HANDTOOLS • CHAIRS • SLOYD • GREENWOODWORK • SPOONS

Quercus

Working Wood by Hand

Great Scot!

Antique tools of the Kilted Woodworker REVEALED!

WITH
Bad Axe Saws
John Brown
Ben Willis
Masashi Kutsuwa
Low Fat Roubo
Windsor Workshops
David Savage
John Lloyd
Dylan Iwakuni
and more...

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Drew Langsner Designs a Greenwood Ladle

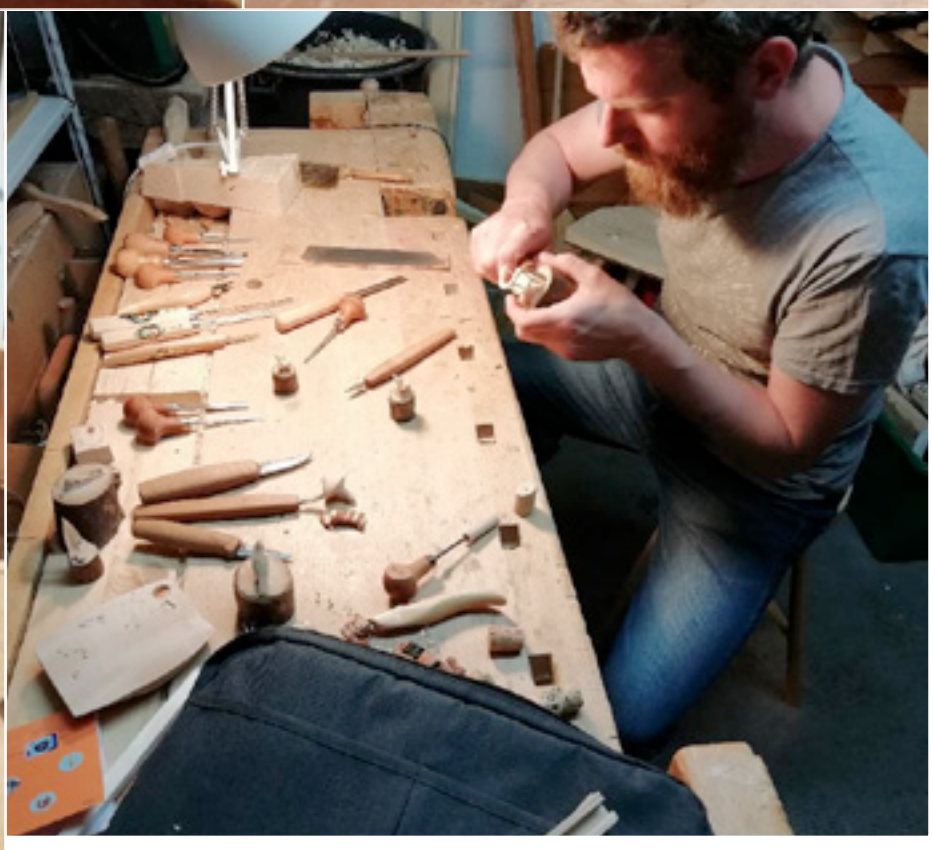
Spokeshave Kits on Test

James Mursell on Chair Shapes

Straightening Backsaws

Rudy Everts, Munich

Known on Instagram as @underhatchet, Rudy Everts has been inspired by John Brown and others to make miniature sculptures of Welsh stick chairs. "Without John Brown I would never have been motivated to embark on the journey of chairmaking and making chair sculptures. Ever since I read Welsh Stick Chairs I had the urge to make chairs and the bug hasn't left me. I think it is here to stay until I leave the planet!" Rudy makes each chair from a solid piece of wood, usually linden (genus *Tilia*, and known elsewhere as lime). "But also," he says, "any local species I find lying around, like birch, apple or poplar. I carve them all with hand-tools and usually produce Welsh stick chairs. My workshop is a cellar, where I also make full-size chairs." Find out more on Instagram or at underhatchet.com.



The Time for Hands

The World is in turmoil, so we've decided to launch a magazine. Indeed the kernel of a proposal was germinated by Lockdown to combine existing material with a world of new contributions. In April we had nothing more than a digital flyer planned, and perhaps a printed pamphlet, hopefully ready by 1st June.

We were limited by what could be achieved within a small Oxford office, and with many craftspeople unable to work, we fell back on articles from *Living Woods* and *British Woodworking*, so apologies if some readers are familiar with one or two articles. The aim is to create a balance, to find a formula to satisfy anyone with n passion for Working Wood by Hand (Mostly).

Though obviously there'll be a British bias, the aim is to offer inspiration and education and entertainment from around the World, tapping social media, expanding what visitors see from post after post. Already we have found Dylan Iwakuni (@dylaniwakuni); Ethan Sincox (@thekiltedwoodworker); Russell West (@russelljwest); Robert Turek (@brotherroberts); Rudy Everts (@underhatchet); John Lee Phillips (@leejohnphillips); Dominic Pearce (@cornishwoodsmith); Markus Tobert (@markustobert) and many more to come.

There's been a limited range of kit we have the experience to feature, but there is plenty to come in the future, and thanks to those who have already sent us images and information, some of which we'd hoped to use this issue with a larger team. Worse still is the shortage of female woodworkers contributing to *Quercus*. We are already contacting potential candidates, and ask for any other women with a passion for handtools to contact us soon.

To test the market, subscriptions for *Quercus* will not be available for the first few issues, but once we've tested demand and tested our ability to produce the magazine, *Quercus* will be published quarterly and then perhaps bi-monthly. There is no shortage of material coming our way. Readers with an outstanding subscription to *Living Woods* and/or *British Woodworking* have received this issue gratis as a message of thanks and apology.

You can now order printed QM02 by calling 01778 392009, or by visiting mymagazinesub.co.uk/quercus. For a digital edition you can also visit mymagazinesub.co.uk/quercus. Both printed and digital copies cost £4.50 (with postage overseas). The next issue will be on sale now & published on 1st September. **Nick Gibbs, Editor**

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An Innovation of Chairs

In an apt repeat, the late *David Savage* compares John Makepeace and John Brown

I am not here to bang the drum of British furniture design, but I'd like to compare chairs made by two excellent furniture makers. The first is John Brown and the second is John Makepeace. Not even his greatest friend would describe John Brown's work as boldly innovative. He was a chairmaker within a tradition of stick back chairmaking. He worked, to my mind, with great integrity, sensitivity and true awareness of what a good piece of furniture should be. But he worked without the objective of turning the chair on its head and starting again.

John Brown was innovative but within the context of the details of the piece. He played around with proportion. He looked hard at the shapes and weights of different components, he bottomed out his seats and shaved his spindles, he bowed his arms and tapered his legs, all with infinite care and sensitivity. You get the feeling that a chair made by John Brown was finished and polished with the sweat from his own brow. There is no bit of that chair that was ever given to anybody else. His work, his hands, his heart is deep within the fibres of the material. His whole personality infects the chair giving it presence, honesty, and quality.

WILKINS

Now there's a word I don't use very often. Quality. By that I don't mean 'quality assured', or 'hand-made by robots', I mean genuine creative quality. But it is a piece within its own *oeuvre*, within its own tradition. Most of John Brown's stick back chairs stand out from the pack as being damn well-made chairs, but at the same time would not define the very moment they had been made. They would not change the way we look at chairs in the way that a John Makepeace chair might do.

The first time I saw Millennium was a heart-stopping moment. That is perhaps a test of whether a piece of work is profoundly good or not. We often say a Work of Art "moves us" and the former art critic of *The Times*, David Sylvester, would describe the physical effects upon his body, the trembling hand, that seeing a great painting for the very first time would cause him to have. Moving us often means exactly that, we are moved physically. Another test, especially with furniture, for a furniture maker like me is: "The bastard, I wish I'd made that".

But why is Millennium so good? It was in so many ways a development of techniques and forms that John Makepeace had been working on for two, maybe three decades. He had already shown the technical competence of his workshop, laminating compound forms in ebony, a timber renowned for its inability to adhere, and in Millennium's case holly, a white timber so difficult to laminate with invisible glue lines.

Nowadays we take technical competence and workshop mastery almost as a given, but John Makepeace was the first to push this kind of woody competence to extremes. The forms of Millennium are like no other chair that goes before it, though there are obvious influences from other periods, and critics and art historians talk about the stylistic links to earlier movements.

The key thing is that it marks a point in the development of the history of chairmaking. It puts down a landmark. Before, chairs weren't like that. Now they are influenced by the way that John Makepeace went about chairmaking, and that perhaps is something worth shouting about.

If we accept that the things that we invent describe our lives, that common things from spoons and pens to chairs and bicycles are all made bearing the signature of our time and place, then history will be learnt from the artefacts that we leave behind, and consequently Millennium is important. I can't say I want to be that close to it. I can feel little of John Makepeace's warmth and personality from within its bounds. This is a studio product made by skilled hands as the consequence of creative destruction and invention. The result is something new, an object that is complete, whole, unchangeable.

For me both these chairs are good but in different ways. A John Brown chair will sit in the sunshine and hum a pretty song, but Millennium is a much cooler creature. She sits apart in an air-conditioned museum, admired by many, but known intimately by very few. And that perhaps is the difference, Millenium was always going to be a museum piece, because it was so innovative, and was never destined for the fireside where John Brown's beautiful chairs will reside.

First published in British Woodworking in 2008.

Ethan Sincox, USA

The Kilted Countersinks

Ethan Sincox, aka The Kilted Woodworker, finds old and better countersinks

Interesting tools follow me home with some frequency. This has happened for quite a few years and accounts for why I have in my possession such tools as a Stearns No.0 eccentric cam clamp (it is the cutest little clamp you will ever see), a Preston 1393s beading tool (which led to an entire collection of Patent Reeding, Rabbeting and Moulding tools), a Langdon No.40 Star Mitre Box (which is really more of a portable mitre guide that is the precursor to mitre boxes), and something a bit unusual for Stanley, a tool with no number assigned to it. It's a little bit of nickel-plated metal with a thumbscrew that attaches to the early Stanley No.18 and No.23 Countersinks.

Around the first of every month I look forward to the mailing list I have received since the early 2000's – Patrick Leach's Monthly Tool List. Patrick is a friend of mine and the purveyor of Supertool.com, where you can find Patrick's Blood and Gore, the paramount online reference for information related to Stanley planes. He is also one of the co-founders of Independence Tools, the company that Lie-Nielsen own.

It isn't a fancy list, but it has detailed descriptions and hi-res pictures and offers an excellent selection of tools priced at market value. You aren't going to find any steals here because Patrick generally knows his stuff, but your purchase is guaranteed, and he stands behind the tools he sells. If you are a bit of a tool dement, like me, you might end up in a description. Actually, I might be the only person to ever get referenced (positively) - September 2015 List, Item MS149, which is an unmarked cast iron beading tool, "...these are great workers as a certain kilt-wearing beading tool nutter features on his blog..."

I always imagine I am in competition with other woodworkers who are also looking for a yet-unknown tool they think they need, so when I first get a list, I give it a quick scan for anything that jumps out at me. In the August 2019 list, my eyes stopped on a listing titled "Pair of handy brace tools". I enjoy using my braces and these were obviously more than your normal bits, so I read on. It was

a pairing of a small spoke pointer (No.22 Dowel Pointer) and a countersink (No.139 Countersink). I opened the picture and looked at it for a moment. Then I quickly shot an email off to Patrick, telling him I was interested in the pair of brace tools before anyone else could claim it. I actually wasn't interested in the dowel pointer or the countersink, though. I was interested in that nickelled piece of metal that looked like a countersink depth stop.

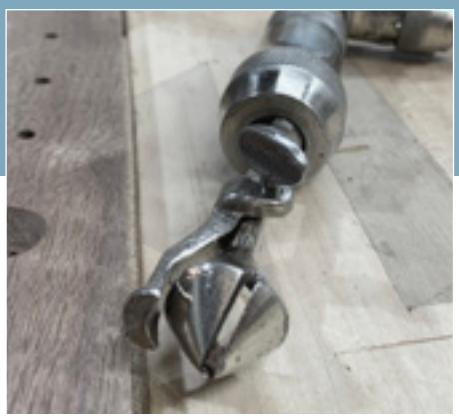
A countersink is a device you can chuck into your brace or drill to widen the top part of a hole you've drilled into wood. The widened area allows flat top or oval screws to be set at or below the surface of the wood. The earliest countersink carried by Stanley was called Wheeler's Patent Countersink. A US Patent for the Wheeler countersink was granted to Asa Wheeler on April 12th, 1870. The patent for the accompanying countersink gauge attachment - that nickelled piece of metal I saw - was granted on July 11, 1871. The countersink is shown without a number designation on page 27 of the 1872 Stanley Rule and Level Co Price List, along with the "Patent Gauge Attachment". By 1884, Stanley claimed to have sold over 75,000 of these.

"Izzie brightens me up, even when I get up from my work area for a drink to find her sitting in my well-warmed seat"

The Wheeler's Patent Countersink did not show up with the familiar Stanley identifier by No. until the 1892 Price List, where it was listed on page 55 as the No.18 Countersink. The option to include the gauge attachment (ie. the depth stop) designated the countersink as a No.20. Coincidentally, this page also marks the first appearance of Stanley's Improved Dowel Sharpener, designated No.22 and displayed right next to the No.18 and the No.20 Countersinks.

By 1914, which is the most recent Stanley Rule and Level Company Price List I own, the countersink listing had expanded to include the No.18 Countersink, Nickel Plated, and the No.23 Countersink, Steel Forging, which was listed as a superior tool with a blued finish. The gauge, still only identified as such by name on the Stanley list, was included with the No.20 (Nickel Plated) and No.24 (Steel Forging) countersinks. In both versions the depth gauge appears to be nickel plated.

While the Wheeler depth gauge is effective on a number of countersinks and brace bits, it really only shines and shows its full capabilities when attached to the No.18 or No.23 Countersinks. On any other tool, the gauge relies completely on the threaded screw to hold it in place; on the proper countersinks, however, the underside of the gauge rides along the apex diameter for support.And since the shaft of the No.18 and No.23 countersink is slightly tapered 9/16" to 1/4", tang to tip, you can precisely dial in the depth of the countersink you want to make.



Adjusting the depth stop

Starting with the gauge as low as it will go, increase the depth by slightly loosening the screw and pushing the gauge up the shaft. It will stop when the screw once again engages.

If you want a deeper countersink, slightly loosen the screw again and raise the gauge until it stops. Repeat until the desired depth is achieved.

Countersinks are not commonplace anymore; almost any bit of hardware you purchase these days will come with holes pre-countersunk. But the countersink bit is a necessary part of your kit when you make your own holes for screws in wood and metal. I use countersinks in pretty much anything I make in the shop. When attaching two pieces of wood with wood screws, for example, I not only countersink the show side of the top piece of wood, I also add a little countersink to the exit hole in the top piece and the entry hole in the bottom piece. This allows the two pieces of wood to sit flush, even if some of the wood around the holes has been distorted and mounded up by the drill bit.

Recently, I used a countersink bit when building trays for my tool chest. The walls of the trays are secured to the bottoms with screws. To keep the screws from catching on the tray below, all the screws were countersunk to sit flush with the bottoms, the depth gauge ensuring the countersinks were each the right size.

From the information I have gleaned, I know that the Wheeler's Patent Countersinks were in production for over 40 years. If their 1884 sales records are accurate and sales did not drop off, then there should be several hundred thousand countersinks out there in the world. Who knows how many No.20 and No.24 countersinks were sold with that little depth stop? I imagine it was a significant number, so it's worth keeping your eyes peeled for them. I will try to track down a few newer Stanley Price Lists to determine when the Stanley No.18, No.20, No.23, and No.24 countersinks were phased out of manufacturing, if anyone is interested in that information.

While the Wheeler depth gauge is effective on a number of countersinks and brace bits, it really only shines and shows its full capabilities when attached to the No.18 or No.23 Countersinks

PEDLAR "Using a tool is what we are made for, our hands evolved for holding axes and knives," says Barn Carder, holding the Pedlar's Certificate that permits him to sell his own wares anyway so long he has no vehicle and makes the products

Barn Carder, UK

Spoons for New Times?

