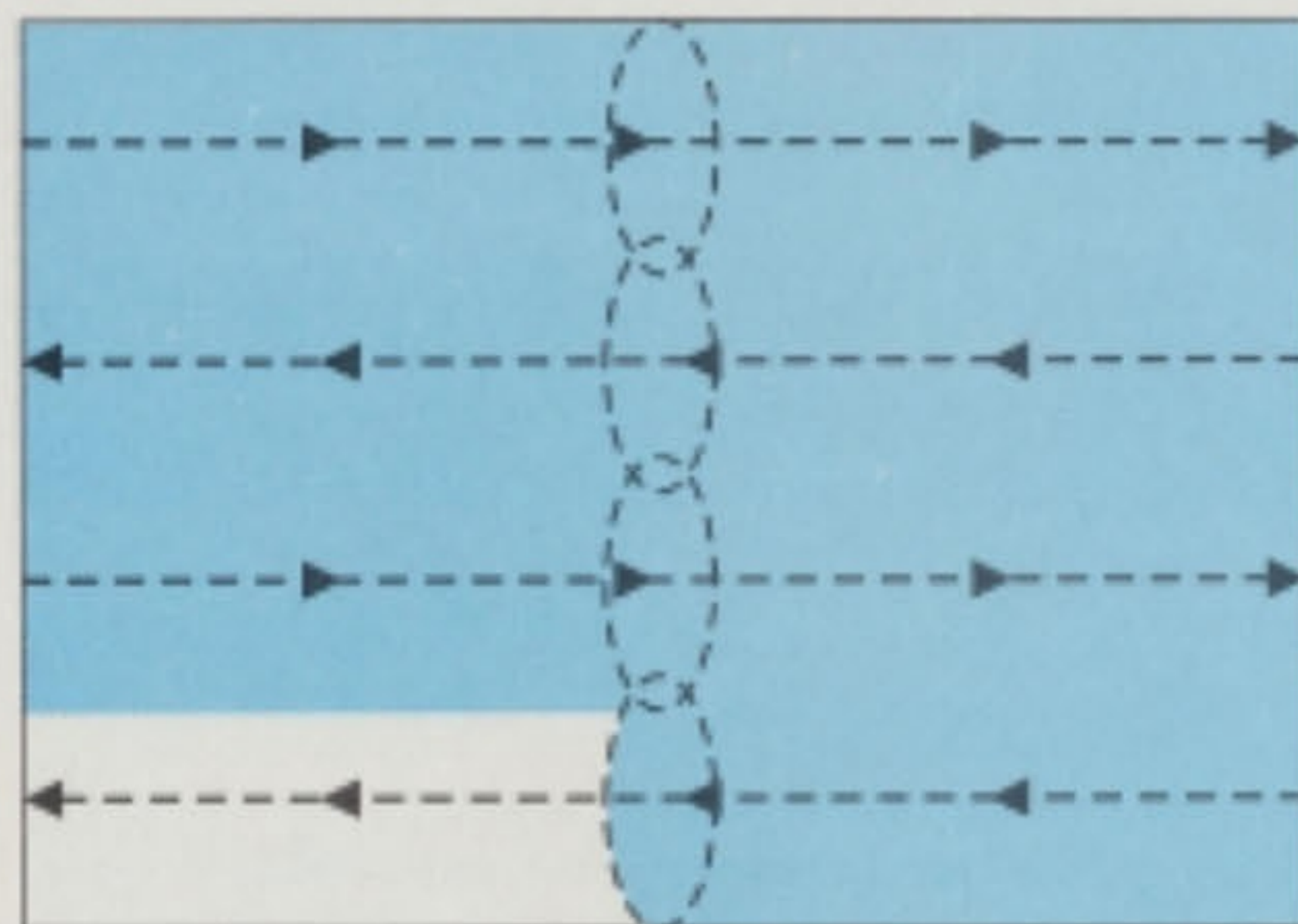
WRONG

Practise on a piece of cardboard to check that the spray pattern, viscosity and amount of material is correct.

Hold the gun 150 to 200mm (6 to 8in) from the work. If the gun is too close excessive material is deposited, if too far away a 'dry spray' results, producing a rough, sandy effect.

At the beginning of each stroke trigger the gun ON and at the end, trigger the gun OFF. Always use this method to avoid a build-up of material at either end of the stroke. The speed of the stroke should be constant. Move the gun parallel to the work surface and at right-angles to the surface. Tilting the gun up or down in a curve will give an uneven deposit.

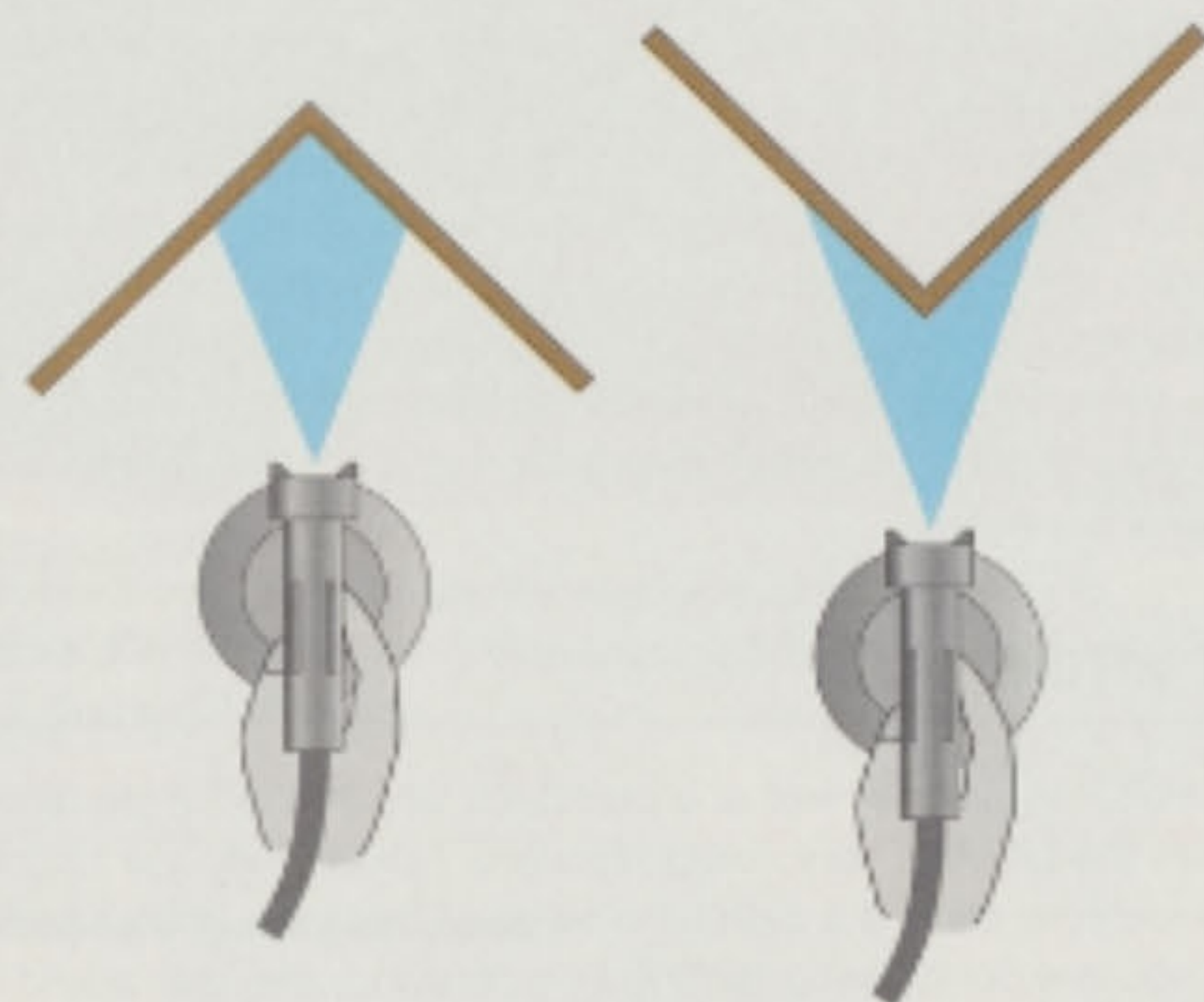
SPRAYING LARGE SURFACES



Adjust the material to flow freely and spray in sections, overlapping each pass by about 30%.



SPRAYING CORNERS



Adjust the spray pattern to a round dot, decrease the material flow and spray both surfaces at once. Always spray edges and corners before the main work.

Facts & figures

The Apollo Hobby Plus is the entry-level HVLP system that this company offers. The Spraymaster 600 model costs £253.80 inc. VAT. For more information on the range, which extends right up to professional standard kit, contact: Bambi Air Compressors Ltd. Tel: 0121 322 2299.

I already had a small compressor and some time ago I bought a very shiny, sexy-looking De Vilbiss gun, not cheap but very good quality, that's what I was told anyway! This gun is obviously aimed at someone who has some idea what he is doing as there are plenty of knobs to play with, to adjust such things as material flow, fan pattern and air supply. I have used this system with some success, although I have not by any means mastered it and have always had to rely on my hand polishing skills to pull the surface over and give it an acceptable finish.

I have also been given a basic HVLP system to try. This unit is made by Apollo and is the Hobby Plus model, which gives you an idea of the market they are aiming at. Compared to many conventional systems that have large compressors, this HVLP system is incredibly small, light and consequently very portable. The turbine, which is the bit that supplies the air, is like a mini Dalek. The hose is of a much bigger diameter than a compressed air system and the gun, despite being black, is nearly all plastic and is not sexy at all. But it does have the benefit of having only one knob to adjust, which means much less confusion for the beginner.

The only thing to worry about seems to be the thickness of the material being sprayed, and to check this Apollo supplies a viscosity cup which is just a small plastic cup with a hole in its bottom. Fill the cup with, in my case, cellulose lacquer and time how long it takes to empty through the hole. Apollo's chart shows that cellulose should take 18 seconds, so if it takes longer add some thinner, if it takes less time I think you're probably in trouble! Having got the viscosity correct, the spray gun's cup can be filled, the hose connected and you're about ready to go.

The only other consideration is the shape of the spray pattern, which is easily adjusted by moving the position of the air cap – the silver bit where the spray comes out! The next thing to do is to check what's going to happen when you pull the trigger by spraying a piece of cardboard. The critical things seem to be that you keep the gun about 15-20cm (6-8in) from the surface and move it parallel to the surface, i.e. don't swing it in an arc. The speed that the gun is moved over the surface is also important. Keeping it constant gives an even coverage and if you apply too much lacquer, which shows as runs and sags, either increase the speed or reduce the amount of lacquer coming out of the gun by adjusting the only knob on the gun that can be adjusted.



Using the Apollo



Cutting back with 400 grit Lubrasil paper and white spirit



Final pulling over with 'pull over' solution

Beware the fog

The big difference that I noticed from the compressed air system is that there is much less over-spray. With a conventional system and no extraction fan you will quickly find yourself standing in a thick fog of airborne finish! The spray from the HVLP system is at a lower pressure and is consequently a much softer spray. This means that the finish material goes onto the surface being sprayed and largely stays there, whereas with a compressed air system a good deal of the spray bounces back off the surface and into the air and a lot of material is wasted.

My verdict

This HVLP system is neat and compact, which is an important consideration for the occasional sprayer. The lack of controls makes the process very straightforward. I didn't manage to get a brilliant finish straight off the gun, but this may be down to my inexperience and it didn't matter at all because I only used pre-cat lacquer, which I pulled over to give the finish I wanted.

If you are considering getting into spraying, this unit would be an excellent place to start, especially if you are already used to polishing with a pad. You will find the pulling over process a very familiar experience.

What about the ethics of spraying antique furniture? Well, I don't suggest the wholesale spraying of all antique furniture, but cellulose will give a more durable surface than shellac and will therefore give the furniture's surfaces a bit more protection from the abuses of their owners. Waxed cellulose can look very similar to a French polished surface and for the conservators, it's reversible. *I rest my case!*

Further reading

Spray Finishing by Andy Charron, £14.95, Taunton, pb, ISBN 1 56158 114 3.

Furniture Restoration – A Professional at Work, by John Lloyd, £14.95, GMC, pb, ISBN 1 86108 220 7.

Both books are available from GMC Publications by mail order. Add £2.50 p&p within the UK (£3.50 overseas) plus £1.50 per additional book. Tel: 01273 488005.

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Designer-maker David Charlesworth, who trained with Edward Baly, runs private courses on making fine furniture from his North Devon home. Tel: 01237 441288 or email: davidcharl@aol.com

This article explains how I made a fine adjuster for the Lie-Nielsen 'Boggs' spokeshaves. I wanted a reliable method of setting fine, balanced, shavings with a slightly curved blade. This set-up is important in furniture-making, for squaring edges and for working 'sets of shavings' across wide surfaces.

Like so many design ideas, it was conceived in a few minutes with a couple of rough sketches. However the working out, dimensions and making took a considerable time.

Make an adjuster for your spokeshave designed by the master of tool-tuning himself – **David Charlesworth**

David's spokeshave adjuster

Spokeshaves can be difficult tools to tame, so a workshop-made adjuster can make all the difference



How does it work?