Responding to the challenges of Lockdown, *Barn Carder* recalls his spell as a pedlar

The word spoon comes from the Old Norse word 'sponn' which means chip or splinter of wood, so when we talk about wooden spoons we are really just talking about spoons. I have made my living from carving spoons using an axe and a knife to shape green wood from trees. In these new, different times I recall the few years I was living as a pedlar, travelling around selling my wares. My maker's mark is a lower case 'b'. I like it because turned on its side it looks like a spoon, but to be honest I rarely sign my spoons. I read somewhere that to rely on your local environment is to respect it and care for it, I think this is the same for people too, which may seem ironic if you view my life on the road as an attempt to escape this interdependency.

Being self employed as a pedlar I felt a much closer relationship to the environment and the people I served than any job I've ever had. I have been employed in customer services for a multinational and I felt like a bit of grit that had been added to the machine to slow it down and reduce what the customer could get for their money.

When I peddled spoons it felt like magic turning a bit of wood into a cup of coffee. There were days when I had no money at all and if I wanted a coffee or some food I carved a spoon and sold it. I still have a very close relationship to all parts of my business, but then I'd sleep and eat where I gathered my raw materials, and was in charge of manufacturing, marketing and sales. My shop was my little silk hanky and my cardboard sign, and if I was grumpy the spoons would sell more slowly.

I seemed to be able to sell all the spoons I could make, but sometimes it was difficult to persuade someone that the spoon I just took an hour to make was worth the money I am asking for it, when they could buy one from Tesco for 70p. There are days when you don't want to hear "how much?!"

There are, of course, lots of reasons to buy a hand-carved wooden spoon. I much prefer to eat with a wooden spoon, the feel of a wooden spoon in your hand and mouth and scraping the bottom of a bowl is infinitely more preferable to that of a metal one (better still if it's a wooden bowl). To me the look of a wooden spoon is also much more attractive. When you buy a stainless steel mass-produced metal spoon you are unlikely to know which country the spoon was made in. How could you ever know whether those involved in making the metal spoon enjoyed their part? This deeper part of the aesthetic is what is really catching on: people are starting to realise how important the human touch is.

Along Barn's journey as a pedlar was running a snow-bound spoon carving course in Hackney Cemetery, with one of the students Scruffy, who'd gained some notoriety for building bodging camp at the Chelsea Flower Show

The way we spend our money is our real democracy. Where and how we spend all day every day: we are voting with our pounds and pence. The problem is it's so difficult to see where they go. I can understand why some people have started to withdraw from the larger organisations towering over us. It's a shame growth is so important.

My answer is just to keep carving. A well-known craftsman said to me: "You know you'll never have any money," but we both know why we do it. It is about quality of life, and if I had all the money in the world I would still want to spend my days doing the same as I do now, though someday I would dearly love to have my own woodland.

Back then I was settled in Bristol for the winter. Now I'm in London. I enjoy city life. People are often surprised by this. It seems strange to me that some people cannot take a step back from their own experience and look at the wider picture. Without cities there would be no life as we know it and I for one am not scared of the Internet or the supermarket. But I do envisage a future where it is normal for a man in the city to forage some wood and carve it with an axe and a knife. It can be boring listening to someone bang on about something they love, so I am lucky to live with the people who don't let me get away with that! They all use my spoons and each has their own special eating spoons. I don't think there is a metal spoon in the house, but they are not greenies. When I came home then, to a town house, there'd be someone reading Heat magazine and watching X Factor, but eating some cornflakes out of a wooden bowl with one of my spoons (this makes me very happy).

Whatever happened to 3D? For the vast majority of human history our homes have been filled with items crafted by us or by those that love us. Using a tool is what we are made for, our hands evolved for holding axes and knives. People seemed to let go of 3D: we cheapened art and craft till it seems to barely exist, subsidised into something worthless. Normal people can create beautiful things. Imagine if no one knew how to use a sewing or knitting needle anymore. A spoon made by you is just as valid a sculpture as those made by David Nash. Everyone knows somebody who knits again these days. It's my hope that in 10 years time carving with axes and knives will be just as mainstream.

You can visit Barn's blog at barnthespoon.blogspot.com or email him at barnthespoon@hotmail.co.uk.

Derek Jones, UK

Running on Greased Wax

In pursuit of sawing Nirvana, *Derek Jones* lets the teeth do the talking

Like a lot of hand-tool processes, developing a robust technique for sawing is better if it comes from within. What if I said you can reach sawing Nirvana more quickly if you trained yourself to focus only on the task? And by that, I mean getting those teeth to go where you want them.

I give students who've read the books and watched the YouTube gurus, yet still find this concept hard to grasp, a simple exercise. I get them to stand with their arms outstretched to the side and close their eyes and stay that way for a couple of seconds. I then ask them to touch their nose, with either hand it doesn't matter. So long as they haven't poked out someone else's eye, the chances are the finger will land accurately, illustrating that simple things can be done with no fuss. You can, it proves, connect with a task, and focus on it, without analysing it nor applying too much direct thought. That's not to say your senses aren't working, it's just they're not getting in their way and preventing you from doing their job.

I once took a class into the Gents at West Dean College and lined them up in front of the mirrors above the wash basins. I asked them to 'make like pistons' with their imaginary saws, showing how inaccurate and unnatural it is to expect your arm 'ensemble' of wrist, shoulder and elbow to lock and work accurately as a piston.

When it comes to sawing, slow and steady wins the day. Long strokes give you time to register and react to whatever sensation you're picking up from the tooth line. Our frame is articulated in such a way that we can make micro adjustments on the fly to achieve the desired results if we just pay attention. Relax, rely on your senses and let them do their job. Don't try and be a machine you're better than that.

Of course it helps to have good tools; tools that are capable of doing what you need them to do. Just as when a plane stops planing because it's blunt, a saw will only cut in a straight line when it's set to do so, guide or no guide.

The greatest asset in your sawing repertoire is confidence. Knowing that you can saw to a line goes halfway, and the sooner you reach that point the better. Kerf width is of little importance when it comes to cutting to a line. By far the most important factor is knowing how close to the line you need to start your cut without crossing it. A close-run second is having the confidence to maintain that line for all the cut. It helps, I think, restricting your sawing to the use of just one saw, if possible, while you're building your skills.

For this I suggest a carcase saw. It might seem an unlikely choice, but if handtool woodwork is your goal it's the one that will come in most handy. A carcase saw (longer than most backsaws and with a narrower plate) will cut dados for fitting shelves. It will cut dovetails, and the cheeks and shoulders of most tenons for furniture, and will also trim wide boards to length. I've even used one for slicing through a stack of veneer and to split a box in two.

When it comes to the spacing of the teeth don't assume the tpi or ppi governs a finer cut or a better finish. Tooth edge geometry and sharpness are the only factors that determine finish. If you must, choose a tpi to have at least three teeth touching the material while you saw. A 14 tpi carcase saw will cut dovetails and their sockets in 5mm thick boards all day, and cope with the thicker stock. A higher tooth count is fairly specialised and not much fun on thicker material.

Getting the cut started is something that troubles the novice woodworker. One common piece of advice is to have you drag the saw backwards to create a channel in which to start going forwards.

My preferred method is to start with the saw plate gently pushed against your thumb or thumbnail with just enough pressure to glide the saw back and forth across the material without actually cutting. You need to get into the rhythm of the stroke, build up some momentum and take ownership of the tool before you commit. You'll be taking about 99% of the weight of the saw in your sawing hand, which should put you firmly in control.After a couple of strokes, reduce your support and let the teeth gradually start cutting. If you take a stop-frame photograph it will show three or maybe four teeth in contact with the material and you'll be running on greased wax.

Such simple technique and rhythm reminds of the dark days back in 2001, when Enron and 9/11, thousands of miles away, put my furniture business into free-fall. Within days, my clients, mostly banks and financial corporates, cut back and cancelled their projects, leaving me with an empty workshop, people to let go and time on my hands. Landing heavily on one's arse can be a great leveller. My way up was to load up the van and go back on the tools to complete a handful of projects that remained on the books. I don't remember much about the months that followed, but enough time has passed for me to look back at them as halcyon days in my woodworking career.

For the last century building things by hand has been considered a form of congenital Luddism. Advice I was given on leaving school, just before the final whistle was blown, has proved to be good advice: "Get yourself a trade," I was told, "and you'll always have something to fall back on." Fortunately I did just that, and now have it in work and in play.

Five Strokes of a Kanna

Having just aligned two large gates, *Dylan Iwakuni* recalls planing parts by hand

The days went by and the materials gradually came together. By the time it was ready to be delivered to the local shrine in Osaka, the gate was huge. On the final assembly day, we had gathered a group of local men to help with the lifting and assembly.

Once the truck carrying the gates arrived and parked in front of the shrine, we all formed into lines in front of the truck. The Priestess of the shrine walked over and held a traditional ritual praying for the safe and smooth completion of the assembly. It was delicate work aligning the gates to the proper position. But once the hinges met, the gate slid smoothly into place, as was naturally meant to be.

The spotless, bare finish of the surface was reflecting off the warm afternoon light. Looking at the assembled gate, I recalled every detail. The dead knots I had filled with wood. The joints which took hours to get fitting perfectly. The wood I had carefully finished with my Kanna. A month earlier, standing in the quiet workshop, my hands would wrap around my Kanna, I'd focus straight ahead, taking steady consistent steps backwards. The wood shavings, transluscent and even width, flow from the Kanna. I run my fingers gently across the freshly-planed surface. Smooth, with

the ridges previously there gone. I bend down and observe the light outside reflect off the surface. "Ahh, perfect", I whisper to myself. This was the last piece which had to be finished.

In Japan, the Kanna is usually the final finishing layer, hence one of the most important and symbolic tools of Japanese carpentry. Slicing the surface of the wood with a sharp blade reveals the best possible natural finish, unobtainable with other finishing methods, yet using the Kanna well is far from easy. From experience, it takes time and patience to understand all the slight nuances that affect the Kanna's performance and the final outcome. From constantly tuning the sole, being able to sharpen the blade to a fine edge and in the right shape, reading the direction of the wood, setting the right blade depth; there are countless factors which play a part. Though a simple looking tool at first sight, it requires the delicate maintenance of a Formula 1 racing car to get it running smoothly.

Working on this wood had its challenges. Removing unexpected tear-outs when I wasn't paying enough attention to planing in the beginning. Some of the materials were the widest I've planed so far, requiring five strokes of the Kanna to shave the entire width (using a 70mm wide blade). It required all my focus to ensure the overlapping cuts of the Kanna was unnoticeable and the surface was seamless. I felt an immense sense of accomplishment.

Doing work for shrines is always nerve-wracking. My master would repeatedly express to me: "The Gods are the clients and they see every part of the work." Even the hidden, unseen parts, such as the insides of joints required the same energy and focus as the visible, outside components. Even a drill mark would upset the clients. This applied not only to the work but more importantly to the attitude towards the work. Always leave a part of your heart in the work. Focus only on the task at hand and if you feel your focus wandering, take a break from the work and sharpen your tools.

After a quick check to make sure the components were in the right place and all assembled, applause and praise on the beauty of the newly assembled gate filled the air. Relief, accomplishment, excitement. A huge wave of emotions hit me then. The end of a long chapter. I am sure this feeling and memory is something I will get to experience for years to come. Every time I visit the shrine and look at the work, I can feel a part of my heart alive in the gate, and that is a tremendous honor. I believe whatever you make, this feeling of revisiting your past is one of the most enjoyable parts of craftsmanship.

Follow Dylan Iwakuni @dylaniwakuni.

The Urban Carver

Entranced by spooncarving, IT consultant *Russell West* becomes a TechnoHippy

Like many of us I work in a world of electronic communication, short deadlines, demanding investors and lots of distraction. It should be stressful. Sometimes it is. But lately, less so. I have found balance through carving. Specifically, I carve spoons from green wood. A utilitarian thing, hand-crafted and occasionally artistic.

You'd probably be very surprised how many of us there are. For most it's just a fun and relaxing hobby, for others it generates a little income too and some even do it full-time, usually combined with teaching or making tools. I didn't need a workshop full of equipment to start: a hand axe, a straight knife, a hooked knife and a way to keep them clean and sharp got me going; carried in a small bag. I get my wood from a friendly local tree surgeon, which is free and saves branches from being chipped. It's not an expensive pastime.

On a one-day course to learn the basics, I ended up with something approximating a spoon. Spotting my enthusiasm, the trainer mentioned a club I could join; one of 30-40 greenwoodworking groups around the UK. In this age of digital distraction, social media and noise, that people get

together, carve and chat is a real tonic, albeit once Lockdown has ended. Most years there are bigger gatherings, such as Spoonfest, The Bodgers Ball, The Bowl Gathering and many more around the world, including events in North America and Scandinavia, the latter being the home of Sloyd (Swedish: Slöjd) from which many principles have been adopted by hand carvers everywhere. But we shouldn't overlook technology completely. There is definitely a place for this, and a great example is a group called Rise Up & Carve, founded and made popular on Instagram as @riseupandcarve (mine is @russelljwest). This free group meets online, with people joining from North America, UK, Europe and Australia on a regular basis.

Recently, many of the clubs have turned to this technology to keep in regular contact and carve together virtually. I enjoy the companionship, humour and insight from carvers around the world. Indeed, while recently unemployed, it was a real lifeline and helped me get through that tough time.

I live in a city, so moments of peace can be rare. When I carve, the focus and attention I pay to the workpiece makes the stress slowly fade. As each chip falls to the ground and the shape slowly emerges the transformation from branch or stump is tangible; the feel and aroma of the timber; the sound of the blade cutting; the physicality of the grips and cuts. It's all very mediatory and soothing. Bewitching. I don't need a forest, I don't even need a workshop; all I have to do is just pick up my knife and carve.

Your Ideas & Comments

Words and suggestions from the readers of *Quercus Magazine*

Modern struggle

As a maker/designer of bespoke furniture, I would welcome some articles on marketing and especially, marketing/selling online. Rarely had a problem with the sale once I've made that initial contact but I do struggle with the modern 'online world'.

Frank Holcombe
cabinetmakingbydesign.co.uk

We will certainly be reporting on the content and people in the 'online world' as a hub of ideas, techniques and work on social media.

Faster pace through space

It appears we are hurtling through space at an ever faster pace, too often ignoring the people and things that most directly surround us. It is time to take stock. Slow down, adjust to a reasonable pace that leaves room for forests, wildlife, notice of the loveliness of the natural world, the morning sunrise, and as the sun sets. The hands, better than the eyes, bring important things more clearly into focus. Holding a chisel in one and a mallet in the other, provides the means to shape wood. It also provides the means to hold something even more dear: the creative spirit that inhabited the makers of the long generations that preceded our own.

Doug Stowe

We'll do our best.

Self-taught

My interest in letter carving stems from seeing beautifully carved letters, words, and signs that seem to magically appear. There's never much insight to the process, and as a self-taught woodworker, that doesn't leave many threads to follow. I've watched videos where the carver has hundreds of gouges. While that's a fantastic sight, it's intimidating for someone with no knowledge of what few I would actually need to get started on the basics. Sweeps, sizes, skewed, straight - do I need a knife? I've read articles which tell you 'how-to' without actually telling you much of anything. Any insights would be much appreciated, and I'm excited for the magazine release!

Steve Harrison

We are exploring ways to incorporate letter carving and engraving.

Inspiration

I would love to share practices in greenwoodworking. Apart from my furniture business, I hobby in greenwoodworking. It would be good to get some up to date inspiration and examples. As such old books (1650-1800) can tell a lot (I do collect those for inspiration,) but sharing with contemporary enthusiasts is what I expect from the new magazine. Do you intend to address mainly UK audience, or will there be an international/EU aspect? There is some nice greenwoodworking in the Netherlands like vers-hout.nl/greenwood/. You should surely involve them when you go to the Continent. Other sites worth visiting are eemlepel.nl in Dutch, houtvanbomen.com and livius.eu.

Jaap Groet

Let's hope the extracts from The History of Chairmaking in High Wycombe *set a tone for this sort of thing. As that hints, there will be a natural UK angle, but hopefully the audience will spread widely, partly to follow trends with a British source (like the making of Windsor chairs and Welsh stick chairs traditionally and with adaptations. We would love to explore American furniture in particular.*

Simple projects

I'm very excited to see the new magazine. I'm a beginner (enthusiastic) so I'd like to see simple projects, but also beautiful pieces that inspire me to work towards them. Proper joints too. I bought a woodworking book last year and not one dovetail in sight!