Clamp the device to the blade with the knurled knobs and clamping plate. The blade sits snugly in a close-fitting dado. The top of the blade registers against the two short screws labelled 'S' on the drawing.

Start with the blade extended too far. The tips of the screws ('A' on the drawing) act against the edge of the bronze handles. As you turn the screws clockwise the blade is retracted – the cap knobs are not tight. By working the left and right side alternately, you can wind the blade back to the desired setting. Tighten the cap knobs fully, remove the adjuster and away we go. I find it easy to set shavings of about one thousandth of an inch, and I prefer these for final finishing. You avoid chatter, get the least tearout and the best polished surface.



Exploded view of the components

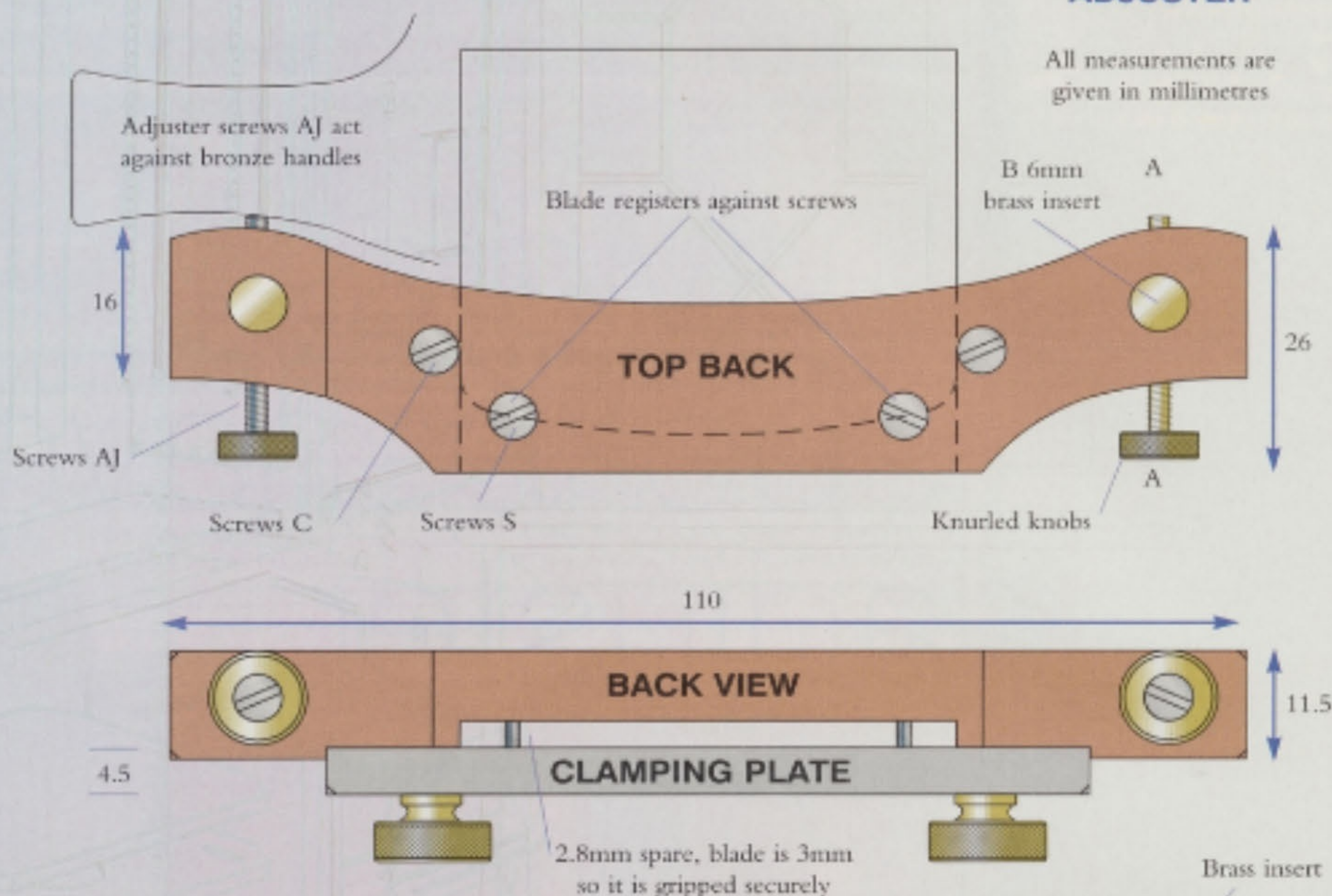
Materials

This version is made from African Pau Rosa, which is an exceptionally hard, dense, rosewood-like species. Any timber with similar properties would do, such as rosewood, box, ebony, etc.

I bought the one-inch 6BA CSK head stainless screws from GLR Distributors Ltd, a model engineering supplier that deals in small quantities of all sorts of useful things (see Suppliers). I get 1ft lengths of hard brass rod and flat section, from them. These are ideal for making smart mirror or hanging plates for cabinets.

DAVID'S SPOKESHAVE ADJUSTER

All measurements are given in millimetres



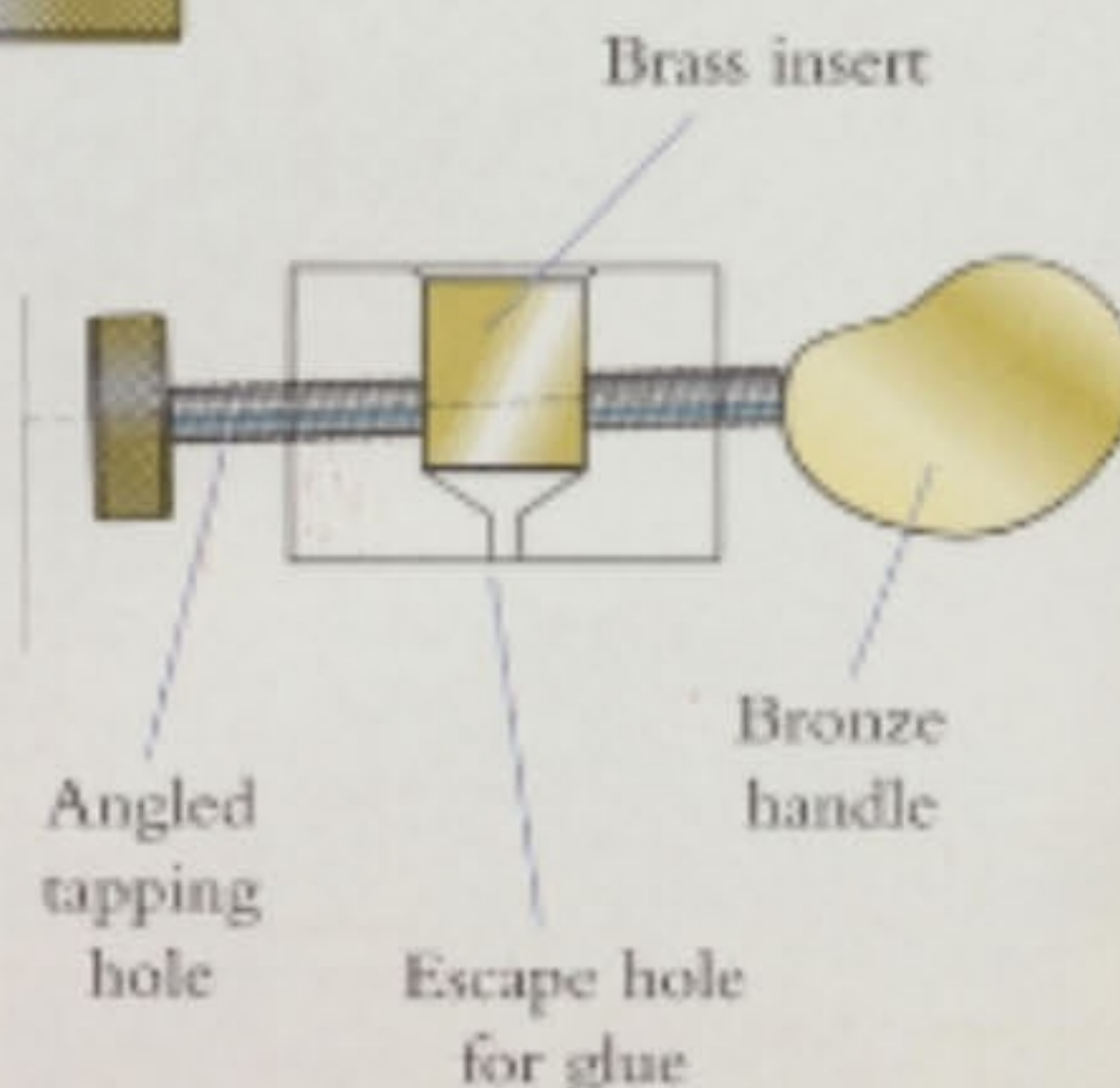
Knobs

The knurled knobs were made on my Myford Super 7 lathe. If you do not have access to a lathe or an engineer friend, it is worth looking at page 150 of Bob Wearing's book *The Resourceful Woodworker* (sadly now out of print). Or page 212 of *Making Woodwork Aids & Devices* (see Further reading). You will see methods for home-made wood or perspex knobs.

You can do small 'turning' jobs in a pillar drill chuck with files. Warning – please make sure they have proper handles attached. The tang of a file driven into a wrist is a very serious accident.

I tap engineering screws into dense hardwood. Although some might frown on this practice it can be extremely useful if used with discretion. If the screw is not going to be removed frequently and is given plenty of length it will result in an excellent grip. I frequently use BA screws for small knife-hinges and stayed box hinges. This is due to the virtual disappearance of low numbered, long, conventional brass wood screws on the market!

Tap and tap wrench. You will need a 'second' or 'taper' tap to match the thread of your screws and a small tap wrench to drive it with. These are both available from GLR (see Suppliers). The hard steel tap cuts threads in wood or brass. When tapping metal, go one turn forward and half a turn back. The half turn back is important as it breaks the curl of swarf. If you omit the 'back' half turn, the tap may jam and break!



SECTION AA

The adjuster before shaping – top view

Making

Bandsaw off a 5mm ($\frac{1}{4}$ in) thick slice and prepare the two sticks, well over-length. Mark and form the blade dado formed first. Saw and chisel to remove the majority and use a router table to perfect the depth. Pare the ends with a sharp chisel. Form the clamping plate dado next in a similar fashion. Then crosscut the clamping plate and shoot to a good lengthways fit.

Now mark out all hole centres. See labelled sketch. Holes 'B' are blind for the brass rod inserts which are later glued in with epoxy or Superglue. Drill a 1mm hole through the bottom of the blind hole, to avoid the 'piston' effect and allow excess glue to escape. Brass inserts are desirable as shallow threads in wood might wear out with extended use. In my device I drilled the tapping holes 'AJ' at a slight angle, after gluing the inserts. I did this by clamping the work to a wooden fence with an angled edge.

Note that the tips of adjuster screws 'AJ' must contact the circumference of the bronze handles reasonably square. It would be wise to have some softwood scrap components to check this with. Polished castings are bound to vary!

Drill tapping holes 'C' through the device and clamping plate. Now enlarge the clamping plate holes to clearance size. Drill tapping holes 'S' through the device only – not the clamping plate. Holes 'C' and 'S' are countersunk to the depth of the screw head on the top surface only.

Now you can cut the profile of the device and clamping plate and smooth them on a bobbin sander, easing the sharp edges.

Holes 'C', 'S' and 'AJ' are tapped, screws 'S' and 'C' are shortened to lengths shown on main working drawing and driven tightly into their threaded holes.

Fasten the tapped adjuster knob to its screw by high torque and epoxy, then install it and the device will be ready to use.

I would love to hear from anyone who builds or improves on this design! Write c/o F&C (see page 1).

Suppliers

6BA CSK head stainless screws from: GLR Distributors Ltd.
Tel: 01992 470098,
www.glrmodelsupplies.com.
Catalogue costs £1.50.

Further reading

The Resourceful Woodworker by Bob Wearing, Batsford, ISBN 0-7134-6485-2. Try libraries.

Making Woodwork Aids & Devices by Bob Wearing, GMC Publications, pb, £10.95 & £2.50 p&p within the UK (£3.50 overseas), ISBN 1 86108 129 4. Tel: 01273 488005



The spokeshave in its standard form

The underside view of David's adjuster



Blade-setting using David's adjuster



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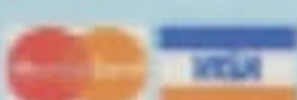


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Success for **IXES**

Mark Cass tests the stylish professional Basa 5 Bandsaw from IXES

A ratchet rise and fall on the guard is a good sign, as are the roller guides



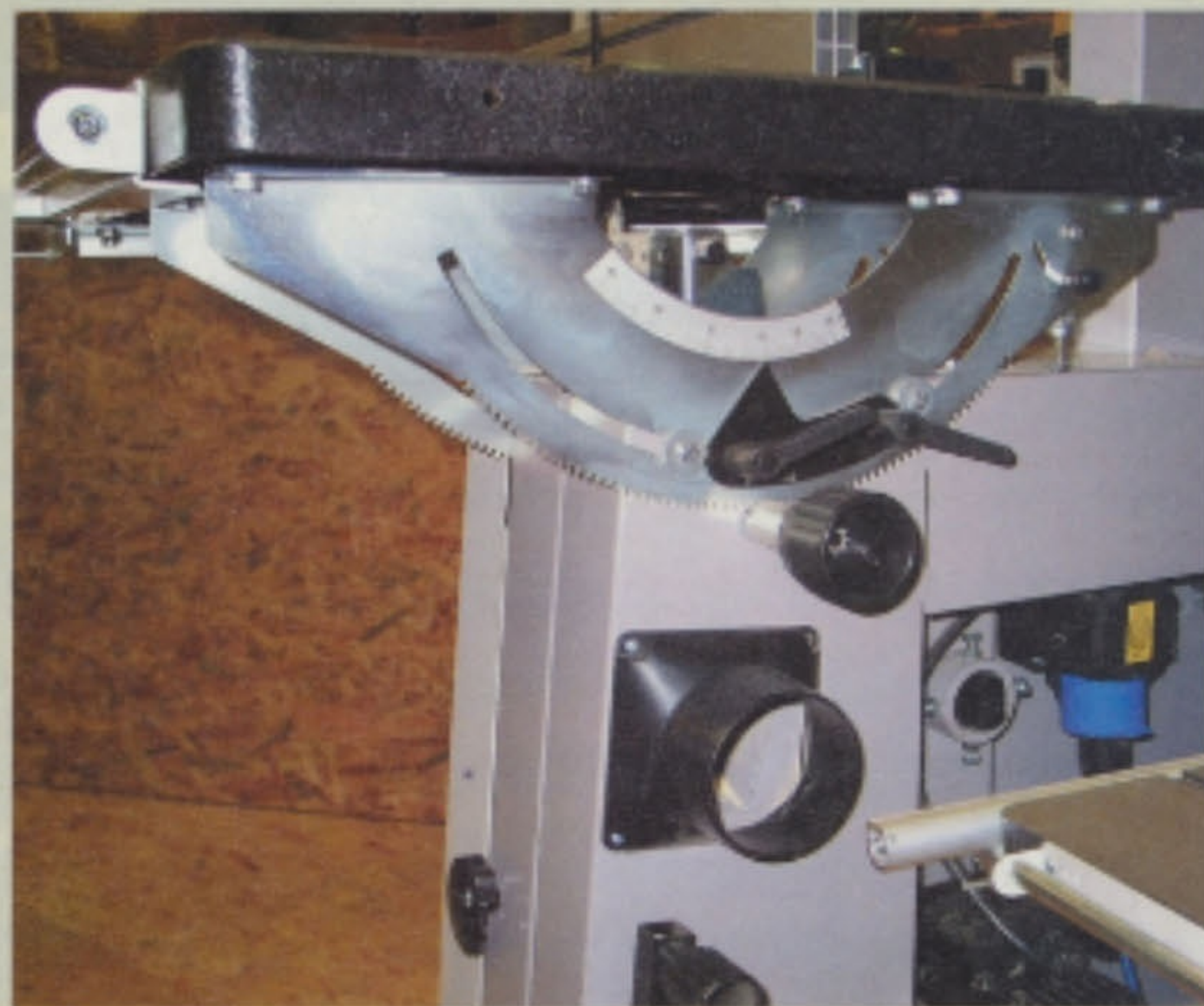
Below: Although the wheels are light compared to some, they are solid and well made

Left: The Basa 5 comes from a line of good quality machines and has an impressive cutting ability as well as being good value



My IXES adventure began in *F&C* No. 74 when I looked at the planer/thicknesser and panel-sizing saw. Then in *F&C* No. 75 I sampled the Molds 7F, a powerful spindle moulder from the same stable. The last of my tests of the IXES range, although by no means the least, was the stylish pro bandsaw, the Basa 5, smaller brother of the almost industrial-sized Basa 7. Built along the same lines, the Basa 5 performed just as well as it looked, if not better.

A heavy cast iron table, accurately milled, is the basis of the working centre of the Basa, and can be easily adjusted, by one hand, to any angle between -15° and +47°, despite its considerable weight. The table set-up features a decent sized throat – some 440mm from case to blade – big enough for most jobs you're likely to encounter. The blade cuts true and, with a vertical clearance of 300mm, is capable of cutting almost veneer thickness from your largest stock. Particularly pleasing was the easy adjustment on the cut height, via a large knob sensibly placed within easy reach. No locking, but a nice positive action.



Angling the cast table is achieved in the usual way, not with the usual cast metal but with two thinner metal plates that allow rack and pinion setting

Sprung like a hatchback

I suspect that Scheppach may have some connections with the motor industry in Germany, as again, like on the Piana 7, there is a hydraulic assist on this machine, and I was caught unawares when the front fairly flew open immediately I turned the catch. It's a bit like your average hatchback support – it certainly took the effort out of opening the door and, more importantly, kept it open to allow easy access for maintenance.

Inside the cavernous interior, the balanced cast wheels are housed, rubber-coated to give better grip to the blade, and driven via a V-shaped belt which transfers the power from the 2hp motor outside the saw at the rear. It is here that you can select the drive pulley to provide either of the two speeds, an operation easily and swiftly executed.

The fence was a variation of those found on other IXES machines and, while every bit as good as them, is possibly over-specified. Unlikely as this seems, I think including a micro-adjuster on a bandsaw is a little unnecessary. Still, better too much than not enough! Certainly, with the sliding mitre fence alongside, everyone's fence-related wishes should be more than catered for.

Right: From the stern, all the right gear

Below: Two unusual features are the micro fence and the fact that it is right-hand-mounted; some makers would like this



THE VERDICT

- Stylish
- Smaller than Basa 7
- Easy to adjust table height
- Easy to adjust cut height
- Hydraulic assist on the door is useful during maintenance
- Rubber-coated wheels give good grip
- Easy to switch speeds
- Fantastic fence – possibly too good!

FACTS AND FIGURES

Model	Basa 5
Table	640 x 640mm (25 1/8 x 25 1/8in)
Table adjustment	-20 to +47
Depth of cut	300mm (12in)
Cutting width	440mm (17 3/8in)
Motor	2hp
Price	Single-phase £1549.82
	Three-phase £1549.82

CONTACT

NMA (IXES), Birds Royd Lane,
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The IXES Professional catalogue is available from NMA.



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Send examples of your work to The Editor, Furniture and Cabinetmaking magazine, 86 High Street, Lewes, BN7 1XU, East Sussex. Please include some information about the piece and brief biographical details, along with photographs of the work itself – transparencies, high resolution digital photographs (maximum quality jpegs or TIFFs with 300 dpi) or good quality prints

David Featherstone, from Truro, Cornwall, says he made the larger piece as a sideboard/dresser, but his wife "appropriated it as a dressing table because the mirror sat on it so comfortably". Both pieces are in his favourite timber – quarter-sawn oak.

David retired as a veterinary surgeon three years ago and took a City & Guilds course in Hand Crafted Furniture at Basingstoke College of Technology. He says he designed and made both pieces during the course, guided by 'a brilliant instructor' Mark Nicholas, formerly of the Edward Barnsley workshop.

The swivel mirror has that wonderful "Barnsley look"



David's wife put the two pieces together



Left: *Coffee cream with a twist* by Andrew R. Grieve

Andrew R. Grieve sent in his nest of two tables that he has made. He based the design on David Applegate's table in *F&C* No. 67, *Coffee cream*. Andrew says, "The sizes of the tabletops are smaller and the legs longer than his coffee table but I do not think that the altered proportions detract in any way from David's design. The curvature at the tops of the legs combined with the relatively widely chamfered edges of the tabletops allows one table to fit under the other quite neatly." The tables are made in English oak, finished with Danish oil, then a final waxing applied by 0000 grade steel wool.

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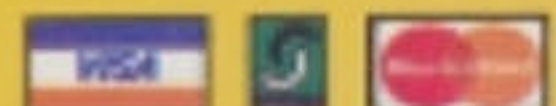
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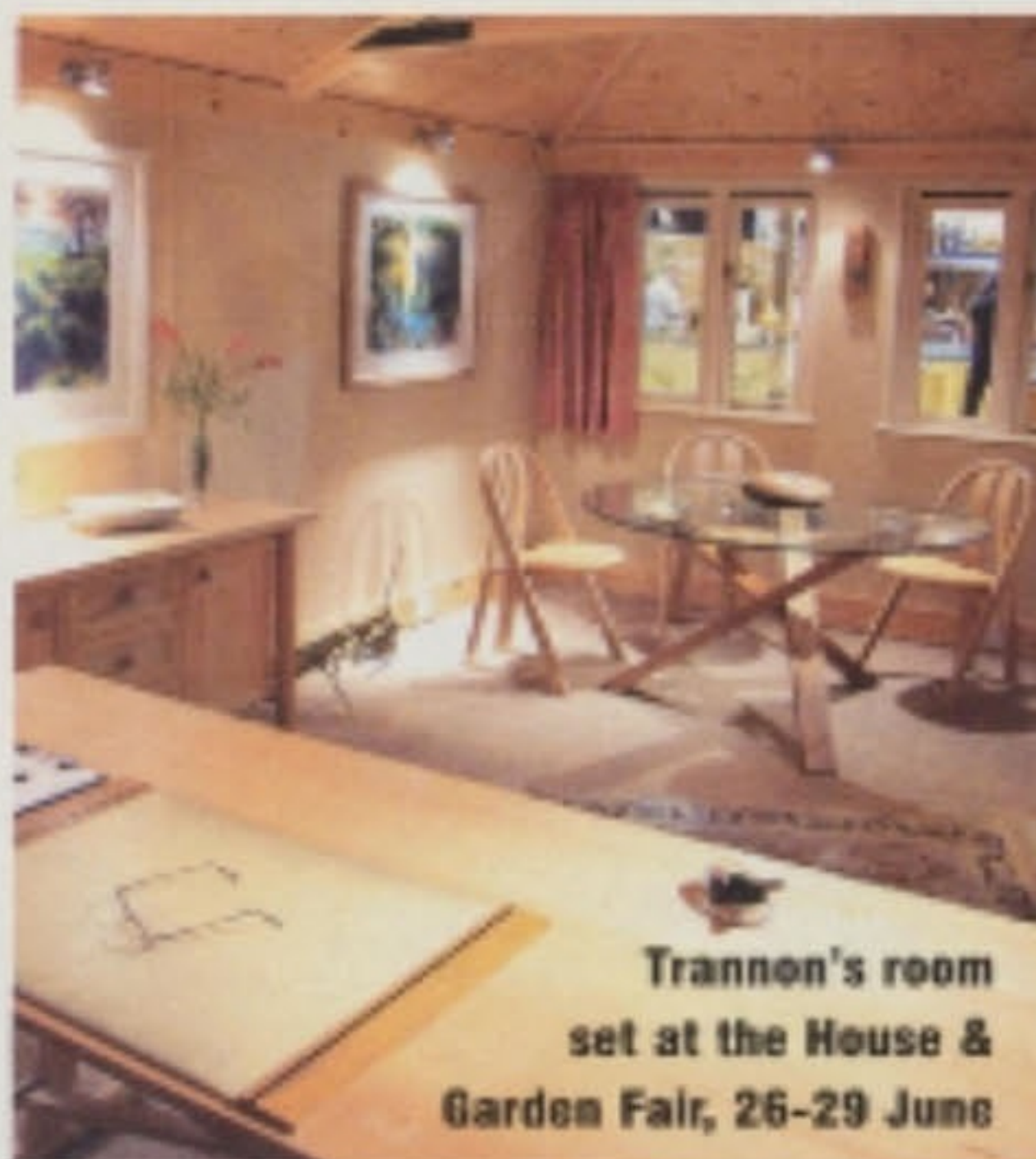
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CAA show about four furniture-makers working with schools in Camden for four years. Sponsored by The Worshipful Company of Furniture Makers, and others. CAA, 2 Percy Street, London W1T 1DD. Tel: 020 7436 2344; Website: www.caa.org.uk

18 April-28 Sept Marquetry Exhibition

Marquetry talks and demonstrations on various dates during a wonderful exhibition at The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle, Co. Durham DL12 8NP. Tel: 01833 690606; Email: info@bowesmuseum.org.uk; Website: www.bowesmuseum.org.uk

17,24,31 May Free demos

Carving, turning & finishing, 10am to 3.30pm, John Boddy's Fine Wood & Tool Store Ltd, Riverside Sawmills, Boroughbridge, North Yorks YO51 9LJ. Courses too. Tel: 01423 322370; Email: info@john-boddys-fwts.co.uk

15,16,17 May Felder in-house show

In-house show, 9am-5pm, at Hammer UK, part of the Felder Group, Unit 80-82 Tanners Drive, Blakeland Estates, Milton Keynes MK14 5BP. Tel: 01908 327801

17-18 May Rustic Furniture Course

Peter Wood, Country Chairs, Ferrers Centre for Arts & Crafts, Staunton Harold, Nr Ashby de-la-Zouch,

Leics LE65 1RU.