Ginny Slater

Interesting. In principle we'd like to see dovetails when they make sense and chosen for purpose rather than purely for decoration. Their value is often forgotten.

Finishing touches

My interest is in hand-made furniture using traditional Sheffield made handtools. I am just putting the finishing touches to a writing desk chair. There are few tool shops and outlets for purchasing furniture-grade timber these days so perhaps you could maintain a list of suppliers, even write visit reports to the better timber yards. Information on some power-tools might be useful, pros and cons of biscuit jointing for example. It might be hard to avoid power-routers although this is something I have avoided. Timber seems to be supplied in only a few thicknesses these days so occasionally I do think about powered thickness planers. Articles on tool maintenance might be useful. Grinding and then honing of chisels and blades, sharpening of saws, although I wouldn't dare try to sharpen my dovetail saw and only just managed to do my tenon saw because you need good eyesight. Articles on wood finishing products and glues would be a valuable resource.

Chris Walker

In response, here's a guide (yes and no). Yes: hand-made furniture, tool maintenance, sharpening. No: routers and biscuit jointers. Possibly: finishes (plenty of information elsewhere) and timber suppliers (we are hoping the magazine will have a worldwide audience so listing suppliers might be superfluous). Timber types certainly.

Woodturning

As an ex-professional woodturner, I'd like to see some woodturning in your magazine. I could contribute if asked.

Bob Chapman

Sorry Bob, but I don't think there will be

much, unless for an essential component and done with a pole-lathe. There is room for using a powered lathe for greenwood that perhaps ought to be explored and for chair legs etc... It is essential we maintain an open mind.

Expectations
What a good idea to check on the customers' expectations.
Chris Fowler
Thanks. Don't know why we haven't done it before, though emails asking for answers to questions or comments on topics has always been productive. One of the issues with social media is that there is no editing, and threads can wander off in many directions and for any length.

Amazing photography
Don't laugh, but I want it all, and from a hand-tool woodworking perspective. Who are the leaders in the field and what are they producing? Describe great old tools and new ones. Talk about fundamental skills. Amazing photography. Talk about the best woods for hand-tool use. Cool project features for both starter and more complex. Motivational stories. And, I want it well written. So please, go ahead and produce something amazing
Peter Marshall
Gosh. We will do our best. All good suggestions except complex projects, except as illustrating techniques and tools, like Richard Arnold's making of a replica RMS Titanic *handrail this issue. Difficult projects with drawings and cutting lists are difficult to produce and used by relatively few people. Starter projects, on the other hand, are essential.*

Addressing topics
Having been a hand-tool enthusiast for over 30 years. I timber-framed my home and outbuildings by hand, have instructed chairmaking and greenwoodworking classes, am an avid spooncarver and pole lathe turner. I couldn't be happier to hear about *Quercus*. There is a journal here in the US called *Mortise & Tenon*, which is the only other publication I am aware of that specifically addresses the topics you intend to cover. Aside from historical interest and aesthetics, focusing on hand-tool techniques is, to my mind, critical at this time of energy and environmental

concerns. Hand-tools, greenwoodworking, and sloyd are the future of wood craft
Kevin J. Kiwak
We know M&T. *Hopefully by now you have realised that we are not competitors, and there is room for both. We take a rather different approach to the hand-tool world.*

Affordable tools
I think it's a good idea to focus on hand-tools. Greenwoodworking is popular and I can see working seasoned timber with hand-tools going the same way. I'd like to see an emphasis on affordable tools, old tools, re-using materials, refurbished tools, lost crafts.
Peter Grant
We'll do our best.

Predominatly power
As someone who predominantly works with power-tools and home hobby machines in my home garage, I would love to know what would be the required techniques and tools needed to dimension rough lumber from the sawmill. I'm not meaning logs, but 1in thick by 10in wide by 30ft+ long. Would really help me work in the evenings rather than continually risking annoying my neighbours or rushing through dimensioning at the weekends during the day. Articles on useful hand-tools and also what to look for when buying second hand. As in, don't buy a plane with XYZ issues, but ABC issues are easily sorted and don't be put off. Buy 'named' cheap plane and then retrofit with EFG parts and you have a great tool? Getting children interested in using hand-tools safely and meaningfully. What about articles about barrel makers or wheelwrights and how they still make a living or not. Gunstock makers?
Dave James
Sounds pretty much spot on. How to prepare timber/boards to make working by hand more realistic may prove to be a controversial issue, but as some say: 'No Guts, No Glory'.

Best on the Planet
I used to subscribe to both *British Woodworking* and to *Living Woods*. As a greenwoodworker, I reckon *Living Woods* was the best magazine available on the planet. Even though I live and teach traditional woodworking hand skills in the Antipodes, the information and ethos in *Living Woods* was inspiring, encouraging, and interesting. As you emerge from the bicycle dust again Nick, I wish you all the best with the birth of the new Quirky Magazine. In true Australian tradition, I have given it a nickname already.
Greg Miller
The Joy of Wood, Western Australia.
Not sure how to respond to that! As you may discover, Quirky is closer to the truth than you might imagine. Many thanks. We will do our best to match Living Woods*, with less about woodlands.*

Machinery rule
Please don't rule out machinery. I can't do woodwork without a Startrite bandsaw. And please keep to a traditional bias: don't be afraid to use 'cramp' instead of that incorrect 'clamp'.
Fred Page
As Chris Schwarz of Lost Art Press has said a few times, the bandsaw and the benchtop thicknesser are valuable tools, and both may hand woodworking feasible and enjoyable. The cramp v clamp issue is prescient. We are trying to devise a Style Book for future use. Mortice and mortise? We have always gone

for a mortice but mortising. We will be Imperial (mostly). We will honour phrases depending upon the nationality. So we won't convert 'shop' into 'workshop' across the Pond.

Worrying name

I am a little worried by your choice of name, *Quercus* is being used by a large number of companies as at least part of their name. There is at least one publisher using the name. Are you happy that none of them will object to you using *Quercus* as part of the title for any magazine you produce?

Gordon Watson

It is a very good point. Companies are no problem. They are not magazines. However, there is a Spanish bird magazine of the same name. We have tried to contact them to test the water. Quercus *is a name John Brown and I [Nick Gibbs] agreed on so many years ago that I would feel unfaithful to try something else. There are two basic rules when it comes to magazine names. One is a test of whether you are 'passing off', ie. using the name as competition to another magazine. That is almost certainly not the case, but might be contested. The other is breaching a Trademark, which does not appear to be an issue. As we own quercusmagazine.com and @quercusmagazine we are in a relatively strong position. That's not to say that I don't worry about a complaint. I won't argue and will apologise, and if necessary will hand them the URL etc... and change the name, as Greg Miller (above) suggests to* Querkus*, or* Honed *or* With the Grain*, or* Woodie*.*

Practicalities

My hopes for the magazine are that it is 'real' . So many publications focus on what looks and sounds nice rather than the practicalities. As an example, they may show a lovely knotty highly-figured chair seat but don't show the hard work, resharpening and time issues finishing. I am always up for doing an article or two in the future if you want on how difficult making a living doing this is but also the undeniable joy and well being it brings to your life. I am a passionate conservationist, along with my passion for traditional woodworking in all of its forms. Your magazine really excites me!

Mike Taylor

We'll do our best, and we will be welcoming suggestions for articles.

Talented craftspeople

Glad you are going forward with the *Quercus* magazine and looking forward to some quality articles from and about

the amazingly talented craftspeople around Britain and indeed the World. As a hobbyist spooncarver, any spoon-related article is a must but I've a lust for hand-tool-made chairs and so anything furniture-wise is always good. The joy of magazines such as this is the articles that draw you down another burrow of the rabbit hole you are already down so a good mix of crafts and craftspeople is always rewarding. Looking forward to smelling that freshly printed magazine in the morning.

Marcus Keaveney

We're not sure if the choice of paper might not be slightly too 'smelly' and not heavy enough. The aim is to publish something that is light to post, uses recycled paper (and potato starch 'envelope' for subscribers), has a rough feel to suit our readers, we hope, and is less expensive to produce than most printed magazines. Many have failed because of high overheads and high production costs. Our aim is to set a low limit for both.

Preparation

Thank you for canvassing my views on the content of this exciting new magazine. I would like to see a broad mixture of technical information on the preparation and seasoning of various species of wood, information on construction and suitability of wooden products and ideas for projects for both traditional and new designs. A section on traditional tools and their correct use would be appreciated.

Philip Glyn

We could do more timber-related articles than we have used this time. May we take this opportunity to explain, as has been done elsewhere, that this issue does include articles previously published in Living Woods *and* British Woodworking. *That is why we are sending this first issue free to subscribers of those magazines (and because we feel guilty that readers didn't get their money's worth when the magazines both had to fold). It is the best way for us to realistically test the market at relatively low cost, and hopefully encourage readers to write articles and become firm supporters. Apologies if anyone feels badly-done-by.*

French Alps

I really like the idea of your magazine. I trained at Parnham House many years ago, and now teaching spoonmaking in the French Alps. Hand work seems really great to me.

Elisabeth Beaupere

Perhaps we should be delivering copies by hand to the Alps.

Avoiding species

I suppose I would like to see stuff about wood: variation in a species (cherry for example), what to look for, what to avoid, how to work with the knots and splits, rather than looking for a perfect billet before making a spoon, for example. Working green vs using seasoned timber for spoons. Also, the perennial conundrum: if a piece of woodwork, spoon, chair, whatever is really made with only hand-tools, the time to make it (and hence the price) will reflect this. There are ways of cutting time out of the process, using bandsaws, power-tool tenon cutters, and so on. How can makers navigate this rough water? There should be a place for everyone in the market, but how to ensure that hand skills are recognised and understood by the buying public. Tool reviews. Sharpening tips. Visits to master craftspeople and a look round their workshops. Jigs and devices. Enough?

Dave Richards

Plenty. Pretty much spot on. We particularly like the idea of visits to the workshops of master craftspeople, especially those overseas.

Great believer

Great news that you are able to resume publishing again! As a professional furniture-maker, I use machines a good deal but am a great believer in hand-tools and hand skills and believe that handwork is the foundation of all craft woodworking. I hope to be able to support *Quercus* and wish it a successful launch.

Andy Lawton

Thanks, Andy. Meeting old friends and

acquaintances once again has been one of the most crucial parts of Quercus*. I [Nick] have missed the emails, the chats, the shows, the people. Just as a warning, I don't find phone calls easy now.*

Back to basics
I loved the articles by John Lloyd especially when they were 'back to basics'.
Dave Haward
We daren't show this to John lest he raises his rates. We are using a few of his old articles to get us going, but hopefully will then challenge him with new ideas.

Pests and diseases
Very best of luck with your new venture. I was so disappointed when *Living Woods* lost its way and moved away from the original ideas. So how about a market place for new and loved hand-tools? How about a native tree of the edition? History of it, pests and diseases, what the wood is used for, tips on what to look out for when buying and selling that wood and some finished examples. That should keep you going!
David Spreadbury-Troy
Living Woods *was a mish-mash of ideas. We never really knew what it was aiming to do and who it was aiming to please. It had two characteristics of a risky publishing venture. It had a very similar number of male and female readers. Few successful magazines are not aimed at either men or women specifically.* The Week *is a rare exception. The other issue is that you need to know exactly where you'd put a magazine on the newstands.*

Serrated sharpening
What sort of things might you be able to say about traditional sharpening? What about spooncarving knives? Or spokeshaves and drawknives? I'd say that trad sharpening is quick, easy, ideal for beginners, cheapest..The odd thing is how ordinary sharpening has been written out of the texts and reinvented by the new boys as a difficult and arcane art. A good (but not woodwork) example of this was a series of exchanges on a chat group about sharpening a serrated edge bread knife. It was described as 'hard' or 'technical'. Someone had bought some cylindrical diamond files and spent hours doing it. In fact it is about the easiest thing in the world to sharpen, just needing a few swipes on a steel as and when necessary, say one minute a week, as I know from having done it for 60 or more years and never had a prob slicing a loaf!
Jacob Butler
Sharpening is clearly key for Quercus*, and the section* Honed *is dedicated to*

that subject (though not serrated knives). We did at one point consider naming the magazine Honed*.*

Typical journey
I've been learning about greenwoodworking for a few years now. My journey has been from spoons to carved bowls, to pole lathe turned treen, to making stools and chairs. I'm also interested in the blacksmiths and toolmakers that provide tools for greenwoodwork.
Martin Ryan
Good. You have taken the path we hope to be typical of many readers. And we have a section called Toolmaker*, dedicated to hand-made tools. We'd rather do that than test them all.*

Started carving
I've a small workshop at home and make tables, chairs and cupboards mainly out of oak, ash or beech. I do have a tablesaw and planer/thicknesser but increasingly I work just with hand-tools. I've just started a bit of carving (started with spoons) and occasionally, I do a bit of turning on a small lathe I have. I went to the Bodgers Ball in 2017 and was pretty inspired by their links back to woodlands, sourcing wood locally and a totally electricity-free environment. As they say, it's not just about the end result, it's the journey getting there.
Mike Fewster
As Robert Persig wrote in Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*: 'To live only for some future goal is shallow. It is the sides of the mountain that sustain life, not the top'.*

Hitting the nail
I think you are hitting the nail on the head with this one. Your ideas fit my interests perfectly. What about profiles/ information on people in the UK working like this now or in the past - I'm thinking Robin Wood/Barn the Spoon/Yorkshire Critters etc. UK focus but there is lots of international stuff as well - Scandinavian carving traditions. Fingers crossed it goes to print - I'll be first in the queue. I much prefer something paper to read rather than a glowing screen! Have you targeted the Bushcraft community? I think there will be a lot of interest from these guys. What about BushcraftUK forum? A lot of traditional bods who would read a hard copy magazine.
Colin Kawasemi
Thanks. Not sure about bushcraft yet. Might be too extreme.

Sustainable way
Looking forward to seeing the magazine in the near future. In these strange times that we live in it will be good to read about, and be involved in, the world of woodcrafts and the nurturing of our woodlands. Maybe the new world that we are entering will bring good things out of living and working with our hands in a more sustainable way. Good luck.
Andy Mohun
Quercus *would never have got this far had it not been for Lockdown. I had been mulling the idea for some time, but could never find the motivation. I was spending my time reading in libraries around Oxford, where I now live. Lockdown closed the inspiring spires, so I decided to get my act together and give* Quercus *a go from my desk in my isolation quarters.*

Barge pole
There is no way I'll be supporting your magazine having been ripped off with the last one! Subscribed for a year and got one magazine! Promises of the magazine returning after recuperation were lies. No refund either. I'll be telling my friends and family not to touch it with a barge pole!
Michael Bachner
Nice. We did receive money from subscriptions and from Crowdfunding we could not repay. It is a sadness. That is one reason we are sending a free issue to every existing subscriber of our closed magazines. Until we can establish if there is a demand and if I [Nick] can edit properly again we will be selling issues one at a time, with no subscriptions at first. For the time being, Michael, best you don't come punting our way in Oxford.

The Titanic Challenge

With the wreck of the famous ship that sank in 1912 now protected by Unesco, *Richard Arnold* works a replica handrail by hand with vintage wooden tools

I love a challenge, and when Nick Gibbs asked me if it was possible to recreate this section of handrail (below) from *RMS Titanic* using wooden planes, I jumped at the chance. The likelihood of the original handrail being made with hand planes is remote, as by the beginning of the 20th century machinery was in common use at big manufacturers such as Harland and Wolff, but it does give a good opportunity to show how complex mouldings can be worked with basic handtools.