Tel: 01332 864 529

Email: teaching@finewindsorchairs.co.uk

Website: www.finewindsorchairs.co.uk

20-23 May Recording source material for crafts

25-30 May Fine furniture making Part 3

Short courses at West Dean College, Chichester PO18 0QZ. Send for a short course brochure. Tel: 01243 811301; Email: short.courses@westdean.org.uk; Website: www.westdean.org.uk

JUNE

SHOW OF THE MONTH

25-28 June Students' Final Show

Furniture restorers, woodworkers and chair caners are among students showing work at the City & Guilds and ABC Centra Final Shows. South Nottingham College Art & Design Creative Studies, Farnborough Road, Clifton, Nottingham NH11 8LJ. Open 2-8pm Weds, 10am-8pm Thurs, 10am-4pm Fri, 10am-2pm Sat. Details from Pauline Barke. Tel: 0115 9146471

6-12 June Fine furniture-making Part 4

20-22 June Fine furniture-making Part 1

23-27 June Country chair-making

29 June-4 July Finishing for furniture

Short courses at West Dean College, near Chichester, West Sussex. Send for a brochure. Tel: 01243 811301; Email: short.courses@westdean.org.uk

7 June Hands on & Sharpening

21 June Woodturning

Demos at 10am and 2pm at Peter Child Woodworking Supplies, The Old Hyde, Little Yeldham, Halstead, Essex CO9 4QT. Tel: 01787 237291; Email: info@peterchild.co.uk; Website: www.peterchild.co.uk

11-14 June Conference in Philadelphia

Check out the competition at The Furniture Society Conference if you'd like to export furniture to America. Annual Resource Directory available for makers, collectors and historians. The Furniture Society, Box 18, Free Union, VA 22940. Tel: (USA) 434 973 1488; Email: mail@furnituresociety.org; Website: www.furnituresociety.org

7 June Woodturning by Marsden Howitt

14 June Gilding by Pamela Keeton

21 June Woodturning by Tony Wilson

28 June Woodfinishing by Jim Kilson

Free demos, 10am-3.30pm, John Boddy's Fine Wood & Tool Store Ltd, Riverside Sawmills, Boroughbridge, N. Yorks YO51 9LJ. Courses too. Tel: 01423 322370

21 June-30 August Celebrating Boxes

Now at Bolton Museum and Art Gallery. Website: www.celebratingboxes.com

26-29 June House & Garden Fair

Trannon has a room set at the Fair. Details of events and courses from: Roy Tam, Trannon Furniture, Chilhampton Farm, Wilton, Salisbury SP2 0AB. Tel: 01722 744 577; Website: www.trannon.com

27-29 June Chilterns Wood Fair

The eighth Chilterns Wood Fair features a wide-range of wood-related activities. Chilterns Open Air Museum, Chalfont St Giles, Bucks. Tel: 01895 237729; Website: www.chilternwoodfair.co.uk

JULY

17-20 July Art in Action

The 26th annual Art in Action event will be held in the grounds of Waterperry House, Oxfordshire. Crafts include woodwork, conservation and restoration. Tel: 020 7381 3192; Email: info@artinaction.org.uk; Website: www.artinaction.org.uk

PLANNING AHEAD

1-3 May Chairs 2004

In 2004 an International Chair-makers' Symposium will be held at The National Arboretum at Westonbirt, Tetbury, Gloucestershire. Chair-makers will hear talks on designing, making, and marketing chairs, exchange ideas and meet potential clients. Bank Holiday Monday will be a 'Chair Fair' open to the public, including an auction of some delegates' chairs. Contact: The Chairman, Chairs 2004, Chucklestone Cottage, Duntisbourne Rous, Cirencester, Glos, GL7 7AP. Email: Chairsin2004@aol.com

Please send us your details

Please send details of your event 12 weeks ahead of the start of the month in which it will occur to: Kate Taylor, Deputy Editor, F&C, 86 High St, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1XN. Before travelling, readers are advised to check details with the venue or organisation listed. Inclusion is subject to space and is at the Editor's discretion.

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STANDING THE TEST OF TIME



Making this beautifully simple drop-leaf kitchen table for a client's silver wedding forced **Richard Stevenson** to learn letter carving – and the results have opened up new horizons

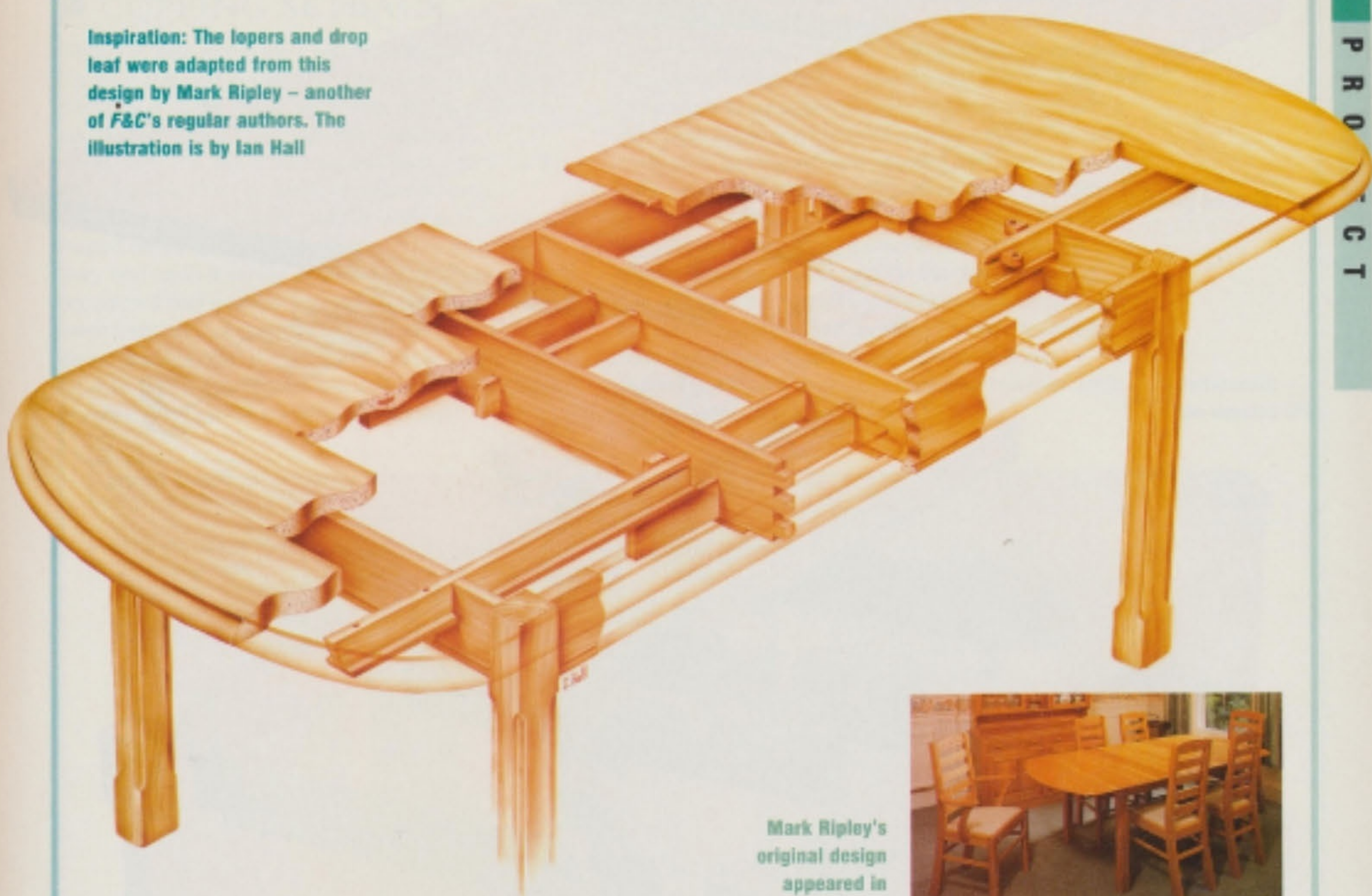
My client was a friend who lives in the village, and wanted a table as a present to herself and her husband on their silver wedding anniversary. As their kitchen is quite small, she favoured a drop-leaf design. For most of its life the table would be used in its shortened form. The date of their anniversary was to be carved somewhere, and as she had been nagging at me for some time to get me to sign my work, she rather forced the issue by saying that if I didn't put my mark on the piece I would not get paid. Naturally this sort of thing concentrates the mind, and I resolved to improve on my letter-carving skills, which would not be hard, as they were currently non-existent.

Commissioned for a silver wedding, this table had to be versatile for a small kitchen



Former architect and photographer **Richard Stevenson** trained in furniture design at City of Bristol College before becoming a self-employed designer-maker. He is based in the West Country.

Inspiration: The lopers and drop leaf were adapted from this design by Mark Ripley – another of *F&C*'s regular authors. The illustration is by Ian Hall



Mark Ripley's original design appeared in *F&C* No. 15



My client originally favoured beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), it being a fairly traditional wood for kitchen tables. However, it does not have the most interesting figure. As the existing kitchen units and flooring were made in a material with light wood grain, I suggested that Canadian maple (*Acer saccharum*) might be a better alternative timber with a more pronounced figure. A sample of this was duly approved.

■ SIMPLE DESIGN

The design is very simple, and perhaps almost austere, but in the way of these things was not arrived at without considerable sketching and head scratching. I wanted a sturdy working table feel, and the feature that lifts it above a completely basic kitchen table is the deep stopped chamfer on the outside corner of each leg. This is enough, to my mind, to lend a certain elegance to the piece, transforming the quite hefty 60 x 60mm legs into graceful supports, the line varying depending on the viewpoint, without compromising the essentially utilitarian feel of the table. The only other decoration, if that is the correct word, apart from the carving, which I will cover later, was to take off each corner at 45°, and to run a 3mm chamfer around both faces of the top. Both these features are really more practical

than decorative as they soften the blow, should someone pass too close to the table edge.

Rather than relying on drawings to put this across, which is difficult as the design relies on the changing angle of view, I made a 1:5 scale model to show to my client, and fortunately this resulted in an instant acceptance, payment of the deposit, and instructions to proceed.

■ STARTING WORK

After rough cutting and a period to allow the maple to settle, I started work on the tabletop. This is 1500mm (59in) long in its raised position x 850mm (33½in) wide x 30mm (1¼in) thick. As I had not made a table like this before, I needed to do some research into methods of constructing the drop leaf and sliding mechanism, and I drew heavily on the mechanism used in an extending dining table designed by Mark Ripley and featured in *F&C* No. 15. To extend my table, you raise the leaf to a horizontal position and slide the whole top forward to partially support the leaf on the frame and produce an equal overhang at each end. Next, you draw out the lopers to fully support the drop leaf – apart from this manual extension of the bearers at the leaf end, the mechanism is very similar to Mark's.

Solid top in
Canadian maple

Slotted plates

Lopers

Fixed lopers

Cross rail mortice
and tenonLoper
slotsHaunched mortice
and tenon

"The design is very simple, and perhaps almost austere, but in the way of these things was not arrived at without considerable sketching and head scratching"

■ 'SMILES AND FROWNS'

I agonised a bit about the orientation of the boards which make up the top, as although the main top is more or less held flat by being fixed to the sliding mechanism, the drop leaf is entirely unsupported and has no resistance to movement and hence cupping. In an ideal world I would use quarter-sawn timber in such a location. But my supplier of imported timber deals primarily with huge contracts, supplying wood by the lorry-load, and selection of boards by a small user such as myself is not an option. I therefore decided to use the best of the boards I had, and this proved to be a doubtful decision, resulting in considerable extra

work, as I shall explain. I decided to run the boards from end to end so that when the table was extended, the grain would run through from the main top to the leaf. Carefully arranging the boards in the traditionally recommended 'smiles and frowns' sequence, I jointed, biscuited and glued them.