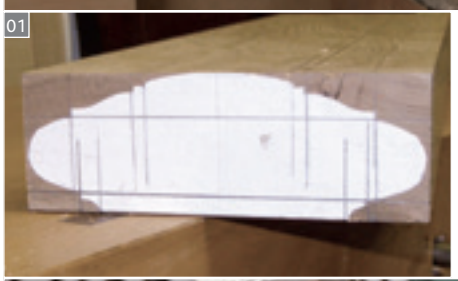
The original handrail looks to be about 6x2 1/8in, and made of oak. At first I considered using a softer timber such as cedar or a soft mahogany to make life a bit easier, but then I thought don't be a wimp, plenty of pre-industrial craftsmen had to mould heavy sections of oak, so why should I have it easy! After all I was only producing a couple of feet, not enough for a whole staircase! One thing to consider when you are moulding timber by hand is that it is a lot easier to work with air-dried stock if at all possible. After all that's what these planes were designed to cut. I'm not saying you can't use kiln-dried material, but it is never as pleasurable to work with as air-dried timber.

When I'm producing a complex mould that requires multiple procedures, I like to mark the section out full-size onto the end grain of the timber (Pic.1). This time I have pasted paper cut-outs to the end sections so I can clearly see where I am working to. In essence the profile is just a series of rebates joined up with various curves, so the first step is to define the rebates with a combination of tools. In this case I have used a plough plane, wooden rebate planes, and a snipe's bill moulding plane. The timber section is marked out along its length with a marking gauge to define the edges of the rebates, and to give a guide line to set the plough plane to.

Working on the top section of the handrail first, two grooves are ploughed side by side (Pic.2) to define the small quirk that divides the large curved middle section from the ogee mould that lies alongside it. I tend to leave the grooves just shy of the gauged lines so that they can be planed to a fine-finished edge with a razor-sharp rebate plane.

We now need to work a large rebate on the edge of the handrail. This creates the quirk that separates the lower edge of the ogee from the outer rounded edge of the handrail. This could be worked with a large rebate plane, but it's a lot of material to remove, especially when it's oak, so I find it easier to plough (Pic.2) a groove from both sides until the central core breaks away. This involves a lot less effort than planing it all away. The rebate can then be trimmed back to the gauge lines with a wooden rebate plane. >

The original section of handrail



01

Richard starts by gluing a paper template to the end of each piece, scoring lines with a marking gauge. The plough plane (below) is used to form grooves for widening rebates

02

History Detectives at Work

A piece of handrail is said to have been picked up by ships from Halifax, Nova Scotia searching for bodies. The moulding was converted into a picture frame (below) and discovered by Fran Laks researching a story for Lion TV in the USA, making a programme for *History Detectives*. We put Fran in touch with Chuck Holder of the International Wood Collectors Society (woodcollectors.org), who explained that the oak for the *Titanic* came from the Tollymore Estate in Northern Ireland. The same timber was used for the *HMHS Britannic* and the, all three of the ships having been built by Harland & Wolff in Belfast.

By ploughing a groove from each side until they meet (above left) you can save a lot of time rebating, using a finely-set rebate plane to finish off the job. Richard then uses narrow (Pic.5) and then wider (Pic.6) hollow planes for shaping

Richard creates a V-shaped trench with a snipe's bill moulding plane (above), using the very sharp point of the sole to rest in a strongly-gauged line. A rebate plane on an angle (below) is used to form another rebate

Ogee moulding between the rebates

We now move on to form the ogee mould that separates the rebates we have formed. This requires the use of moulding planes commonly known as hollows and rounds. These planes have no form of fence or depth stop, so on first appearance may seem a little tricky to use, but have no fear, our old friend the rebate comes to our assistance once more. If we work a shallow rebate into the lower portion of the ogee, it gives us a guide for our round to work in.

To form this rebate I have used a method that may be unfamiliar to some of you, but I hope you might find it useful. It involves the use of a snipe's bill moulding plane (Pic.3). These are often found as a left- and right-handed pair, but in this case we only need one. The sole of the plane comes to a very fine point which will sit easily into a strongly gauged line.

This allows you to form a V-shaped trench with one upright side. This in turn allows you to use a skewed rebate plane which is tilted to one side to start the rebate (Pic.4). As the cut progresses the plane can be moved to an upright position to finish the cut. 'Why form it this way?' I hear you ask. Well the reason is that it's surprisingly quick and efficient, and requires no form of guiding fence, just a simple gauged line to start with.

The ogee section can now be finished by completing the top rounded portion with a suitable hollow plane (Pic.6). At this point it might be useful to talk a little about the various sizes of hollows and rounds. During the middle of the 18th century these simple planes started to be marked up with a numbered sizing system. Hollows and rounds were marked in pairs from 1 to 18, but this does not mean that craftsmen necessarily bought complete sets, perhaps just matching pairs in the sizes that they found they needed.

This brings me to the point that until I came to write this article I could not have told you what the size of the planes were that I used to form the various profiles required. In actual fact I just pulled planes of the shelf that were the nearest fit to the curves I needed. It's also worth noting that a numbered plane by one maker may not match the same number profile by another maker. So my point is this: if you are thinking about getting into using hollows and rounds, don't get hung up on the idea that you need a full set, or they all have to be by the same maker, it really doesn't matter all that much.

Getting back to the handrail, the middle section is formed with a combination of a small hollow on the edge followed by the biggest hollow that I could find to form the slow curve to the centre. The next stage is to form the round on the edge. This could be done in its entirety with a round plane, but I chose to take some of the bulk away with a jack plane (Pic.7). With the top completed, the underside is formed in a similar way with a rebate to form the quirk (Pic.9), and a second rebate to guide a small hollow to form the cove underneath.

I used a combination of three rebate planes while making this moulding, but in truth it could have been done with just the one. Two of the planes were identical skew mouthed, 1in-wide rebate planes. The first was set to take a heavier cut to remove the bulk of the material, while the other was set fine for the finishing cuts. The third plane was a large skew mouthed badger plane that was good at truing up the bigger rebates.

One of the advantages of working with hand planes is that there is very little cleaning up required. Unlike machine-worked mouldings there are no milling marks to sand out, or burn marks from a router cutter. On the other hand the profile will never be as regular as machine work, but then again I happen to like the fact that it looks, and perhaps more importantly feels hand-made. After all, is this not what puts us in touch with the craftsmen who made something with nothing more than simple tools and skills handed down the generations?


08


07

A jack plane (above) is a quick way to remove the waste on the edge, rounding the edge with a narrow hollow plane (left). Then Richard starts on the underside rebates (below)


09

Justin Matranga's Titanic Connection

Early *Quercus* reader Justin Matranga replied to an Instagram post about Richard Arnold's *Titanic* replica handrail with a fascinating personal connection. "My great grandmother and great aunt emigrated from Ireland on the *Titanic*." Margaret Murphy had spent a few years in the USA early in the 20th Century, returning to Ireland in 1911. There she fell in love with her neighbour John Kieran. When he left to board the *Titanic* on 11th April 1912, Maggie and her sister Kate ran away to Queenstown (now Cobh near Cork) to join Kieran with third class tickets costing £15. "The night before the little group in our village was to board the Titanic, I slipped away from home carrying all the clothes I could," she told the *Altoon Times* later in 1912. "The thoughts of being separated from him were too much for me. When we heard the Titanic was doomed we left our berths and rushed on deck. I never thought for a moment that the steamship was going down. When both of us realised it was, Mr [John] Kieran took a lifebelt off himself and assisted me into one of the last lifeboats. We kissed each other goodbye and he promised to see me soon." She recalled how some crewmen had blocked their way to the upper decks and that some lifeboats left the ship partially full. She and her sister were rescued by the *RMS Carpathia*, but John Kieran drowned.


10

Tools used (from left): Badger rebate plane; jack plane; marking gauge; plough plane; snipe's bill and various hollows and rounds and rebate planes, made by different makers and from different sets. The oak was air-dried for easier use with old tools

Learn more about old & vintage tools at Richard's website:richardarnold.co.uk

Using a large wooden badger plane to work the rebate (above) before using a small round for the cove (below), rounding with a wide hollow (Pic.12)


11


12

Rushers tended to be paid more than caners as the work is tougher. Most sit low with the chair between their knees

Windsors of Wycombe

In the first of his series, *John Mayes* explains why one small town became the heart of Britain's chairmaking trade

The last half of the 18th century was the heyday of the London furniture industry. Chippendale, Hepplewhite, Manwaring, Sheraton and other great personalities were not merely names but the living, active heads of prosperous firms where they designed, made and sold fine furniture, including fine chairs which went to furnish the dining rooms and drawing-rooms and the principal bedrooms of the great houses of the country. Only 30 miles away was Wycombe, on a main coach road and surrounded by hills where beech grew so abundantly that it became known as the Buckinghamshire weed and where elm trees grew in the valleys and ash for bent parts was reasonbably common. All these were materials ideally suited to the making of simpler chairs needed for the furnishing of the kitchens, the servants' quarters and the lesser bedrooms, as well as for general use in smaller houses and the inns, the churches and the public buildings of town and country. It is natural to suppose that the Wycombe chair trade made its start at about this time and there is a considerable body of evidence to support the theory.

In the Oak Room of the Wycombe Town Hall there is a 20th century stained glass window, which records that the first chair factory was established in 1805 by Samuel Treacher and Thomas Widgington. The names, or at any rate the surnames, are possibly correct, but I believe the year to be too late. Samuel Treacher's name first appears in the baptismal register for 1769, where his father's name is given as William Treacher, and some years ago a most interesting billhead was discovered that read 'William Treacher, Windsor, dyed and fancy chairs, opposite the Woolpack Wycombe', and this bill-head bears the open date 179-, the last figure to be filled in at the time of using. The description of his chairs indicates something far removed from the casual productions of unskilled farm labourers set to chairmaking in bad weather, which disposes of the particular account, widely held, of the beginning of the trade.

A reading of the first chapter of this history will also, I hope, dispose of another often-repeated statement that in the early days the complete chairs were produced in little thatched huts in the woods.

The biggest single piece of evidence for an 18th century start to the trade is contained in the Stowe manuscripts now housed in the British Museum. In 1798, anticipating possible military needs, the High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire ordered the constables of every town and parish to take a special census of all men between the ages of 15 and 60, with every man's trade recorded against his name.

In the Borough of Chepping Wycombe the total number listed was 395 and of these 33 were chairmakers, by far the largest single trade group, other than servants and farm labourers, in the town and far too numerous to be engaged in a strictly local consumption industry. In the parish the figures were 325 and 7, and in West Wycombe 250 and 18; no less than 58 chairmakers in all, mastermen and workmen included, and this number does not take any account of men over 60, and chairmakers are a long-lived race.

The sum of the information given so far indicates a flourishing chairmaking trade and one which was producing a variety of types. We do not know how they worked, but it seems likely that each manufacturer made whole chairs right through, for there are no indications of subsidiary trades except that of leg turning, which was carried on in the surrounding villages, and this kind of chair production seems to have continued for the first fifty years or so. The period covered by the late 18th century and early 19th century was not one to encourage rapid growth in a manufacture which, even though its products were simple, was at least on the fringe of luxury by the standards of the day. We owe the 1798 list of chairmakers to the fact that the Napoleonic war had reached a phase when invasion of the country was quite likely, and under such conditions few men would be prepared to sink capital in such ventures and probably not many more woud be willing to part with their money to buy new furniture.

• *In the second part of John Mayes'* History of Chairmaking in High Wycombe*, John takes a step backwards in time to visit the woods and find the bodgers, upon whom the factories relied. You can learn more about High Wycombe from the High Wycombe Society (highwycombesociety.org.uk).*

A framer's hammer was used for 'legging-up' a Windsor chair on a framing block

Backsaw Tensioning

Needing to straighten a backsaw, *Mark Harrell* takes to his hammer

Victory! You have just completed a series of difficult tenon cheek rips for a table you're making in quarter-sawn white oak, and it's time to celebrate with a libation awaiting your attention in the workshop's cooler. But discipline first: time to put away your tools, which is when you notice something quite awry with your most prized vintage carcase saw, a beautiful brass-backed Disston from the 1880s with horns intact on its quartersawn applewood handle.

But now there's trouble in paradise. Your once straight toothline looks more crooked than a politician's bankrupt casino. How on earth did the plate get such an s-roll in it? First the handle loosened up over winter making an annoying click on every push stroke, and you've stripped out one fastener trying to tighten it, and now the plate's shot. Now you'll have to send it off to the saw Doc to work his magic, and heaven knows how long that will take. How could you have been so ham-handed?

Not so fast. Backsaws aren't made of sugar candy. Chances are you just pulled the plate out of tension making cuts best reserved for a tenon saw. Fortunately, straightening it out is easier than adjusting a plane iron, and it's something you can do in seconds.

Sugar candy

Now another look at that drop-dead gorgeous Disston lying on your bench. There is a reason it's been around for the last 140 years, and you're about to discover why. It has everything to do with the traditional folded sawback and how to realign it at will.

Retensioning a toothline arrow-straight by tapping your sawback fore and aft was once so commonly understood that woodworkers a century ago would look at you funny if you didn't know how to do it. Did I also mention that simple retensioning techniques also tend to tighten up a handle grown loose from the effect the cool, dry air of winter has on your workshop? Or that a simple accessory you can make yourself will allow you to realign your vintage sawback to its original factory settings, and will even serve as a saw sharpening vise?

Mark Harrell of Bad Axe Saws. Visit badaxetoolworks to see their fine saws

Read on, and you will know how to take matters into your own hands when it comes to simple backsaw maintenance you can implement immediately, regardless of your present skill set.

Here's a quick summary of the traditional skills you can master in short order:

- What is retensioning?
- Analogy to a ski binding.
- The retensioning process.
- Returning your vintage (or new) sawback to original factory settings.
- Tighten your handle in the process.
- How to make your own simple saw maintenance jig for less than $75.

Torquing the plate

You will eventually ask more of your saw than what it was designed to cut, and wind up torquing the plate with a less than elegant cut – I certainly have in the past – and you will see a bit of an S-roll along the toothline. What has happened is the plate has minutely slipped inside the sawback, rather than kinking in the cut. No worries. It's an extremely simple thing to straighten out with retensioning. Retensioning a backsaw's toothline is an amazing technique for proper backsaw maintenance. That was once quite common knowledge until handsaws fell out of favour for power tools almost a century ago and have only recently, in the past 20 years, experienced a dramatic resurgence in interest for relatively cordless woodworking. Given that we've now experienced at least three generations of this kind of knowledge-lapse, it's not surprising that this once common technique is virtually unknown in the 21st Century – so let's just climb back into the saddle and ride along with our great-grandfathers for a while.

Simply put, retensioning a backsaw is all about properly whacking the toe and heel end of your sawback to redistribute the clamping pressure along the spine, where the traditional folded sawback is sprung along the axis of your plate's spine. Newer saws made since the mid-1990's are often found with the sawplate permanently fixed into the back with epoxy and/or screws inside brass bar stock with a precise slit milled along the underside to receive the spine of the plate. The advantage of this type of sawback, of course, is that it lowers production costs (and price) and serves its purpose of providing mass and keeping the plate straight.

The disadvantage is that this method disallows retensioning and one will live with what one does to the saw over time. The traditional folded sawback, on the other hand, forgives hard use by simply allowing the plate to slip out of tension before kinking, and this is why these days so many century-old saws proliferate on eBay, just as good today as they were a long time ago. More on that is to follow.

Let's get some perspective on retensioning a backsaw first. For starters, any vintage saw will have a traditional folded sawback. Look on eBay at the old Disstons, the Atkins, Richardsons, Simonds, Geo. H. Bishop, Harvey Peace, Jackson, Spear & Jackson, Groves & Sons, Garlick, Lynx, and . . . well, any backsaw from back in the day. They all had a folded sawback, folded over into a 182-degree bend and sprung onto the spine of a thin sawplate not only to make it rigid, but to allow the user to retension the plate and toothline at will.

You likely have an old backsaw in

your till at home already. Blow the dust off it and check out the toe end of the fold. You'll notice that it has an air-gap between the spine of the plate and the inside fold of the sawback. That airgap is deliberate, so take note.

Tugging the ski binding

The back, as we all know, is intended to provide mass and to stiffen the plate, right? But the back also has that air-gap to allow the user to shift it around, whether it's to tighten up a loose handle dried out in the cold, dry air of winter-time, or to retension your toothline straight because you might have tugged the plate out of tension with heavy, awkward use or perhaps even dropped it off your bench (we've all done it, and there is no shame).

Think of your sawback as a ski binding. You wouldn't want to ski with your slats glued onto your boots, right? You need a binding that will release your skis if you take a tumble on the slopes, lest your knee buckles in a way Gray's Anatomy never intended. Likewise, a traditional folded sawback allows your plate to slip out of tension before kinking with heavy or awkward use. And resetting your plate and back assembly is super simple.