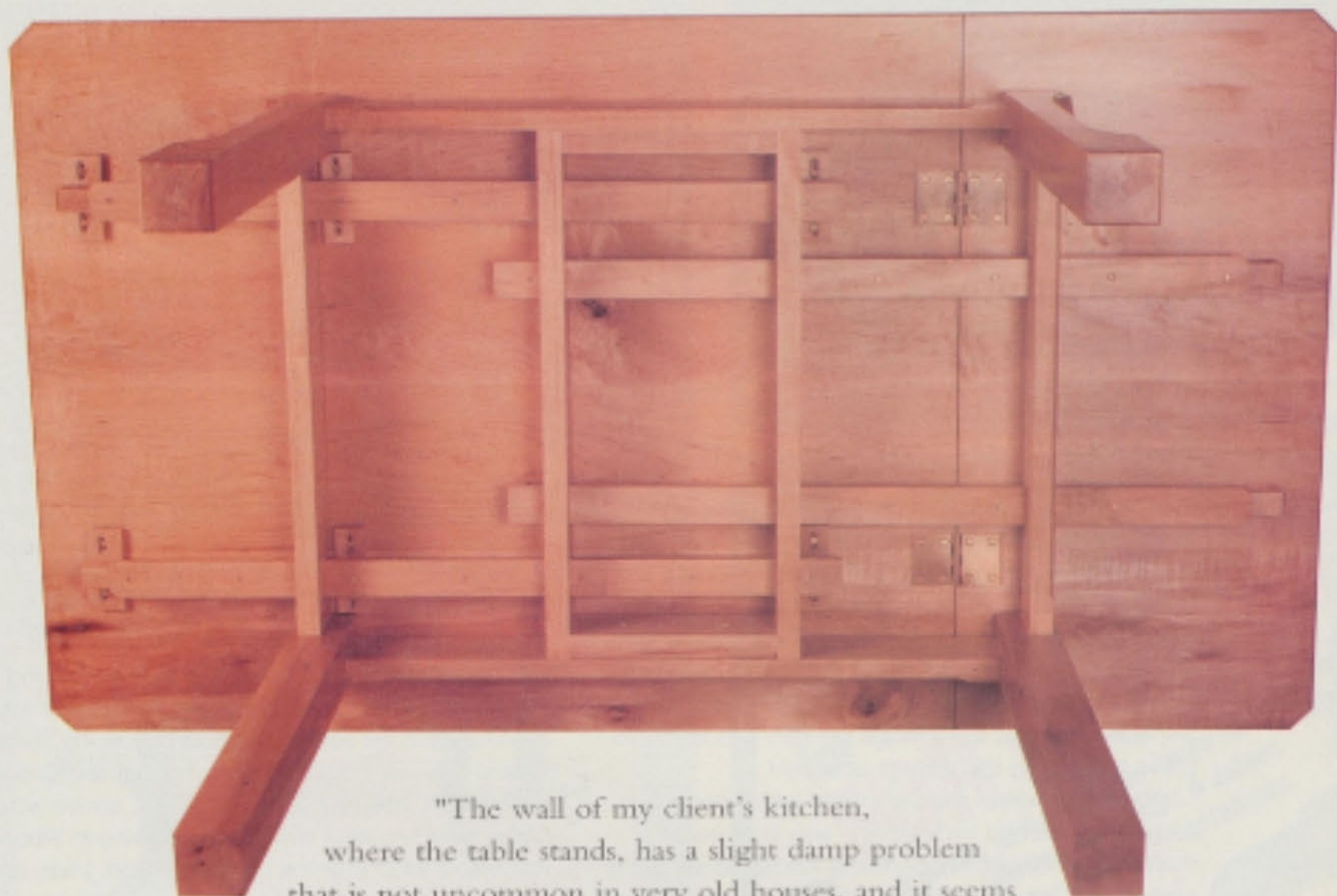
After cleaning up the joints I set both sections of the top to one side, and kept a wary eye on them as I worked on the frame. In fact they stayed remarkably flat and on completion of the frame I finished the sections and hinged them together with large brass back flaps and mounted them on the sliding machinery. Sadly, life would not continue to be so forgiving, and a few weeks after delivery, I received a request to make some adjustments as the mechanism was sticking.

CUPPING SETBACK

When I looked at the top I was horrified to see that the drop leaf had cupped so that it was almost 6mm ($\frac{1}{4}$ in) proud of the top at each side. So much for the 'smiles and frowns' arrangement restricting movement to a slight washboard effect – no wonder the table was sticking. Back in the workshop I pondered on the problem. My workshop is centrally heated on the basis that finished pieces will most likely end up in a similar environment, but on this occasion it had worked against me. The wall of my client's kitchen, where the table stands, has a slight damp problem that is not uncommon in very old houses, and it seems that this was enough to cause severe movement of the unrestricted leaf.

Planing out the curve was not an option here, as it would reduce the thickness of the top substantially. I could not fit cleats or braces, as they would prevent the top sliding into position. I finally decided that the only option was to cut each joint open, plane each edge to a very slight angle and rejoin the boards – not for the faint-hearted. In fact this worked very well, and after re-planing it flat, I was rewarded with a top which had a minimally reduced thickness, and was about 10mm ($\frac{3}{8}$ in) narrower than before. I hoped that the wood had done all the moving it wished, but to help it in the decision, I fitted three more of the heavy (and expensive) brass hinges to the joint between the two sections. The plan seems to have worked as – touch maple – the table is still operating efficiently several months later. However, back to the construction of the frame.

Underneath –
the working bits

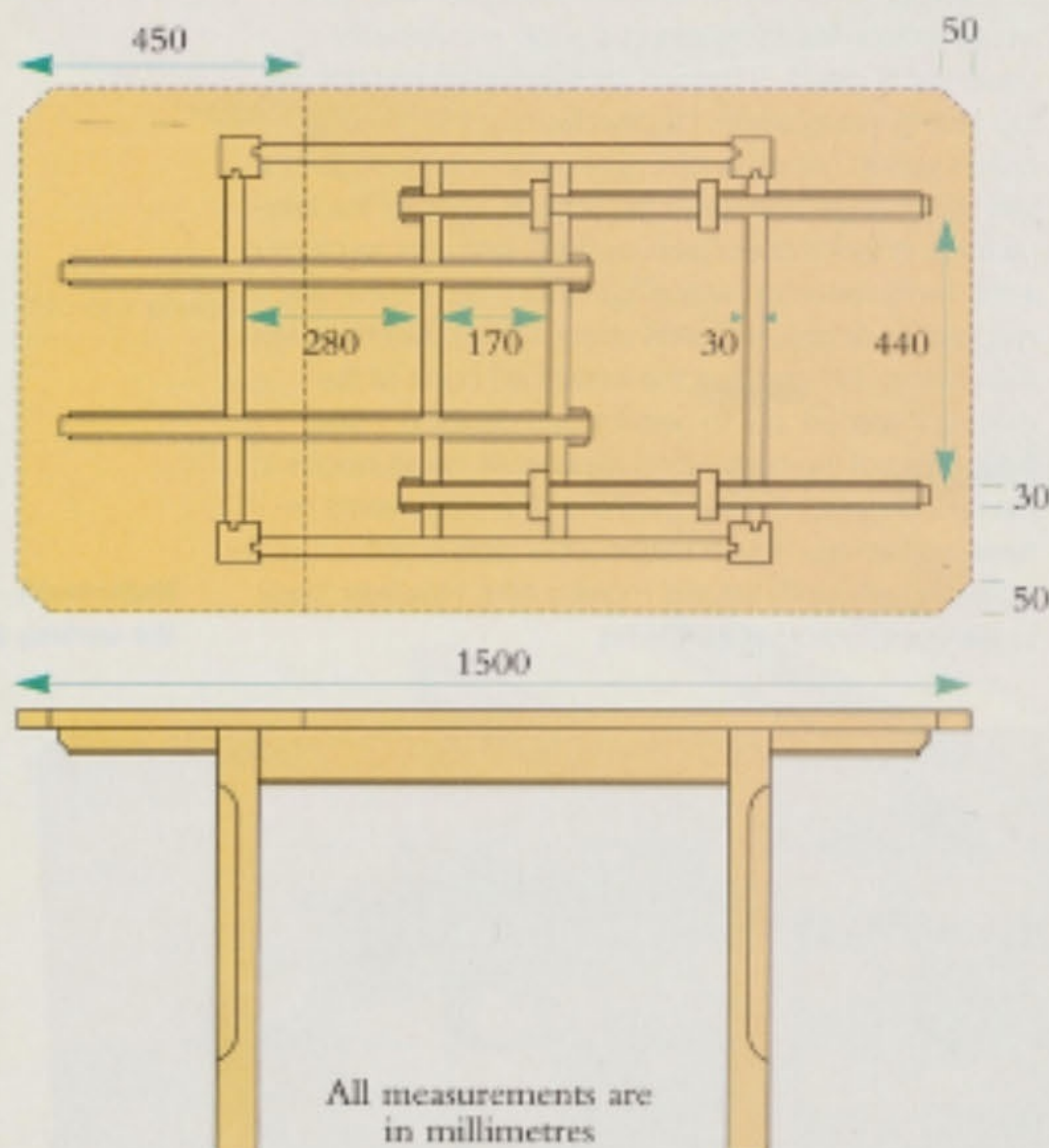


"The wall of my client's kitchen, where the table stands, has a slight damp problem that is not uncommon in very old houses, and it seems that this was enough to cause severe movement of the unrestricted leaf"



Far left: Stops
for lopers –
note the slotted
fixing blocks

Left: The other
end of the
lopers, with the
finger recesses



MAKING THE FRAME

This is quite straightforward. Haunch mortice and tenon 90mm (3½in) deep rails to the top of each leg. Cut a 5mm (¾in) stopped chamfer with a block plane, spokeshave and chisel on the underside of the rails to continue the theme established by the legs. The line of the underside of the rails determines the top of each leg chamfer. The end rails have to have T-shaped slots cut to allow the bearers and lopers to move through as the table is extended.

The underside of the completed table shows a rectangular framed mid-section, with slots cut to match the end rails, supports the inboard ends of the runners and lopers. Stops are screwed to the ends of these pieces to prevent complete withdrawal. The top is mounted to the sliding frame using blocks screwed to both parts with slotted screws being used into the top to allow for movement. To get the mechanism sliding smoothly involves some fine-tuning with a

block plane and several removals and fittings, but I found that with a bit of patience I could achieve a nice action, allowing the leaf to be raised and slid into position without pushing the table across the kitchen.

LETTER CARVING

I should describe my introduction to letter carving, as mentioned at the beginning of this article. This was obviously carried out before assembly of the frame, as I could face ruining a single rail, but not dismantling the table to replace it. As it turned out, armed with Chris Pye's excellent book, *Letter Carving in Wood**, and with a lot of practice on scrap wood, I was able to produce a quite acceptable result, although I say it myself, and found the learning process very enjoyable. I would not claim to be a master carver by any means, but feel I now have another string to my bow, and have been confident enough to repeat the process on a few subsequent projects.



FURTHER READING

Letter Carving in Wood – A Practical Course, by Chris Pye, £19.95 plus postage: £2.50 within UK, or £3.50 overseas. ISBN 186108 043 3. Paperback with 313 colour photographs and 136 illustrations. GMC Publications, ordering hotline: 01273 488005.

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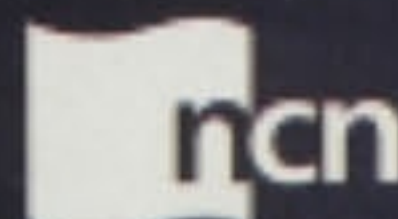


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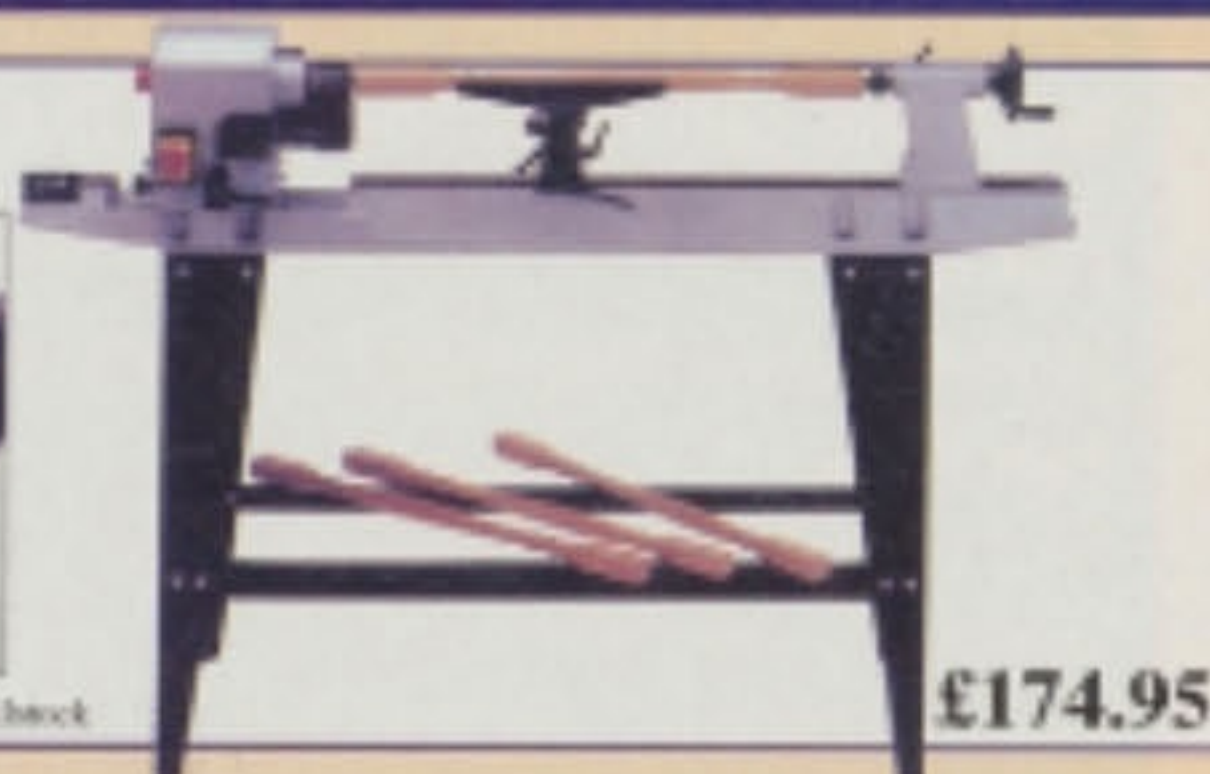
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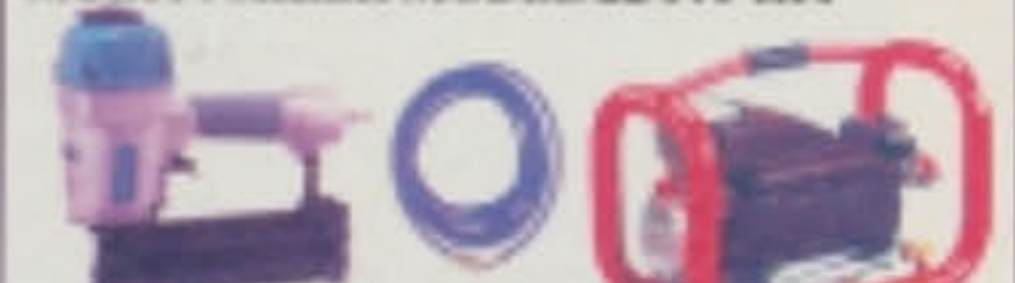
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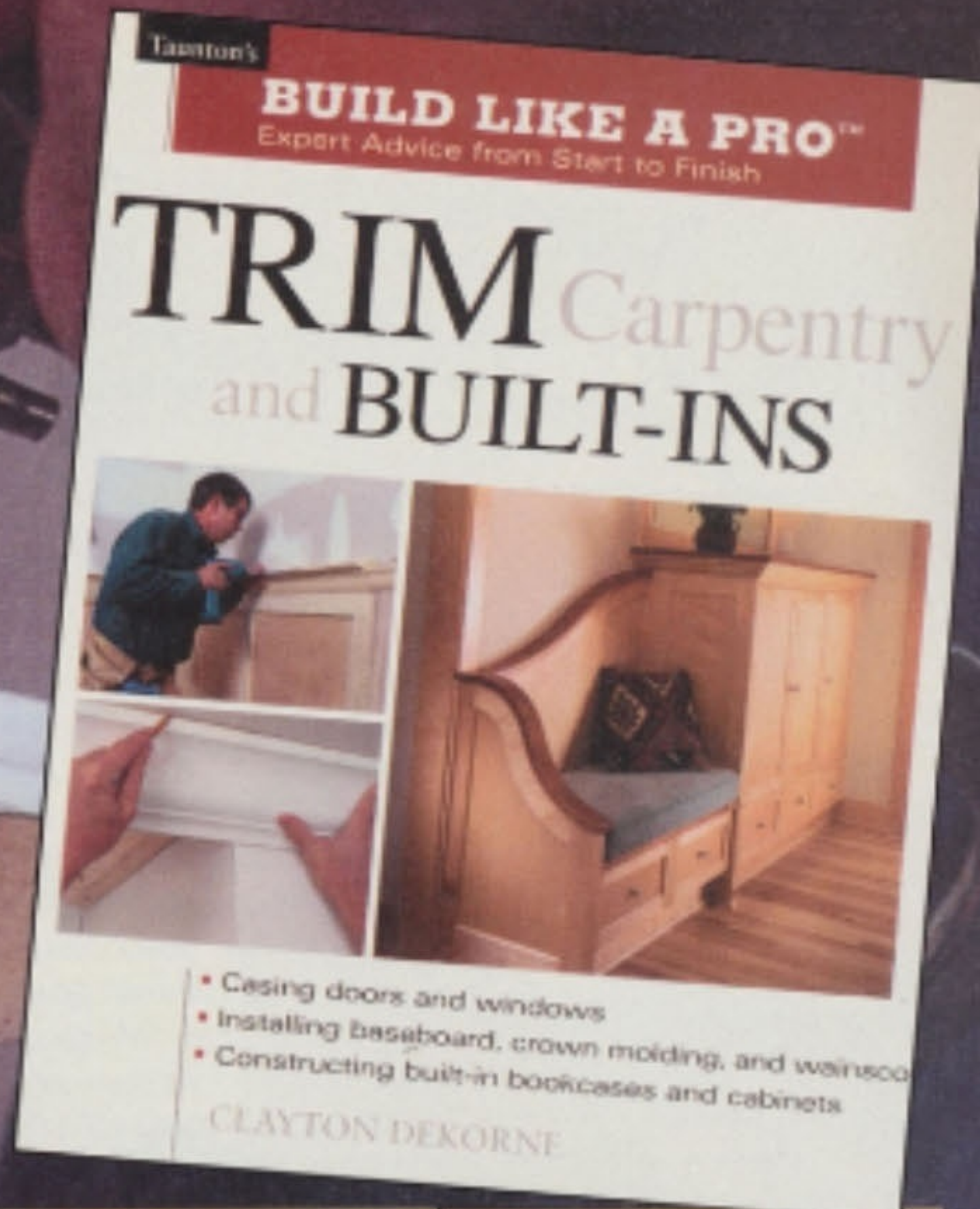
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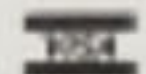
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Ralph's latest table is in catspaw oak



Many thanks for the idea I will consider it. Other readers might be interested in David's excellent books, so here are the details.

David Charlesworth's Furniture-making Techniques, Volume I,
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David Charlesworth's Furniture-making Techniques, Volume II, £14.95
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Ed.

WE'RE AIMING HIGH

Q My husband Stuart and I have (madly?) given up our 'day jobs' and have bought a house and barn in the Highlands of Scotland. Stuart has been making and restoring furniture as a second job for five years now, is champing at the bit, and his success has prompted our change of 'career'. Scary! I fit in as his apprentice!

We moved at the end of March and when we have converted the barn (like John Lloyd in June 2002 F&C) we will need insurance and public liability insurance for the barn. We will also need insurance for the carriage of

furniture to and from clients, etc. Could you advise on insurance companies who are kind to woodworkers and their needs?

F&C is a very good read (even I like it) and we shall be taking up another two years' subscription. Keep up the good work and thanks for your help.

From the wife who now knows about routers and bandsaws and veneers and finishes etc!

**Christine Asher
(And husband Stuart Clifford)
From Nottingham to Scotland**

A I spoke to said John Lloyd, the other barn person, and he said that what you need is business insurance which covers a lot of these and other things as well. He had a great deal of difficulty looking for the right company and this is not uncommon problem among restorers. In the end went to a broker who came round and looked at the premises and John ended up with a policy from Norwich Union. Good luck. Any similar experiences and ideas are always welcome.

Ed.

Save space with a drop-leaf

Q After reading your editorial column, I thought I'd drop you a line, particularly as I'm unable to stop making tables!

The latest model is a drop leaf table in catspaw oak, 72 x 54in. This was my first attempt at the dreaded 'rule joint'. Congratulations to David Charlesworth for his detailed instructions in his book of articles first published in F&C, Furniture-making Techniques, Volume II. This enabled me to produce an acceptable result.

I've been using tung oil as a finish for some time. While I like it, the major drawback is the time it takes to dry (I don't have the luxury of a finishing room). You kindly gave me a

sample of Organoil – basically this seems to be tung oil, however the Aussies have added something that speeds up drying, yet still gives a very acceptable matt finish. Followed by beeswax it gives a very nice finish. I have ordered some more Organoil. Turning to your comments/questions on a table for yourself. While this drop leaf is hardly Arts & Crafts or Shaker, it has much to commend it.

It seats eight comfortably (10 at a pinch for a dinner party) and your guests are not fouled up with legs and rails as they would be with a gate-leg or refectory style. With one leaf down against a wall, it is just fine for four, and when both leaves are folded down the table takes up very little room. It is also easy to vacuum round it. All in all, it's a design you should consider.

**Ralph
Featherstone,
Oakham,
Rutland.**



PHOTOGRAPH BY
RALPH FEATHERSTONE

Ralph's gateleg
undercarriage

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Toolbox

Members of the F&C team rummage in the toolbox for more new gadgets, tools and machinery

This symbol denotes items tested by F&C. Items not bearing the icon have yet to be tried out by us, but do appear to merit attention



Air Press

There has been a flurry of activity at the Air Press Company. It has redesigned its range of portable presses and now even the original standard press has its own carrying handle. Since moving to new premises Air Press has introduced several new products, including Vac Pots. These are individual vacuum clamps that work from either a compressor or a vacuum pump. The advantage of the individual units is the flexibility they offer: a clamping system that allows virtually any size panel to be clamped – you just need more pots. They simply connect via tubes you can cut to any length. I have tried them and you cannot shift them! They even lock strong enough to use for planing.

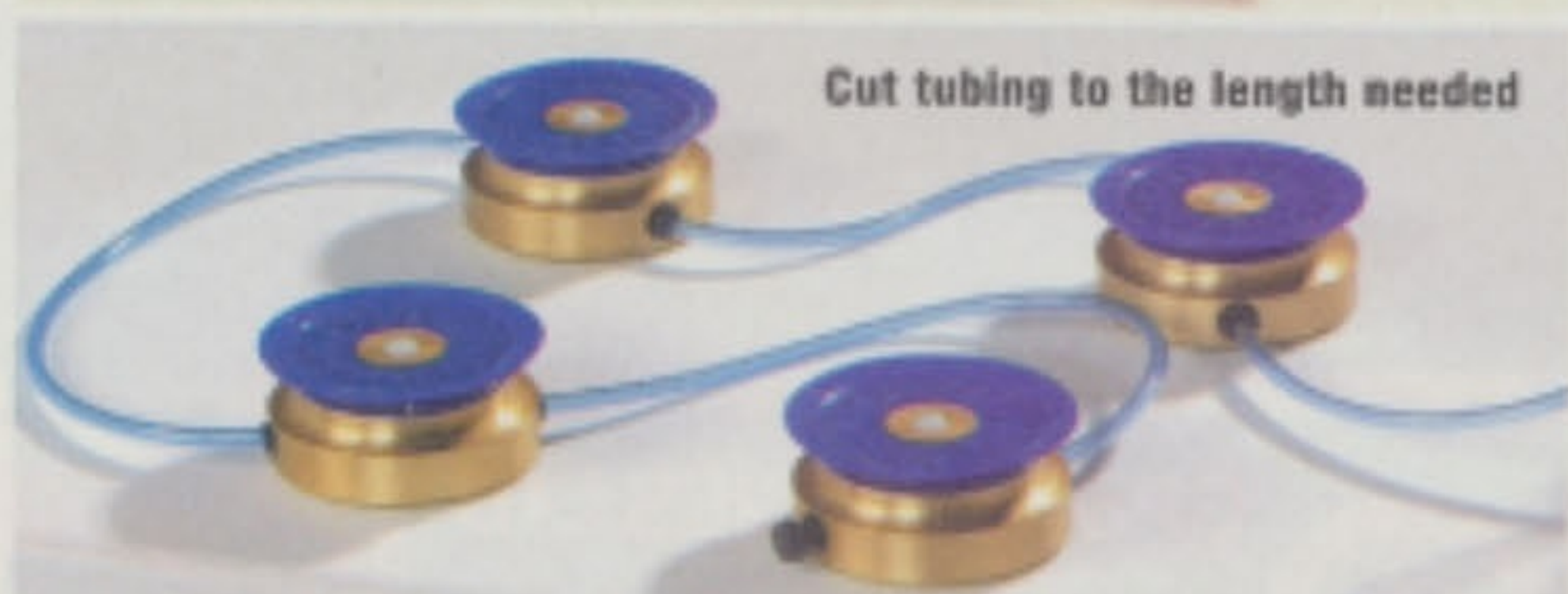
There is a host of industrial presses with heated beds, but of more interest for individual makers is a bench-mounted press with optional overhead heating for rapid curing. They come in three sizes, from 4 x 3ft to 6 x 3ft and 8 x 4ft. Utilising your existing pump, prices are likely to range from £1,500 to £3,000 according to size. This is still currently undergoing trials – as soon as we know more we will tell you!

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600mm version£29 inc. VAT

2000mm version.....£54.80 inc. VAT

The KO2 Parallel Clamps from Gross Stabil are really nice strong heavy clamps that will pull in parallel, which therefore makes them ideal for such things as drawers, frames and other box type construction. They come in a variety of spans from 300mm to 2500mm and with a clamping arm depth of 100mm.

They can be used either fully across a workpiece or also grip side on as the clamping face extends out from either side of the bar by 17mm. This makes them useful for fixing beading and the like.

The clamping arms are of a

glass fibre strengthened polyamide with steel inserts and are unbreakable. The 'kind to wood' polyamide pads are replaceable, but I think that would be an unlikely event as they are pretty tough. The bar is notched, which allows for the positioning of the lower arm without unwanted sliding on the bar. The wooden screw handle is pulled outwards to release the clamp arm from the notching and pushed in to secure it. Final tightening is done using the hand screw mechanism.

The clamps are quite heavy, with the 300mm version weighing over 2 kilos, and the 600mm version I tried at nearly 3 kilos.

I liked the KO2 clamps; they are tough and durable with good size parallel clamping heads to allow work to be pulled in and clamped evenly and dead-square. Good tough workshop clamps for medium to large woodworking and cabinetmaking.

Terry Porter



The KO2 can be used side-on for narrow work and edge holding





Carb-I-Tools cutters
from Australia

The Data game

Based in South Wales, Data Power Tools supplies power tools and accessories to the construction industry, allied trades, and hobbyist woodworkers. Now it is launching a new range of high quality router cutters, imported from Australia.