The bottom line is that first you're going to tap the fore and aft ends of your sawback lightly with a light-duty mallet. This see-saw action redistributes the clamping tension of the sawback where it is sprung onto the spine. Unlike a static-backed saw, the traditional folded sawback is designed to shift, thus keeping one from permanently kinking the thin sawplate under extreme duress, or clumsy sawing.

Two steps to retension

• Step #1: Starting with the heel end of your backsaw, clasp the underside of the sawback and the plate where it enters the sawback with thumb and forefinger. Upon tapping, you'll feel the plate slip very slightly into the sawback. If you don't feel the back slip, then it is quite likely already mated along the floor of the handle's mortise receiving the plate/back assembly, and that's a good thing.

• Step #2: Flip your saw around and now tap the sawback at the toe end of your saw. Here is where you'll quite likely feel the plate slip minutely inside the back. Your goal is to get the plate to slip no more than 1/64th to 1/32nd per tap, and to *never* cram the sawback down so much that the spine of the plate actually touches the inside fold of the sawback. The air gap is deliberate, allowing for a teeter-totter effect of the sawback along the spine, which equalises clamping tension along the spine, which in turns straightens out the toothline.

Do not attempt to adjust the static saw back (above left) or you will ruin it. The folded back is sprung onto the spine of the sawplate. Steel sawbacks exert tremendous clamping pressure on the spine yet still allows the spine to slip before kinking

This process makes your sawback teeter-totter ever so slightly, redistributing the clamping tension where the sawback is sprung along the spine of the plate.

Simply hold your saw upright on a jointed flat surface, lightly pinch the plate/back assembly, and give the heel end of the back a light tap. Flip it around and do the same at the toe end. Voila!

Another advantage of the traditional folded sawback is the ability to tap it to effect a lateral shift, allowing one to close the minute air-gap that develops over wintertime when the cool, dry air loosens the tool handles inhabiting your shop, saw handles included. The kneejerk solution when tightening a handle is to crank on the fasteners, which are usually brass and deform quite easily. If you think about it, all you're doing is squeezing the handle cheeks tighter, which can possibly crack the wood if you overdo it. As a minimum, you'll distort your slotted fastener bolts.

Airgap of the sawback

The real issue is the slight airgap that has presented between the back wall of the sawback where it is intended to mate with the back wall of the handle's mortise receiving the plate/back assembly. The remedy? Simply cinch the plate of your saw in a vise and whack the toe of your saw with a light-duty mallet. Pictured are a couple of pieces of angle iron lined with cork-rubber which prevents scratching your sawplate. Once frozen in place, simply tap the toe end of the sawback while holding the handle. Don't kill it– just tap with increasing intensity until you feel the heel of the sawback just kiss the back wall of the handle's mortise. You'll feel it in your hand. Perhaps tighten the fasteners a little – and you're done: no more rocking, clicking handle.

You can make some inexpensive saw maintenance jigs for your shop with which one may fix the saw in place for maintenance, whether adjusting the back, retensioning, restoring a plate depth

back to factory settings, or removing the back altogether.

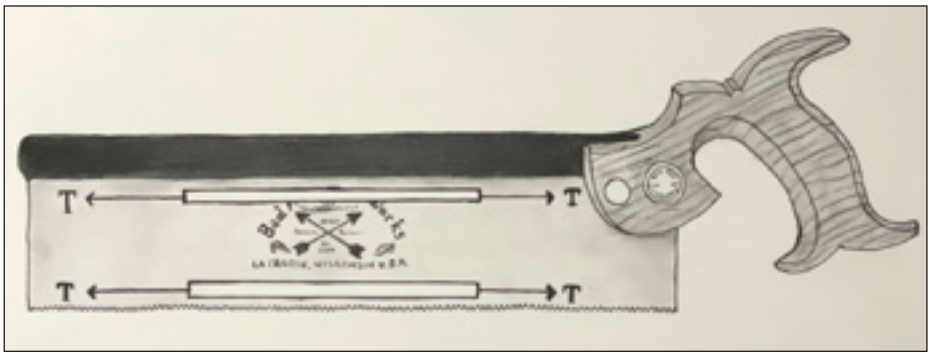
Inexpensive holding jigs

Pictured is an inexpensive method for creating a jig with about $75 of angle iron and cork-rubber. Simply cut a 1.5x2x36in section of angle iron in half to create two 18in long pieces, debur the metal, and line the inside surfaces with cork rubber.

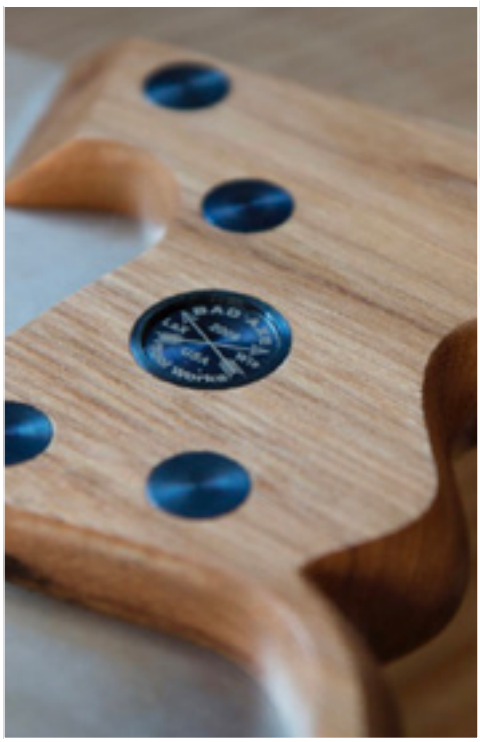
Used in conjunction with your shop vice, this accessory gives you a useful shop jig with which to maintain your saw as described in this article. Source a 14x1.5x0.25in piece of flat iron, debur the metal, cut a 2.5in kerf on one end and line it with cork-rubber, and now you have a simple pry-bar with which to lift the sawback completely off for maintenance, or to simply raise it to achieve original factory settings on your backsaw.

In summary, it is the traditional folded sawback that underwrites the longevity of any saw. There is no significant mystery, just a few simple techniques that have been largely forgotten over time. Now, like your grandfathers preceding you in woodworking, you too can take ownership of a simple, straightforward technology that has withstood the not-so-elegant cuts of time for over 300 years.

The techniques described here only relate to saws with traditional folded sawbacks, such as a Bad Axe or any backsaw that was made prior to the 1990s. Visit badaxetoolworks.com to see Mark's tools.



The traditional folded sawback is sprung on the spine of the plate. Whatever happens with the back translates into the straightness of the toothline. If you can adjust a plane iron, you can straighten the toothline with a couple of judicious taps on the sawback with a light-duty mallet. It's that easy



Got the loose handle blues? Simply fix the plate of your backsaw in place and tap the toe end laterally towards the handle to tighten it without destroying the fasteners. You can make your own maintenance kit (right) to adjust the sawback with a few pieces of angle iron and flat iron lined with cork rubber

Head of the Grinders

Author *Sean Hellman* starts reconditioning an old axe head

I often buy old second-hand axe heads, re-profile them and put new handles on. When buying an old axe head it is important to check if the head has ever had the handle burnt out. I have seen people put a broken axe head in a fire to burn the old wooden handle out from the eye. The heat from the fire will make the axe head soft so that good retention and hardness of edge has been lost. Unless re-tempered, the axe will only be good for wood splitting. Older axe heads are sometimes made by folding the metal billet over to form the eye and are forge-welded together, or a harder metal edge is welded on. Check that the metal is not coming apart.

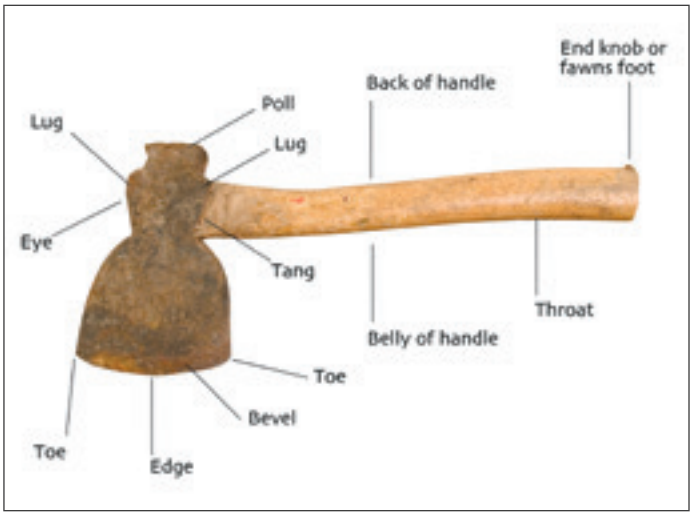
Axes are often used as wedges and are banged into wood with a metal hammer. Most axes are not designed for this. Look out for signs that the axe has been hit too much on the poll, as cracks open up on the side of the eye and in severe cases, the eye can be split all the way through on one side. If the axe has lots of rust, brush some of this off around the cutting edge to see how deep any rust-pitting is. Badly rusted tools can have deep pits caused by the rust eating a hole into the metal. Pits near the edge need to be ground away, as they will leave a nick or jagged hole in the edge of the blade. Sometimes a tool cannot be renovated as so much metal will need to be removed.

The first step in renovation is to de-rust the tool. Use either a wire brush or a fibre sanding disc. If these are used on an angle grinder the tool will shine within a couple of minutes. I grind away any bent over metal on the poll and generally tidy the axe head up. I also tend to leave the handle on as this gives me an easy way to hold the axe head in a vice. When working with power-tools, both hands must either hold the workpiece, and the tool must be firmly fixed in a vice or to a table; or, the workpiece must be clamped firmly to a solid object and both hands must hold the power tool. Holding the axe head with one hand with an angle grinder in the other is a recipe for disaster. Always wear eye protection when using any power-tool on metal.

One-sided axes

In these pictures, I am making the axe right-handed, so I am putting a long bevel on the left side of the head and the main, steeper bevel, is on the right. This makes the axe a sided axe for right-handed use, so that I can swing the axe more vertically into the right-hand side of the wood, rather than having to hold either wood or axe at an angle. This is a more efficient use of energy and helps with creating flat surfaces or regular cuts on my wood. A side axe is not very good for carving out concave shapes, eg. the shoulders of spoons, but is excellent for carving flat surfaces. Of course you do not have to 'side' your axe as I have done here, you could just create even-sized bevels on both sides. I would advise that a general purpose or a bushcraft axe should have even bevels.

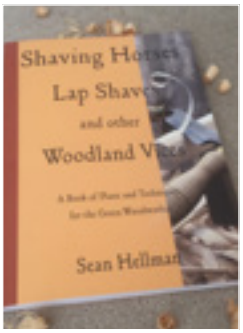
The edge takes a lot of punishment and some axes are tempered on the soft side, so an acute 25° bevel would fail and the edge fold over. If the temper is hard, the edge is likely to crack and chip. Finding the right bevel angles for your axe may take a few tries. If using green wood you can get away with a 30° angle but with seasoned oak the angle may have to be 40° or more otherwise the edge will dull too quickly. A splitting axe will have a secondary bevel of about 60-80°.



When using an angle grinder (here with a fibre disc) make sure the axe is held and you have two hands on the grinder. From the top of the axe you can see how the lugs have been bent out of symmetry. Grind the edge too long, too hard or too fast and you will lose the temper, the bluing indicating the temper has been lost, the edge too soft. You have to grind back beyond the bluing

Power-tools make light work where using only files and bench stones could take many hours of tedious filing. I like using a bench grinder/belt sander combination, with a coarse grindstone and a couple of grades of belts.

See a review of Sean Hellman's Shaving Horses & Lap Shaves elsewhere. Visit seanhellman.com to buy a copy for £20.45.



The Lighter Ways to Rip

Needing to exercise his arms, *Robin Gates* opts for the hand-powered ripsaw

Considering how long we have depended on electricity to light our homes and workshops it is curious how the candle still illuminates our conversation. Who hasn't been warned of the dangers of 'burning the candle at both ends' and who hasn't muttered to themselves, when something in the workshop proved a disappointment, that it 'wasn't worth the candle'? The smoking evil-smelling necessity that was the tallow candle of a century ago has become an aromatic luxury, designed to bring an air of quiet contemplation to a corner of a frantic world. But in its most basic form the household candle remains a practical and beneficial form of lighting. At home we have been in the habit of switching off the kitchen lights and burning candles on winter evenings for years. The fiery light is timeless and a great stimulus for ideas. It brings us together.

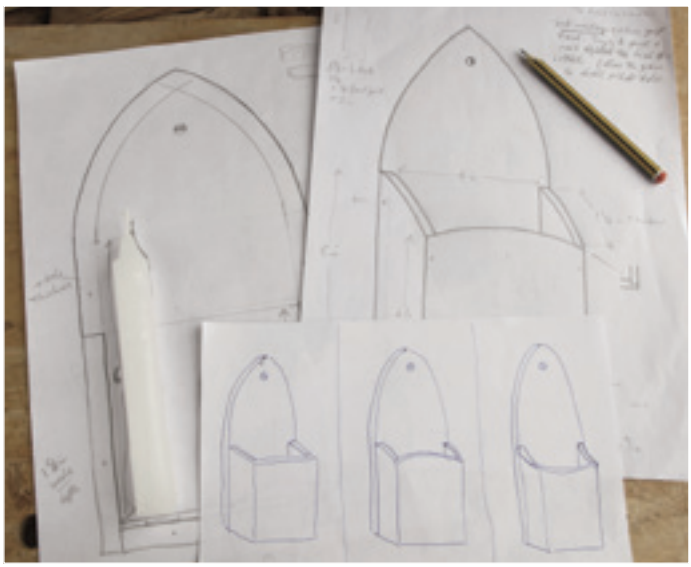
The stand-by for power cuts stocked by corner shops is Price's paraffin wax candle: 6in high, 3/4in diameter and said to burn for five hours. Without realizing it we had put this claim to the test while home-schooling our son Tom some years ago. We used 0.5cm graduations of a candle to measure time and looking back through his science notes shows that the average time to burn through 0.5cm was 13min. Even disregarding the top 3/4in of the candle, which is tapered, that extrapolates to 5h 41min!

Wooden candle boxes have sometimes caught my eye in country houses and old churches so I thought I'd make one to hang in the kitchen. The design grew upwards from a base that would accommodate a full box of 10 candles, in two rows of five, which, allowing a little leeway, gave 4in width and 1 1/2in depth measured between inside walls. The front and sides were drawn to allow a head count of the candles while the back board was raised to 9 1/2in, enhancing the box's presence on the wall. In shaping the high back I was guided by the candle flame itself which is essentially a Gothic arch, while the sides and front were decided by popular vote after sketching three alternatives: straight, concave, and convex. The family voted for convex.

The next consideration was the timber. From my motley stack of offcuts and oddments recycled from discarded furniture I picked an elm board salvaged from a broken tabletop. The board was splintery and bowed and had been stained dark but it's day had come. When cut to the short lengths I required the bow could be planed out of it and with a scraper I could restore the elm's tone.The unconsidered dimension thus far, however, was thickness. At 13/16in the board was more in scale with the proportions of a window box than a candle box, so I would have to resaw it. In my machinery-free workshop resawing (reducing the thickness of a board) is a serious commitment of time and energy. Not that I'm complaining because, up to a point, I find resawing by hand both satisfying and worthwhile. It's quiet work at a human pace, also good for recycling, and it's a feasible method of obtaining the right dimensions.

When sawing a long board, however, I can see the advantages of the industrial revolution! Resawing begins with scribing around the board to the required thickness, remembering to allow for wood lost in sawdust and in cleaning up with a plane afterwards. The board is clamped at about 45° and sawn alternately from each corner, rotating the board as necessary. As

Working with a Disston 28in 41/2tpi ripsaw. The design evolved over a few stages (below)



the board nears separation its two halves begin pivoting around the unsawn wood remaining so a shim in the kerf is useful to assist with clamping. If the saw has followed the line the kerfs will meet somewhere in the middle of the board which will fall open like a book.