Known as Carb-I-Tools, the cutters are manufactured by a company of the same name that is already established as one of the premier Antipodean cutter manufacturers in Australia. Despite being made some several thousand miles away, these elite cutters are competitively priced.

For more information on Data Power Tools, visit the website: www.datapowertools.co.uk

IN THE FRAME

As its name suggests, Gross Stabil's Drawer Frame Clamp AGS is particularly good for bringing together right-angled joints on drawers and other carcass or frame work. It is principally made of aluminium with a galvanised spindle and a wooden handle. The gripping faces have rubber linings to prevent bruising, and only a couple of turns on the handle will bring a joint tightly together. Given its forked design, it can also be used as an edging clamp. The maximum width of material it can accommodate is 70mm (2 3/4in), and it weighs about 2lbs. Made in Germany.

This is a very handy well-made clamp that is effective and easy to use, but a little pricey at about £54.70 inc. VAT.

Terry Porter



Good spring-loaded gripping action holds butt joints tightly



The Air Ace
improves safety

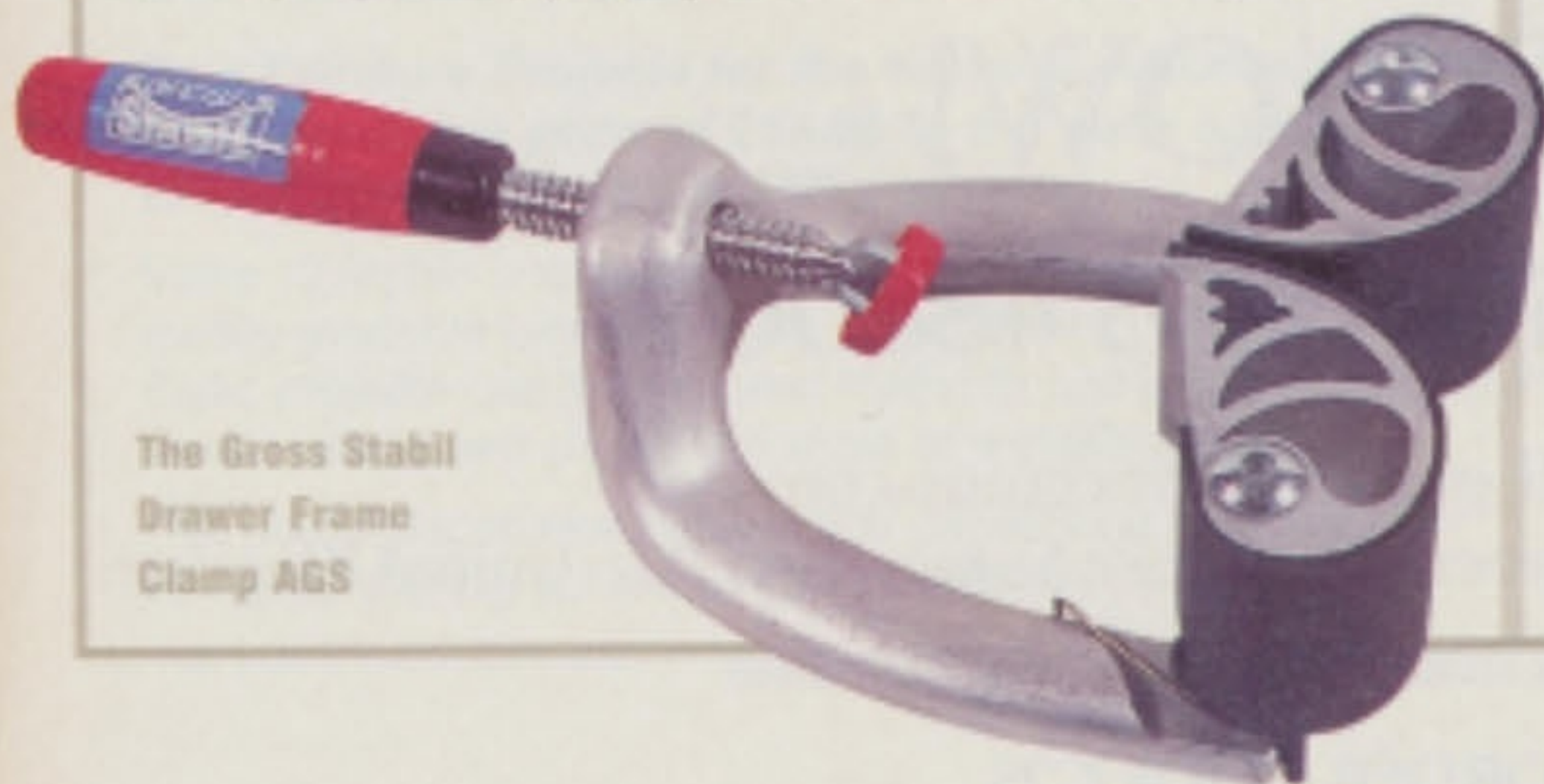
Aces high

Despite looking like a prop from a 1980s Sci-fi drama, the Air Ace is actually an improvement on the standard respirators because of the increased surface area of the filter (five times a normal dust mask) and the fact that the exhaled air is expelled downwards. The latter point is of particular help when wearing eye protection and I am assured by a short-sighted friend that this is a particular boon for people who wear glasses.

The Air Ace protects the user against 'hazardous toxic dust particles'; metal fumes and mist to classification P2 and down to 0.3 microns enabling use with MDF. (This means that it offers protection against 12 times the normal occupational exposure level).

The additional visor is a sensible option but at £8.42 it seems rather overpriced. It would be nice to see an inclusive price that made the whole kit better value.

The Air Ace costs £30.49 (inc. VAT) and a variety of accessories are also available. For further information on any of these products contact Trend on 01923 249911 or visit the website: www.trendm.co.uk.



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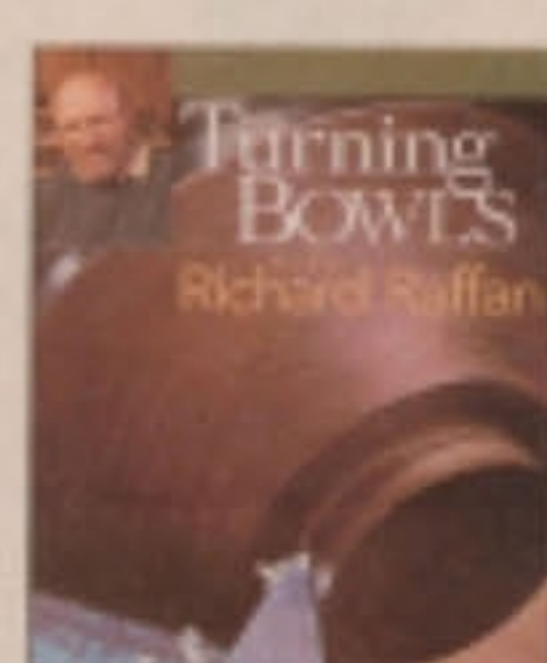
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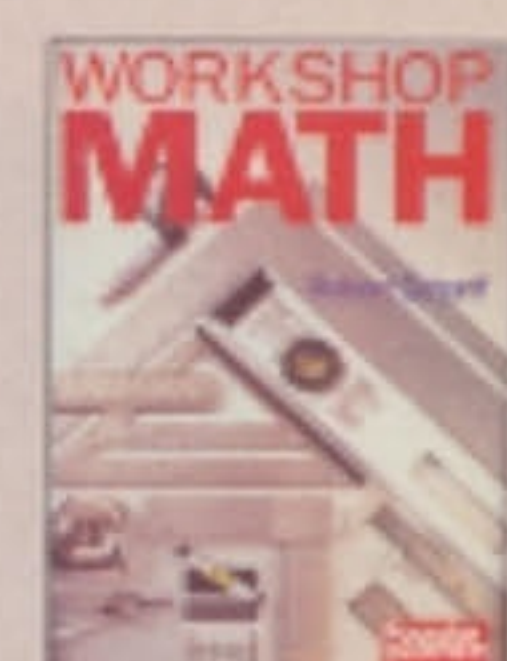
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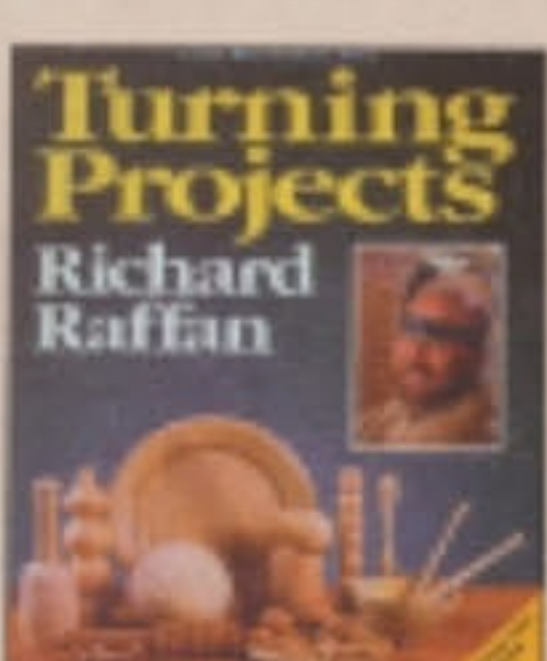
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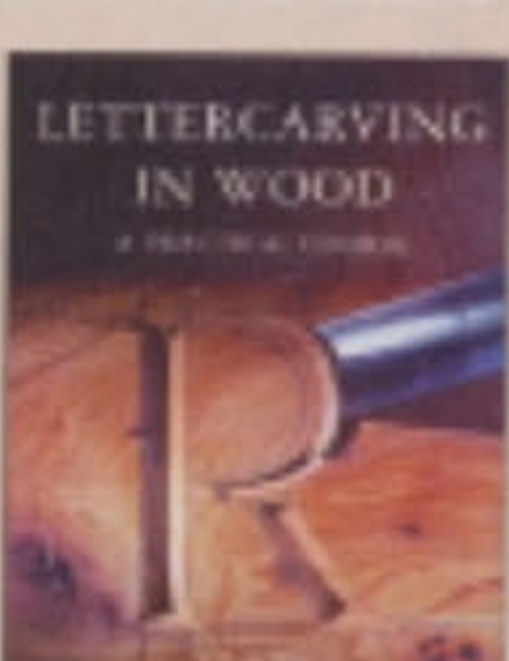
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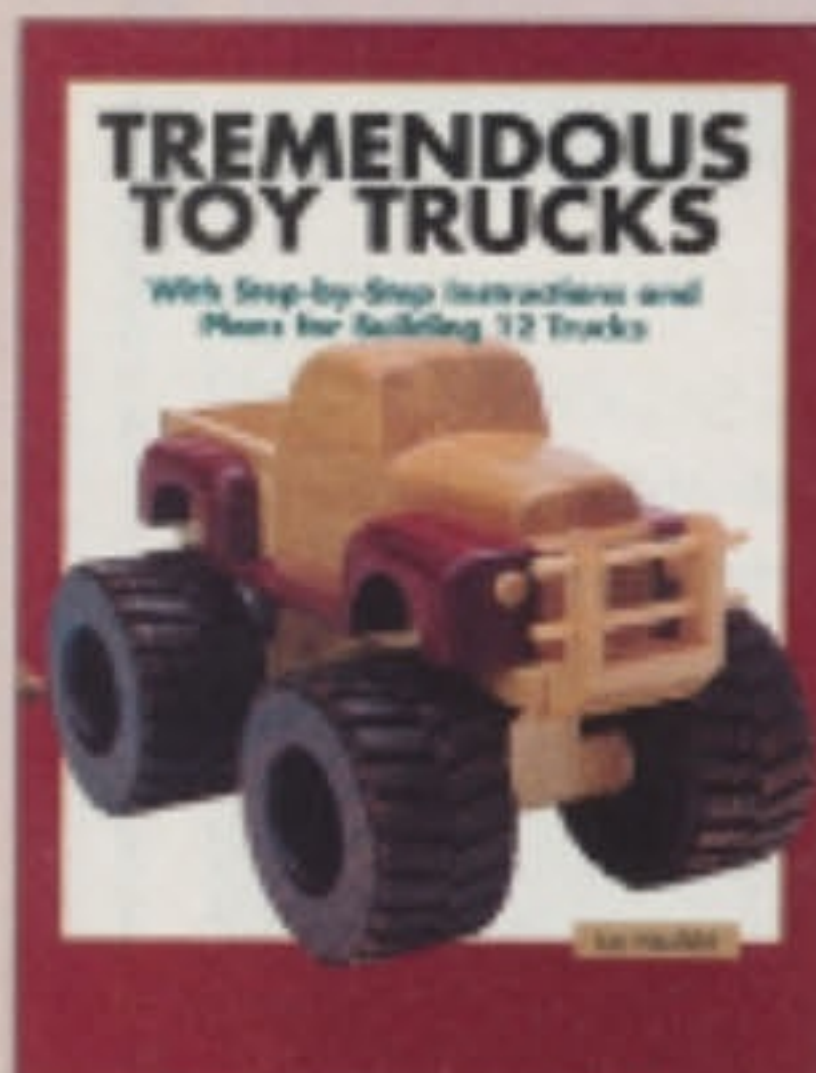
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Chests of Drawers

Outstanding Projects from
America's Best Craftsmen

By Bill Hylton



Taunton ■ £19.95 ■ paperback ■ ISBN 1 56158 422 3 ■ 192 pages, 140 photos, 90 black & white illustrations
Available from GMC Publications Ltd, 166 High Street, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1XU

This is one of a series of books focused on one type of furniture. We've had beds and bookcases and now we have chests of drawers. The first ones have been very good, showing a variety of construction methods and types of the furniture in question. So I was expecting this one to be good too. What caught my eye was the front cover – I thought: "Hmmm, that looks familiar... I recognise the handles... Barnsley!"