Teeth per inch advantages

For this project I compared resawing with a 6tpi hand saw and an older frame saw and found that each has its advantages. The frame saw was easier to push – its narrow blade causes less friction – and although it was also easier to stray from the line it was easier to steer back onto the line. A weaving blade does leave an undulating surface but it's soon made good with the smoothing plane. Using the hand saw I also managed to stray from the line but found that my error was more consistent or, looked at another way, impossible to correct!

For resawing small boards I still favour the frame saw because it is so nimble and well balanced when the frame is vertical. For sawing bang on the line, as here, when there is no waste side, its narrow blade gives an unobstructed view of the line. In contrast, the wide blade of a hand saw obscures the line so I am constantly peering to one side or the other to see how I am doing. Another difference in technique with resawing long boards is that I don't find it practical to saw from all four corners. Having clamped the board at around 15 degrees from vertical in the bench vice I find it sufficient to saw from just the top two corners, turning the board after every inch of progress. When the saw is running sweetly it is tempting to keep going without turning the board but I find this is when I am most likely to stray. At my level of experience frequent stops are essential for accuracy. It also helps to keep the saw as low as possible to the vice, both for comfort and to minimize vibration. Resawing

"The frame saw was easier to push," Robin recalls, "as its narrow blade causes less friction, and although it is also easier to stray from the line it is easier to steer back onto the line"

Smaller ripping jobs

When resawing a very small piece to thickness or ripping a longer one to width I often have to remind myself that one of my back saws has rip teeth too – the dovetail saw. It is misleading to think that the work of this saw is limited to cutting the joint that named it. Made by Thos. Turner & Co with a 10in blade, 14tpi and no discernible set to the

teeth, this saw cuts very neatly and proved ideal for trimming the small boards of the candlebox to size. Its long-horned handle is an ergonomic masterpiece and the folded solid brass back stiffening the thin saw plate also lends enough weight to the cutting edge that it is not necessary to push down at all.

Clamping the work under one knee in traditional ripping style is too coarse an approach for work on this scale. It is better to lift the wood on a block and brace it against a tall bench dog, beginning the cut at about 45° before progressively lowering the angle so that the sides of the kerf keep the blade running true. Below a certain width it becomes impractical to saw to width but having taken the trouble to resaw a board to the required thickness I am loathe to waste any by planing away what may be a useful offcut.

Some years ago Lie-Nielsen redesigned the back saws with taper, in the sense of the saw plate being deeper at the heel than at the toe, not in the sense of being taper ground from teeth to back. Taper is reckoned to improve precision. Many an old British back saw was given taper as standard: this one tapers from $1\frac{13}{16}$in at the toe to $2\frac{1}{4}$in at the heel.

by hand makes little sense for professionals – it is undeniably slow and labour intensive – but for some amateurs it is not only feasible but perhaps preferable to the noise and dust created by machinery. In my own situation, with the workshop adjoining the kitchen, a bandsaw or thicknesser resonating through the house would not prove popular.

Aesthetic advantage

And besides the obvious gain of making two or more boards from one there is an aesthetic advantage to resawing in that the characteristics of the parent board run through its offspring. Work done with resawn boards has consistent grain and colour, even allowing components to mirror each other with a subtle undercurrent of symmetry in the wood itself.

Taking a purely practical view resawing opens up an infinite range in board thickness for the hand tool worker, so that we need not be constrained by the standard dimensions of what the retailer has in stock. And even better, if you believe in recycling you can generate high quality new boards from discarded furniture – sometimes in hard-to-find hardwoods such as this English elm which came from a broken Ercol table top.

Exploring the technique of resawing further I have found the frame saw less convenient for longer cuts. This is because it becomes necessary to turn the blade, tilting the frame to one side so that it clears the board. The ability to turn the blade in relation to the frame is what makes a frame saw so handy when sawing curves but when trying to make a long straight cut the saw feels unbalanced and I am prone to wander from the line. So for longer cuts I have returned to the hand saw with its more familiar wide saw plate.

The first hand saw I compared with the frame saw was an old 26-inch Spear & Jackson ripsaw with 6 points-per-inch which I picked up at a local boatyard for £3. Although a tad rusty when found it has proved a good bargain, straight and sharp, a testament to the quality of 1950s Sheffield steel, and with further practice my results have definitely improved.

What has taken my resawing to the next level, however, is a 28-inch Disston D-8 ripsaw (shown here) which I found on ebay for £22. With 4½ points-per-inch it is coarser and consequently a little harder to push than the S&J but it makes up for that with speed. Weighing 2lb it is also about 25% heavier than the S&J. Extra weight can be a disadvantage when ripping a board held horizontally as it tires the sawyer's arm on the back stroke, but when resawing a board gripped vertically in the vice the saw itself is running more or less horizontally in which case its weight supplies extra down force for the cut. Another useful feature is that the teeth are graduated – that is, smaller near the toe - with 6 points-per-inch helping to establish the kerf for the coarser teeth that follow.

Buying old saws on eBay is a gamble. I was lucky with the

A scraper plane (left) is used to remove marks from the resawing, and using the frame saw again to shape the arch (above). John Lloyd is writing a piece on paring (below) for the next issue

Disston which had been stored flat and with an edge guard but the next saw I bought has been recycled as scrapers!

Preferring the frame saw

On balance I preferred the frame saw which gave a more accurate if slightly more ragged result. After burning off a few more calories with the plane and the cabinet scraper I had 1/4in-thick elm boards I needed to mark out the candle box. I began with the back as I'd been itching to saw the Gothic arch. Having settled on the curvature of the arch on paper I scored this into the wood using dividers and followed the line with the frame saw. The hand screw proved its worth for clamping the back while sawing as I could position the work in good light by the window and make frequent adjustments easily.

Next I made cut-outs in the back to accommodate the box sides so there would be an unbroken line from top to bottom. In fine-tuning the box sides I clamped and planed them together, using a spokeshave for the curved tops which drop by 3/4in from back to front. I opted to use nails because that was the way it was done in the 19th century candle boxes I have seen, but I was wary of splitting the timber and also of driving the nails crookedly in which case they would burst through the sides.

A test nailing exercise proved I was right to be wary because the nails followed the grain and went off course every time. The solution was to drill a fine pilot hole for each nail: simple.

It also helped that I was working in elm because this cross-grained timber is known for its resistance to splitting. Traditionally it was used to make transoms for wooden boats since nails hold well in its end-grain. Bearing that in mind I used square copper boat nails, driving them home with a nail set so that I didn't mark the wood.

When rebating the front to accept the sides, a block lifted the workpiece sufficiently for the side fillister's fence to clear the bench and the shavings fell away like ribbons. The front's arc was sawn and planed to meet the sides, falling from 4 3/4in at its centre to 4 1/4in at the edges, and with the front nailed on I took final measurements for the base which was cut and fitted.

Two things remained before sanding. The first was to merge the arcs where they met at the front corners of the box. Chiselling by eye I cut a rolling bevel for this, making sure the box was clamped firmly under the holdfast's beak. Then I had to drill a hole to hang the box. The dividers again proved invaluable in marking the spot, spanning from each side to ensure the hole lay on the centreline. I finished sanding with 00 grade paper then rubbed in a 1:1 mixture of bees wax and walnut oil, buffing to a gentle shine. It's a finish that is silky smooth without diminishing the beauty of the elm, and now the box is on the wall I can see another advantage in using resawn timber - the swerving grain in the front of the box is echoed in the back, conjuring up the movement of the flame.

There will be an article next issue about spokeshaves; their use and their designs. A side fillister (below) is used to cut rebates in the candlebox front for the sides, and a chisel to roll the bevel where the sides meet the front (right)

The Contented Chair

Tempted by a reclining design, *James Mursell* questions the shape of a Windsor chair

Windsor chairs are special in that they so closely follow the human form. Think about the names we give the parts of a Windsor. Almost all are parts of the human anatomy: feet, knees, legs, seats, arms, hands, knuckles, backs, ears and so on. Let us first consider the simplest of side chairs, from the side. We can see the seat, legs and the back – ignore stretchers and spindles for the time being. By varying the angles of the front and back legs we can completely change the personality of the chair. If the front legs are upright and the back legs angled steeply backwards, we have an energetic-looking chair. The back legs give the appearance of being ready to thrust the chair forwards to meet any challenge.

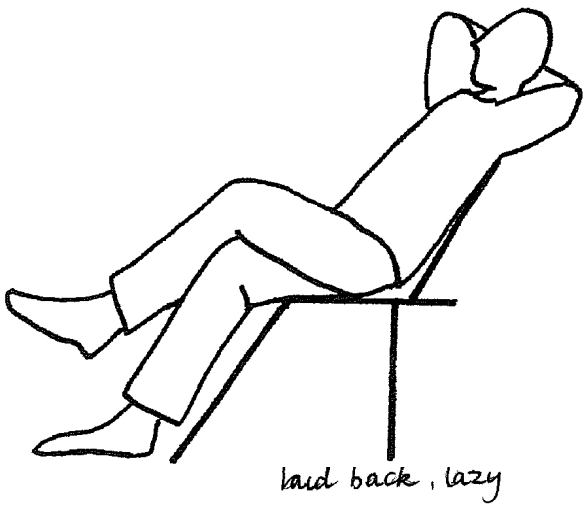
Change the angle of the front legs so that they are at the same angle as the back legs, but opposite, and the chair becomes neutral in appearance. It looks settled, and not expecting to have to move. It is relaxed and sees no threats. Finally reverse the original arrangement so that the back legs are vertical (not very sensible!) and the front legs stick out to the front. This gives the appearance of a chair that is totally laid back – almost lazy.

Can you picture people in these poses? Some people always look ready for action: they have a vitality about them, which comes in large part from the way they stand – knees slightly bent, and the weight on the balls of their feet. Others just stand as if in a queue, patiently waiting, but knowing that the bus won't arrive for some time yet. Finally there is the figure leaning against a wall, hands in pockets, not caring what is going on around them.

If you can picture these people, and see how the simple adjustment of leg angles can mimic these human stances, then you will understand how important is the choice of angles in a chair. Be conscious of the messages that you may be sending with your chosen angles, and make sure that the message is appropriate for the situation that your chair will be put in, and its expected use.

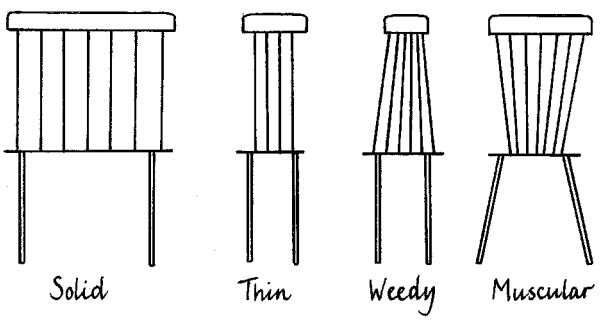
For example, if you are making a set of chairs for the boardroom of a dynamic new company, then the last message that you want to send is one of being lazy and not caring what is going on. The thrusting, alert message would be far more appropriate. Consideration of these body-language messages is not only useful when designing new chairs, it also gives a framework with which to classify existing chairs. It is easy to separate chairs into different styles – for example sack-back, comb-back, bow-back – but without a system such as this it is hard to compare them intelligently. We will have our own personal preferences, but they may need to be modified when looking at chairs for different purposes.

Front legs and back are leaning backwards, parallel in this case

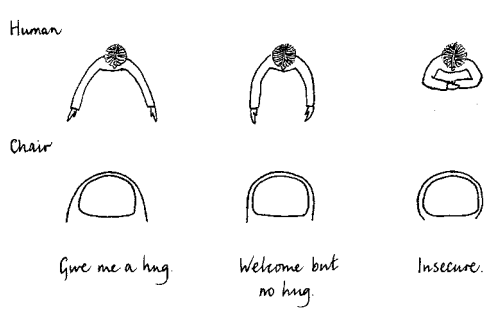


Having looked at leg angles, we can take the same skeleton side chair and add arm-posts and an arm. They continue to have the same effect, but there are more options to develop the message by adjusting the arm-post angle, and even that of the back.Take the neutral side chair and add arm-posts that are parallel to the back legs. This produces a strong forward-slanting diagonal in the chair that suggests forward movement. Next adjust the arm-posts so that they are vertical. This destroys the forward diagonal and gives a more neutral look to the chair. Finally, angle the arm-posts back

Different approaches to the crest



Comparing human and chair arm positions



so that they are parallel to the front legs (also possibly the back) and the chair takes on a laid-back personality.

Splay of the legs

There are so many varied messages that can be given out by just a few small changes. What else can be done? Look at a chair from the front, and a new set of messages can be received. Firstly, the splay of the legs alters the impression of the chair.

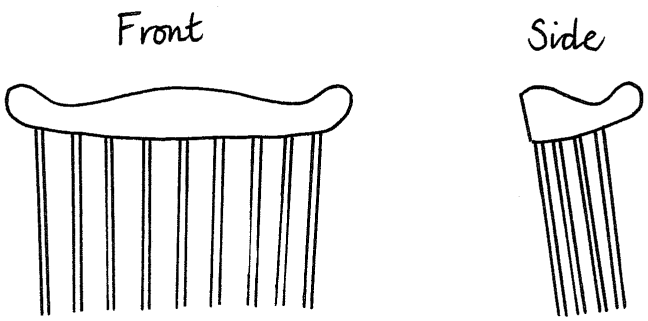
If the legs are vertical, then the chair appears uptight, as well as being unstable; but the distance between the legs affects the look of stability and solidity. Thus vertical legs with a wide stance look solid, and a narrow stance looks weedy. Splayed legs give an air of balance and strength, and work well with the 'thrusting' arrangement seen from the side.

The arrangement of the spindles and the back itself adds to the messages from the legs. A narrow parallel-sided back on narrow legs gives the impression of thinness, but not necessarily weakness. However, taper the back so that the top is narrower than the base, and you have a chair with narrow shoulders – a definite sign of weakness. Conversely, splay the back to give broad shoulders, and you have a strong muscular chair, whether or not it is heavy or lightweight; in a person it could be considered athletic. With splayed legs we have broad shoulders, a narrow waist and a broad stance – an 'ideal' male profile. If the chair is broad, and with little splay in the legs and the back, it suggests a very solid person and personality. It can appear to be strong as well, but definitely not light on its feet. The arms are also used to convey messages. If you greet a long-lost friend, you are likely to extend your arms to them with your hands wide apart in welcome. Chairs with arms that diverge towards the front are much more welcoming than those with arms that are parallel. Parallel arms in a greeting say, 'Welcome, but I don't want to hug you!'

The least welcoming arm message is to keep them wrapped around your body protectively. This definitely discourages close contact with another person, but makes the owner of the arms feel secure. Similarly a chair with arms that wrap around the sitter slightly – they cannot wrap around too much or there would be no room to sit down – give a feeling of security to the sitter, but do not welcome anyone to sit down.

Finally, a chair with a crest can convey emotions. Car makers for some time have given considerable attention to the front of cars to ensure they don't give the wrong signals. It is easy enough to make the radiator grill of a car point down at the ends, giving a decidedly grumpy or sad expression, if you consider it as a mouth. Similarly crests can be upward or downward pointing, depending on the shape and orientation.

A crest with a straight bottom, but which is mounted perpendicular to the spindles that slope backwards, will appear to curve upwards like a smile when seen from the front; furthermore the uplift will be enhanced with greater angles to the spindles, and also as the crest is curved more towards the front of the chair.



The crest rail from the front and the back

The shape of the crest other than the base also makes a difference. If it has ears that lift at the ends, as is traditional in many American chairs, then this will add to the 'smile'; they might also be considered to be like dimples on either side of the mouth. If, however, the ears point downwards, as is found in some Victorian English chairs, then however much the base gives an uplift, the overall impression will be gloomy.

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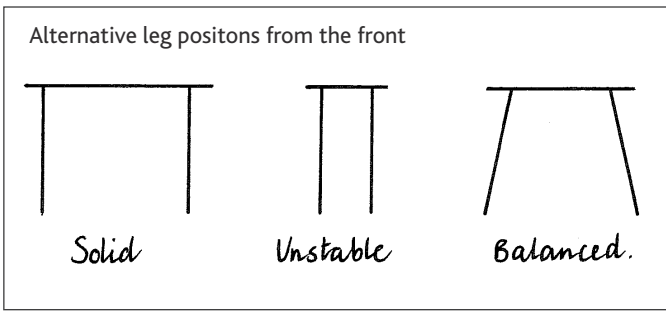


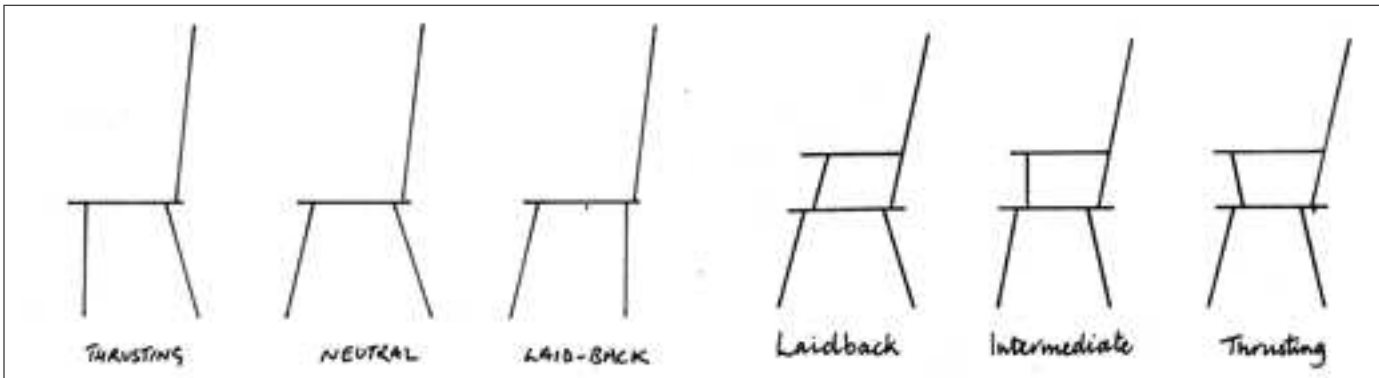


Fig.06 The chair seen from the side. Notice how the arm post position can alter the personality of a chair

Better Scale

Though he could use CAD, *Robert Turek* makes models to design chairs for bodies

I typically get two types of requests from potential clients. The more common variety comes across as "I saw this great thing, and thought you could make it for me? See this attached image." I assume they mean: "Can you make this for a lower price, reverse engineering it without buying plans from the original designer?" I often just don't respond. The rarer client says, "I love your work, and am looking for a piece of furniture that will... (fill in the blank)." The more interesting that blank, the faster I get back to them.

After many prompts and questions about a client's needs (often they've considered this more than they realize) and knowledge of their home's vibe, aesthetic, style, etc.) I make sketches of possible solutions, and try not to rely on pre-existing typologies. Whatever I come up with, neither I nor my client should have ever seen anything quite like it, yet it should be familiar enough to feel comfortable in their home.

After sketching, many designers move straight to Computer Aided Design (CAD). It's the wrong tool to start designing seating with. Cabinets perhaps, but in my opinion it has little in common with the human body or shaping wood, and should be used to record a design or prepare it for production, but not to develop your idea. Should I be fussing around at my laptop with angled construction planes and modelling tapered octagonal legs set at compound angles, when I could already have cranked out two or three physical models? The beauty of a hand-tool workflow is that things are measured relative to other elements, and only a few crucial dimensions need attention in the design phase. They should be sized to the client's body and the object's use. Everything else is defined by your eye, which frees the mind.

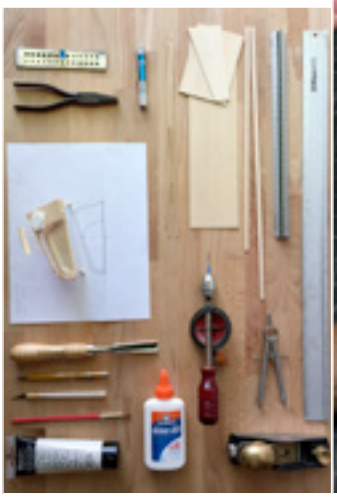
I make my design models from basswood at 1in=1ft scale, 1/2in strips equating to 6in full-size. Only the crucial dimensions matter, so you don't have to measure every component. Some designers work at different scales, but I find mine is big enough to visualize the form, and even strong enough to test the structure and joinery.

How, you might ask, can a tiny scale model test structure? Albeit unscientific, you can press down on the seat or flex the backrest with an index finger to see if anything snaps or bends too much. For this to work, each joint should be modelled as you'd build it in full-scale. I even size my spindles with a jewelry drawplate, which looks and works like a dowel plate, except that you use pliers to pull instead of a hammer. I've found that the tension of pulling through the thin dowels tests for grain run-out, making them a good approximation of flexible, riven wood.

Taking time to build your model as you would the full-scale version may alert you to other crucial grain orientation issues. On this piece, it reminded me that that right-hand armrest can't be cut from a simple board. The grain of my model split just trying to drill the holes with jewelry-sized bits in my tiny pen drill. That armbow will need to be either bent lamination (not quite the right vibe for a Welsh vernacular), pieced together for better grain orientation, or even better, steam bent separately before securing it to the shelf.

Once you're done with a design model, keep it around. They're useful for sharing ideas to new clients, and if you can meet in person, there's nothing like holding a scale model in your hand. And, if you were wondering, this odd-looking chair was a response to a request for a special piece of furniture with a specific and delightful function, which I look forward to sharing with you as I build it full-scale.

"In the time spent fussing at my desktop with CAD, I could already have cranked out several physical models"



Carved Elm Lamp

Robin Gates relies on his V-block to make a carved lamp by hand

I was recently left with a chunky offcut of ash which looked too useful to throw out. Occasionally I'd pick it up while sweeping the workshop floor and ponder what it could be. Having carried the bough home from the woods I felt a peculiar kinship with the last piece. Eventually I realised that if I were to bore a hole to channel an electrical lead this naturally curved and tapering form would make a solid base for a table lamp.

A common problem for carving is how to grip such an irregular shape, and throughout this little project I've used a V-block with a 12in G-cramp to hold the wood steadily. For drilling, I marked vertical lines at 90° as visual guides to keep the bit on course. I was using a long auger, proceeding by half turns, and soon gave up hope of doing anything else that afternoon. No doubt a time-served craftsman in the last century handled this kind of work with ease, but my unconditioned muscles demanded rest. It was worth the pain to look back through the hole I'd bored, $^{11}/_{16}$in diameter and 10in long. I don't think my power drill would have managed that.

Axing the original bough had left one end with a chunk missing, so I needed to saw a top for the base below this point. To grip the piece for sawing I used the bench vice and a G-cramp bearing on a board placed underneath the guide bars of the vice, providing support in two planes. This inexpensive vice has play in the jaw, but has proved very useful in accommodating oddly-shaped timber. Given a cramp and a selection of wedges it will hold all manner of curved and tapered work.

Next I used the V-block (the most useful piece of wood in my workshop) and G-cramp to grip the piece for planing the end-grain so that the two ends would be flat and parallel. Then I sketched in the desired circumference for the top and axed away the waste to an approximate circle, also working back along the piece to restore its original proportions.

Having achieved a fair outline I laid the piece on the bench between improvised jaws and set about texturing the surface using gouges driven by a mallet. Making shallow cuts of varying lengths I was hoping to evoke the naturally-eroded

Raking September light accentuates the texture of gouged surfaces in the ash base and elm shade (above). Carving nurtures a more tolerant approach than working four-square wood with straight lines and jigged tools (left)

Hewing the top of the ash base to rough shape with a Gransfors Bruks carpenter's axe (above). While boring the flex hole the block was gripped in a V-block by a G-cramp (right)

Holding natural shapes

Working with natural shapes of wood may offer freedom from rigid plans and measurements but it brings problems of its own - how do you grip the work on a bog standard woodwork bench? The planar surfaces of vices offer only half a solution, requiring assorted clamps and wedges to steady the piece under the blows of the mallet, and constant adjustment as the wood is carved to a new shape. Typically, there's no standard answer to holding wood that's curving in three directions, you have to invent what you need as you go along. We'd be delighted to hear (and see) what methods Quercus readers have used.

The base supported by the V-block while the top is planed (above). Pinched between a dog in the vice and the V-block (right and below right). Hand-held on the bench (below).

look of exposed timber that has been contoured by differential weathering of hard and softer tissues.

Growth rings

The ease of carving varied around the piece and I wonder if this was because the bough had grown with the typically lop-sided growth rings of reaction wood. In some areas the chips flew cleanly while in others they tore and lingered such that I had to make cuts from opposite directions meeting in the middle. Wanting to carve the entire lamp from solid timber, the idea for the shade was that a random arrangement of holes reminiscent of the work of wood-boring beetles would allow some light to pass through. An elm log recovered from a tree which had slid to the beach on a winter landslide seemed ideal material for the shade since its interlocking grain would stand up well to hollowing. I sawed off around 4½in of the elm and began boring with a brace and centre bit, first from one end and then from the other.

The remaining fibres were removed with a gouge and as the inner wall of the shade grew pipe-smooth I was reminded that, before iron, elm was used to make village water pumps because it resists decay when wet. Now, in its dry state and warmed by friction with the bit, it gave off an aroma of avocado.

I textured the outside of the shade using the same technique as for the base before planing the end-grain smooth and then boring the 'beetle' holes with a brace and auger bit. For a while I contemplated brackets and screws for attaching the shade to the base but the solution proved simple: three tapering pegs carved from tough, fine-grained hawthorn pierced the shade and fitted snugly into round holes in the base.

Now I just had to find a suitable light fitting, but they were all too tall! Perhaps I should have thought about this earlier but in the past I have been discouraged from starting a project through trying to solve all its problems in advance. Now I prefer to cross each bridge as it is encountered; there's usually a solution. In this instance I counterbored the flex hole a couple of inches to accept the light fitting, with the result that a 9W SES energy-saving spiral bulb sat well below the top of the shade.

Thus far I have resisted applying a finish to the lamp since light alone brings out the sculpted texture of the wood. Shadows shrink and spread again as daylight moves across its dimpled surfaces, then in the evening the lamp's own light beams through the shade like sunlight glimpsed through gaps in the forest canopy.

Boring out the middle of the elm shade with a brace and centre bit (left) before excavating waste using a gouge. The shade is gripped by the V-block in a handscrew (above). Smoothing end grain with a block plane (below)

Rarity of elm

Chances of finding a sound piece of elm large enough to make hollow structures like water pipes or even this small lamp shade were dealt a fatal blow when Dutch elm disease all but wiped out the UK's elm tree population in the 1970s. The disease is caused by the fungus *Ophiostoma novo-ulmi* which is spread among mature trees by adult *Scolytus* beetles which lay their eggs beneath the bark. The fungus triggers the elm to block its own water-conducting tissues, inhibiting photosynthesis and eventually killing the tree. Characteristic fan-shaped galleries left by the beetle larvae are often seen when the bark falls off dead trees. Elms continue to thrive in hedgerows but only for around 20-30 years, after which the airborne egg-laying beetles mark them out for destruction.

Boring random holes in the shade (above). Tapered hawthorn pins attach the shade to the base (below). In a cidery light (right)

Making Better Shaves

Wanting spokeshaves for shaping curves *John Lloyd* turns to kits

The spokeshave is a wonderful thing, well, obviously some are more wonderful than others, but in essence, they are delightful tools and can do things like no other. For me they fall into the 'Finesse' category, meaning that they benefit from a sensitive 'feel' and subtlety of touch. All hand tools need some practice to get the best from them and spokeshaves, perhaps, need a bit more practice than many others, but if you take the trouble to put in the time you will be rewarded with a tool that will make short work of shaping curvaceous back chair legs or cabrioles and can do tricky things like the tapering chamfer or even the exciting curved tapering chamfer.

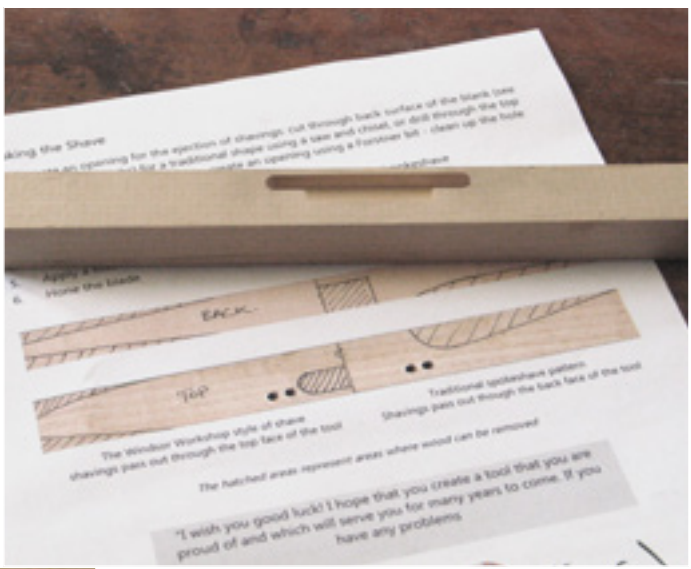
Obviously spokeshaves can be bought 'off the shelf', whether they be something like the all metal Record 151, a design that's been around since the 19th Century, the wooden versions from the likes of HNT Gordon or perhaps an 'antique' model made from boxwood, or better than that, you have the option to make your own, to whatever size or shape that you desire.

To make this really easy there are now several kits on the market and you'll be relieved to hear that you won't need a spokeshave to make a spokeshave (although, of course, you could use one if you had one!).

A traditional spokeshave is just a shaped piece of wood, often with very fine, delicately shaped handles or 'wings'. The blade might be flat or curved, depending on its intended use, and it's fitted to the handle with tapered metal tangs extending at right angles to the blade and cast as an integral part of the blade. This arrangement actually works really well. Adjustment of the blade is very simple, rather similar to adjusting a wooden plane. A tap with a pin hammer is all that's required in a seemingly rather haphazard and precarious process which is actually very quick and effective.

The problem with this system though is that with repeated adjustments being made and the blade constantly being removed and re-inserted for sharpening, the holes that the tangs fit into can become enlarged and consequently the blade isn't held quite so securely and can have a tendency to move in use. A metal spokeshave, like the Record, deals with this problem by having two threaded adjusters which can, in theory, move the blade very accurately, but there is usually a rather annoying amount of play in this mechanism, so it's hardly prefect. This adjusting issue is something the British and Canadian spokeshave kits I've been testing have been designed to resolve, and both James Mursell and Veritas have come up with accurate and positive solutions.

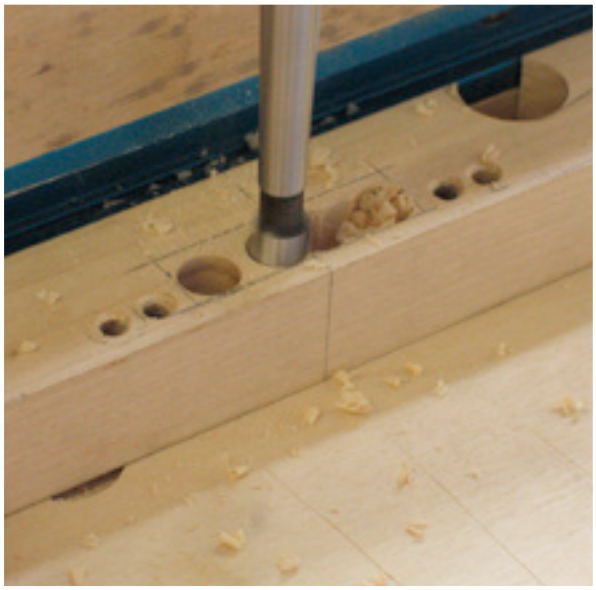
The Veritas kit consists of a bag of metalwork, with blade and adjusters, a brass wear strip and screws and a tap. There is also a template for the wooden handle and a comprehensive booklet of instructions, giving every step of the making process in great detail and with many clear drawings. There is even a section at the end that gives some instructions on how to sharpen and use your newly-made creation. The wood for the handle is not included with a Verita hardware kit, but cherry blanks are available separately, or you may prefer to find your own piece of hardboard. Obviously some handtools are needed to shape the handle and a pillar drill is necessary for accurately drilling



The Veritas kit (left, with a handle supplied by John), and Windsor Workshop kit (below & above) both come with detailed illustrations

Two Sizes of Spokeshaves

The Windsor Workshop spokeshaves are available in small and medium sizes, though the smaller one is a bit more versatile. These both have silver grub screw depth stops (right, beside the knurled adjusters), while the Canadian kit has threaded brass rings on the tangs for a similar job. Traditional wooden shaves are very simple and much the same when it comes to adjustment as a wooden plane. A tap with a pin hammer is all that is required in a seemingly rather haphazard and precarious process which is actually quick and effective. But eventually the holes for the tangs are enlarged and the blade is held less securely.