The chest of drawers looked similar to one I had made while at the Barnsley workshop myself. Intrigued, I found the article. There it was – a chest of drawers by Mark Edmundson that had many of the characteristics of my own (see photograph.) The inspiration was, indeed, the Barnsley workshop. I remember seeing the drawer-pulls in one of the many boxes of fittings in the workshop cabinet. I think we did make up a new set for one chest of drawers.

But I digress, the book has something for all tastes in period and style, from a Queen Anne style on a scrolled frame, to a country

tall chest and some well proportioned, understated modern designs. There are seven chests, using a variety of construction methods. Some are made by the author from originals of current craftsmen and others by the craftsman concerned. Traditional techniques and modern biscuit jointing are addressed and there are two useful chapters on the basics of chest construction and drawer making. There are complete instructions on making each chest as well as clear colour photographs and excellent drawings. F&C readers will feel at home. Every aspect of each of the pieces is discussed in detail. Highly recommended as an excellent reference book, even if you don't want to make any of them!

Colin Eden-Eadon

**Chest made by Colin
Eden-Eadon at the
Barnsley workshop**

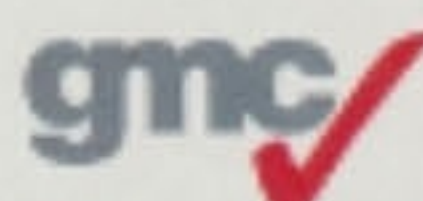


PHOTOGRAPH BY COLIN EDEN-EADON

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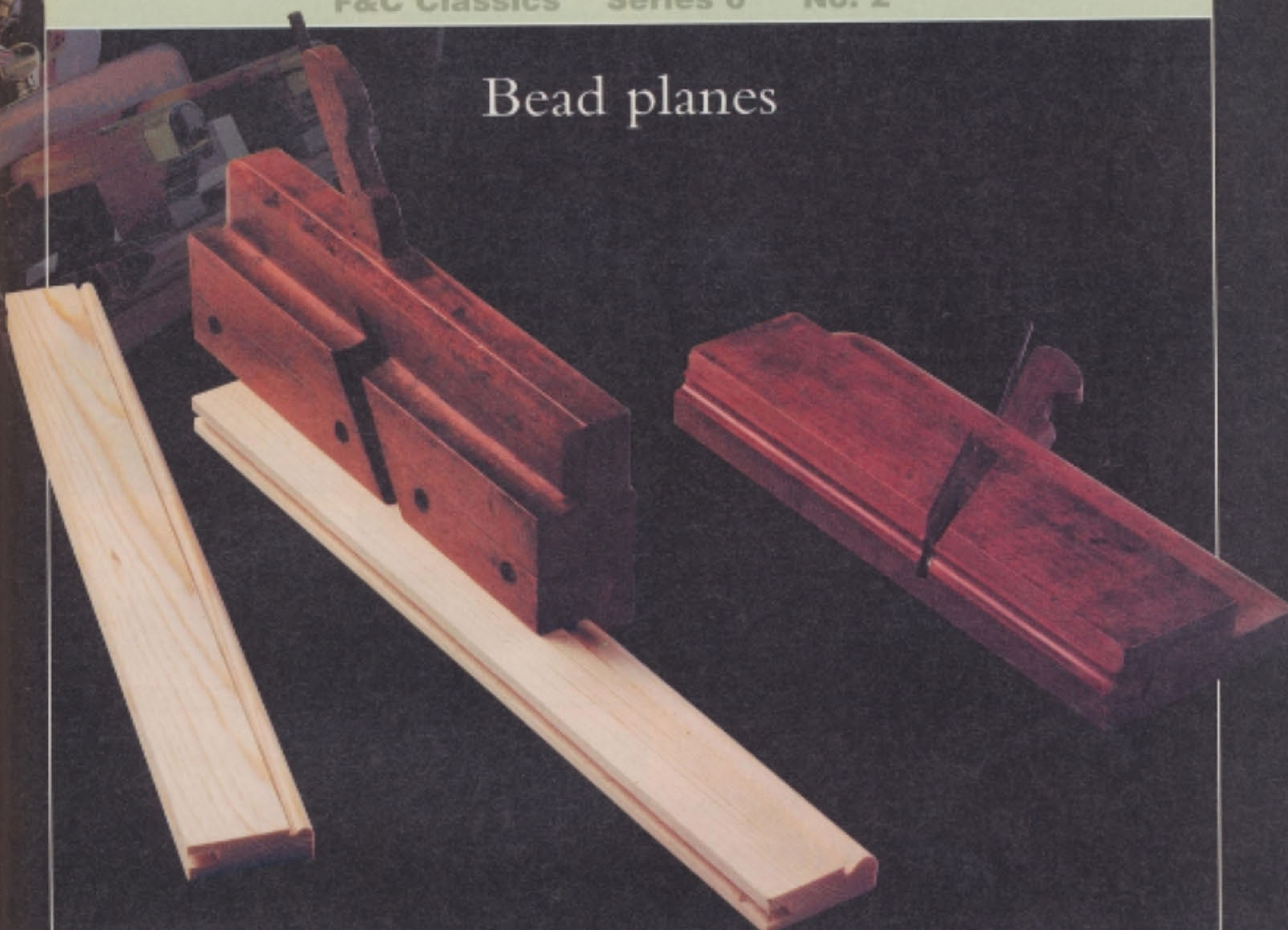
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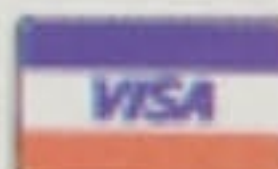
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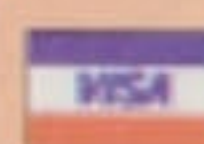
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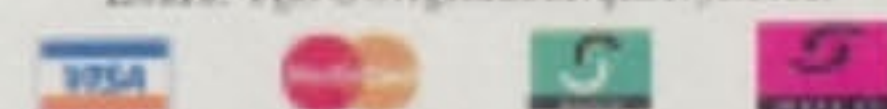
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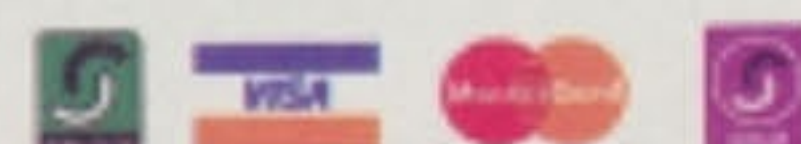
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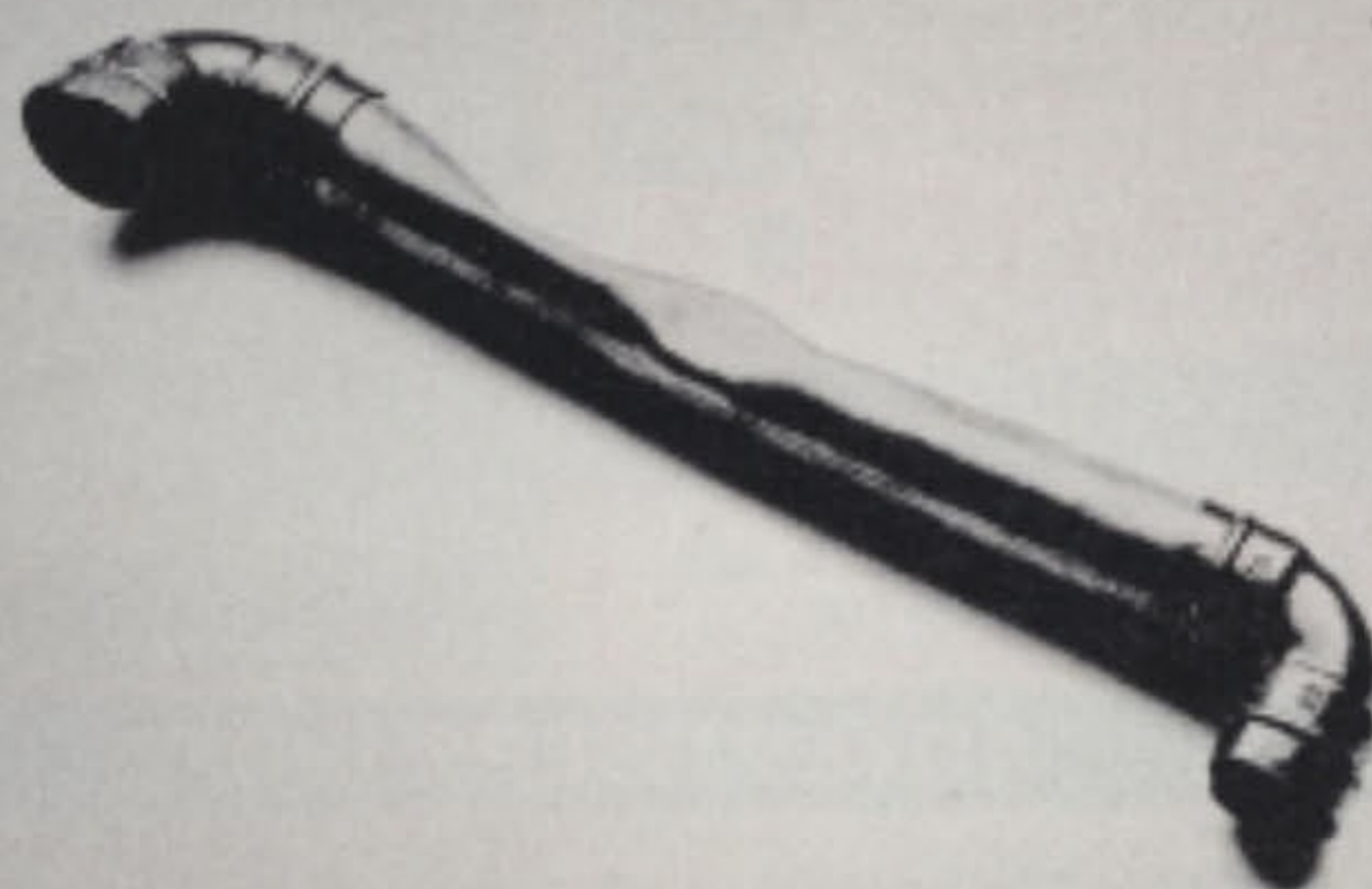


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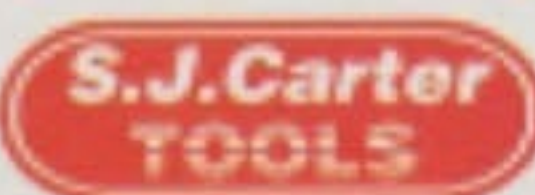


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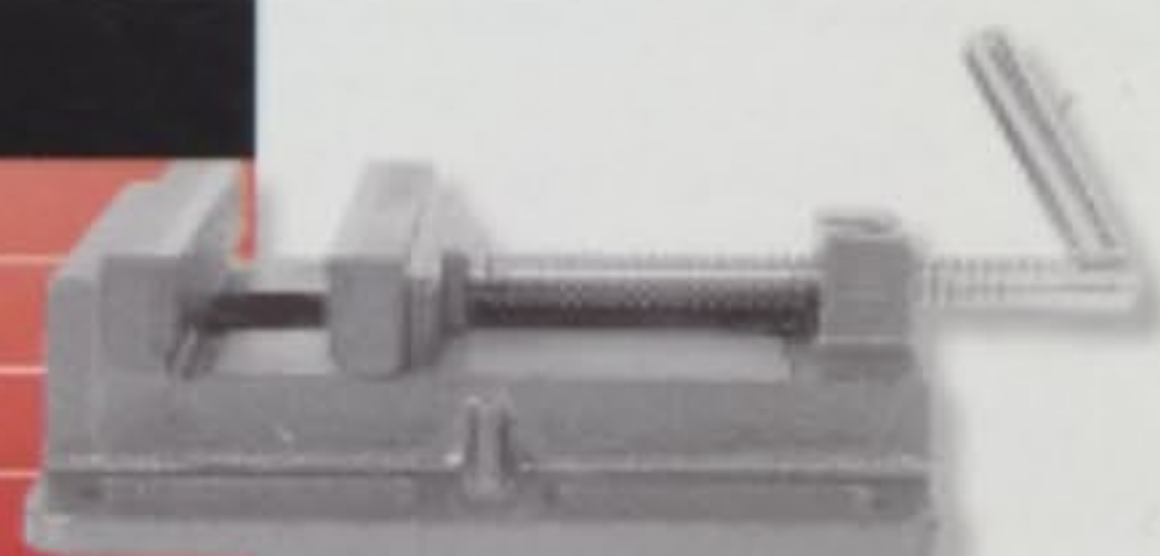
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