A Forstner bit is ideal for helping to shape the handles and for removing waste in the mortise for the shavings escape route (above right). You need to measure the thickness of the brass wear strip in the Windsor Workshop tool (right)

The wear strip has to be pared to an angle (above). Notice how waste has been removed with a Forstner bit to help shaping the curved handles ('wings') towards the body

the holes and recesses, ideally using a Forstner bit to create the flat-bottomed blade recess. Accuracy when fitting the blade and the wear strip, which has to be set at a slight angle to the blade, is vital, but otherwise the shaping of the 'wings' can be free-style. A bandsaw is useful but not essential, and in fact all of the shaping could easily be achieved with a fretsaw, rasps and abrasive paper. When assembled, the brass blade adjusters look rather chunky, but the benefit of this is that they are really easy to use and no additional tools are required to make blade adjustments, which are also more precise.

Drilling holes & recesses

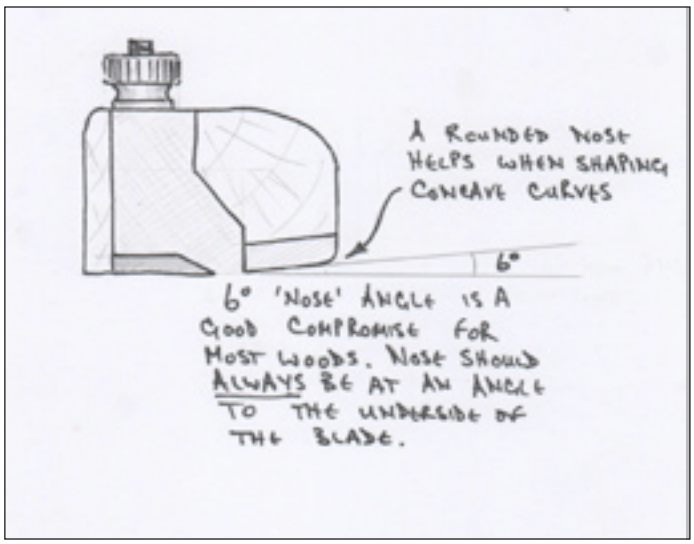
The big difference for the Windsor Workshop spokeshave kits is that you get a bit of a head start because they come complete with precision-machined maple blanks, so that the Hock blade and grub-screw adjusters are already fitted, which could, I suppose, be construed as cheating, but there's still plenty to do.

The sizes offered are 'Small' and 'Medium', with the 'Medium' being pretty much the same size as the Veritas 'Large'. There are instructions included in the kit but they are not in the same league as the Veritas, telling you roughly what to do but not how to do it, which I would suggest is absolutely fine if you have done a bit of woodwork, but not so good if you're a novice who would like a bit of hand-holding. Once again a pillar drill and Forstner bit are useful, and bandsaw/fretsaw, rasps etc... for shaping. There are two patterns suggested by the Windsor Workshop for their shaves. One has the traditional layout with the shavings exiting through the back face of the tool (as with the Veritas), the other has the shavings passing through the top, which might sound a bit strange, but I rather like this arrangement. The benefit is that the back face of the shave, directly behind the blade, is completely flat, which is just where you put your thumbs to drive the shave forward; what a good idea! There is a template for either of these options and of course the exact shape of the 'wings' can be adjusted to your own taste.

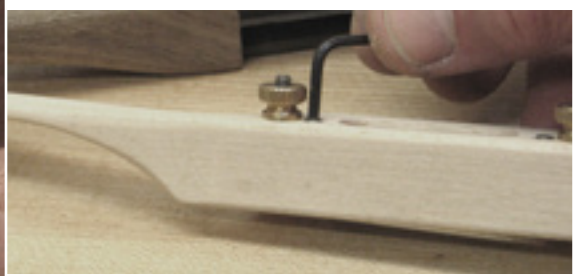
In conclusion, both makes of kit work really well. The blades hold a good edge and both micro-adjusters, which use a push-pull system, are excellent, the big difference being that the Windsor Workshop shaves are perhaps a little bit more of a fiddle, requiring an Allen key to make adjustments to the grub-screws, whereas the Veritas is completely tool-less. If you don't possess a spokeshave, you really should, and making one is a really nice little exercise resulting in a tool that will open up all sorts of shaping possibilities and will help improve your general hand skills.

Veritas Small Spokeshave Kit: $41.50 (leevalley.com). Windsor Workshop Spokeshave Kit (including precision-machined wooden blank): Small £51.00; medium £55.00. Finished Small Spokeshave £89.50 (thewindsorworkshop.co.uk).

Rasps and cabinet scrapers are good for finishing the 'wings'. A section through the Windsor Workshop spokeshave shows how a rounded nose helps with shaping convex curves



The adjustment mechanism differ between the two kits. The Windsor Workshop one (below) has grub screw adjusters already fitted to the Hock blade, which gives you a bit of a head start



When Art Meets Craft

With 10 Japanese enthusiasts set to make Van Gogh replica chairs, *Masashi Kutsuwa* recounts how a colleague visited Spain to learn how the they were made

In Japan, there is a type of chair called the 'Van Gogh Chair'. It has three back slats and a woven rush seat. Posts are roughly shaved small diameter poplar branches, with pith in the middle. Rungs are split pieces, roughly shaved and stuck into round mortises. In the 1960s many of those chairs were imported to Japan from Spain where they were originally made, and attracted many Japanese artists and craftspeople.

I am a woodwork teacher at a college called Gifu Academy of Forest Science and Culture. I first learned chairmaking from Mike Abbott in 2006 and was fascinated by green woodwork. Since then I set up the Japan Green Woodwork Association, developing our own green woodworking techniques and programmes with my colleagues. Now we run various courses mainly at Gifu, in the central part of Japan where we are based, and occasionally all over the country.

In 2012 the organiser of a chair exhibition called '100 Chairs by 100 Craftspeople in Hokkaido', the northern island, asked me to run a coinciding greenwood chairmaking course. The Van Gogh chair occurred to me for its simplicity. Why not make something to do with 'art' as the exhibition was to be held in the Sapporo Art Park, which has an art museum and craft workshop buildings. But at that time I had no experience of making the Van Gogh chair and almost no information about it. So I started researching the history and techniques.

It was Shoji Hamada (1894-1978) who 'discovered' the Van Gogh chair and introduced it to Japan. Hamada was a famous potter designated as a living national treasure, and one of the leaders of the Japanese arts-and-crafts (Mingei) movement. In Britain he was well known too, as a potter who kept a lifetime friendship with Bernard Leach. At the age of 26 he moved to St Ives to build a Japanese-style kiln and worked with Leach for five years. Hamada acquired a good command of English and wide views of the world. He travelled abroad for exhibitions and demonstrations, and collected indigenous crafts on visits.

Hamada's interest was not only in pottery but also in furniture, especially Windsors and rush-bottom chairs.

Tatsuaki Kuroda (left & below) was one of Japan's premier woodworkers when he went to Spain in the 1960s to study chairmaking, with an itinerary to meet makers of Van Gogh chairs

In 1929 he was commissioned by a Japanese gallery to import British antique furniture. He visited London again with Muneyoshi (Soetsu) Yanagi, the leader of the Japanese Arts and Crafts movement, and bought 300 chairs and shipped them to Japan. In his essay 'Chairs and Myself' Hamada described the Windsors and rush-bottoms as the genuine chairs because they were designed as a result of long-time improvement by many anonymous craftspeople. It leads to the theory of the Mingei movement which focused on the beauty of everyday objects made for the people, rather than decorative objects for the monarch.

Hamada came across a primitive ladderback chair and visited the workshop when he was travelling around Spain in 1963. He was astonished and impressed to see such primitive chairs were still being made and used in daily life. According to Hamada's note, it took the chairmaker only 15 minutes from shaving green logs to assembling a chair frame. Water splashed out of the joint as the rungs were banged into the mortises. Back in Japan he held an exhibition of folk crafts from all over the world, and among them there was the primitive ladderback chair. He described the chair as 'just like the Van Gogh painting'.

Kuroda's influence

Tatsuaki Kuroda (1904-1982) was probably the person most influenced by the Van Gogh chair, and one of the greatest woodworkers and lacquer artists in Japan. He joined the Mingei movement at the age of 21. At that time Vincent Van Gogh was one of the members' favourite painters and especially the painting of the chair impressed Kuroda. It was not only the painting itself but the simple shape of the chair that attracted the young woodworker. Kuroda managed to make a copy of the chair by carefully observing the painting printed in a book, but later he recalled: 'Van Gogh's brushwork was too rough to observe the detail of woodwork'.

But it took almost 40 years for Kuroda to observe the real Van Gogh chair. Shoji Hamada gave him one of those chairs imported from Spain. By then Kuroda established himself as a renowned

PHOTOS: KENKICHI KURODA

ORDER OF PRODUCTION On his journey to Granada and Guadex in Spain, Tatsuaki Kuroda found the makers assembling the front and back frames first, ready for attaching to one another with the side rails and then of course the seats being rushed

woodworker, but most of his works were cabinets and lacquered objects. He didn't make many chairs, particularly because Japanese people don't use them much in their daily life. Hamada had only just given him a Van Gogh chair when Kuroda was commissioned to make 30 chairs for the new Imperial Palace. The task was to make a Japanese chair for a modern Japanese palace, with an original design.

The archetype of chairs

So at the age of 63, Kuroda decided to travel abroad for the first time in his life, to study the history of chairs in the Western countries before he started designing the Imperial Palace chair. Shoji Hamada organised the itinerary for Kuroda, including the Van Gogh chair workshop, with was actually Kuroda's biggest interest, as he regarded it as 'the archetype of all chairs'.

In 1967 Tatsuaki Kuroda and his son Kenkichi travelled to Spain and visited two chair workshops in Granada and Guadix. At the workshop in Granada a lame chairmaker in his 50s and a seat weaver greeted them. They hesitated at first but showed the whole process of chairmaking to the father and son. Kuroda had brought a film camera from Japan and recorded the process with excitement. He described it in his essay: 'Decades of experience and training made them choose the right material and assemble at a tremendous speed and accuracy.' Perhaps at the same time Kuroda was seeing hundreds of years of chairmaking history in the West in this Spanish chairmaker's work. During my research I met Goichi Kuroda, Tatsuaki's grandson, in Kyoto. He had kept Tatsuaki's film rolls and photographs, and showed them to me.

In the film the chairmaker was using a simple shaving horse and a push knife to shave the logs. The push knife was the only tool to shape all the parts, including the tenons at each end of the rungs. Mortises were drilled with a brace and a spoon bit, drilled at a certain angle with no bevel gauges, just by eye. They would assemble a front frame and a back frame, then fit them together with side rungs. It was probably because the side surface of the chair was warped and it was easier not to assemble the sides first.

Interestingly, the chairmaker did all the work on the shaving horse. The physical disability in his leg might have forced him to do so, but it emphasised how simple the chairmaking was. Kuroda described the chair as 'the champion of all the Mingei chairs in the world' in his essay.

On the trip Kuroda went to more than 10 countries, including Britain, and visited palaces to see what the chairs were like and how they were displayed.

PHOTO: COLLECTION OF TOYOTA MUNICIPAL MUSEUM OF ART & TATSUO HAYASHI

Tatsuaki Kuroda (second on right) was welcomed by chairmakers in Spain in the 1960s, before he designed and made chairs (left) for the new Imperial Palace in Japan

Back in Japan, he started designing the Imperial Palace chair. With the basic structure already in his mind, he made a prototype and developed it four times. As he was determined to make an original Japanese chair from the start of this project, the design had a distinctive scent of Orient. The experience of observing the hundreds of years of chairmaking history in the Western countries must have made his position on designing a chair even clearer. Hida Sangyo, one of the big furniture manufacturers in Japan, helped Kuroda because it was his first batch production of furniture and there was not enough space or staff in his workshop to make 30 chairs in a limited period of time. The sweet chestnut frame was finished with 20 coats of Japanese lacquer. Kuroda recalled the making process later and thanked the makers of Hida Sangyo because they worked overnight at the last stage with the help of tonic medicine injection at the hospital!

Shoji Hamada and Bernard Leach visited Kuroda while they were producing the chairs. In 1968 the new Imperial Palace was completed and the chairs were installed. The work was highly appreciated and two years later he was designated as the first national living treasure in woodwork. Having been introduced by the two great craftspeople in Japan, the Van Gogh chair became popular among many artists and woodworkers. One of those chairs imported by Hamada became part of the permanent collection of the Japan Folk Crafts Museum. Some woodworkers were so fascinated by it that they even travelled to Guadix to meet the Spanish chairmaker. But when it comes to making the Van Gogh chair, there is almost no one (except young Kuroda) who actually tried it. There was no manual or drawing left. The film and photographs of the making process by the Spanish chair maker were not open to the public until Kuroda's family showed them to us.

We, the members of Japan Green Woodwork Association, measured one of the real chairs borrowed from the museum and made a drawing. We watched Kuroda's film again and again to learn how the Spanish maker worked, altering some methods so that 10 enthusiasts could easily make it with our shaving horse and drawknife for the 100 Chairs event.

NEXT ISSUE *Find out next issue how 10 first-time enthusiasts attempted to make Van Gogh chairs in Sapporo Art Park.*

PHOTOS: KENKICHI KURODA

SHAVING HORSE In Spain Tatsuaki Kuroda found a maker of Van Gogh chairs doing all his work on a shaving horse, with a curved 'push knife' that is also pulled when working on back splats and seat rails. Some of the shaping is done after the chair has been assembled

According to Drew, eating and serving spoons, like a ladle, have more complex requirements than flat cooking spoons, which are also easier to carve: "Handles on ladles are often curved, which aids their usefulness."

The Swedish Scoops

Inspired by a great Scandinavian woodworker, *Drew Langsner* designs a ladle

The Swedish woodworker Willë Sundqvist introduced me to spoon carving on a serendipitous visit to our mountain farmstead in 1976. Willë was in the US as the curator and demonstrator for an exhibit of traditional Swedish handcrafts in New York City. When the exhibit closed, a mutual friend led Willë on a winding path from Vermont to southern Appalachia to meet American woodworkers. We were among the fortunate few to meet this tall, thin Viking with a knife hanging from his belt.

This was woodworking that fits my life. I was hooked on Sloyd and believed that it was an approach worth spreading in this country. We invited Willë back, and his classes in Carving Swedish Woodenware were the start of Country Workshops' course in traditional woodworking in 1978. As with most types of woodworking, there are many traditional and contemporary approaches to carving a spoon. A great deal depends on what tools and materials are available. The tool kit can be kept simple and portable; perfect for taking on a vacation. Spooncarving utilises some very sharp tools that can cause serious injuries.

An important element in spoon carving is using considerable time to study and really look at what you are making. How can this spoon (or the next one) be improved? Willë Sundqvist told me that an old carvers' expression was that 'The light shines in the dark'. This conveys the idea of a craftsman studying the form he is developing with that very special low angle, raking light emanating from a single source that is not so bright as to wash out the appearance of both form and surface. An elusive but valuable element of our ancient human experience disappeared when the electric lights went on. Rural electrification came to rural Sweden relatively late.

Wooden spoons can be divided into several groups. Cooking spoons are the easiest to make, and as ever, they serve well in many contemporary kitchens. They are usually rather flat in profile, and made with sturdy bowls and straight handles.

Eating and serving spoons have more complex requirements. The bowl section can have more variation in form and the handles are often curved (from a profile view) which aids in their usefulness. In addition, eating and serving spoons become part of a table setting. They should look attractive, and feel good between your fingers. The best spoons incorporate subtle design refinements that transform them into small, but compelling, sculptures. Such spoons must work well, but the good ones also fulfil the desire to live with beautiful objects. In Scandinavia the designs for functional eating and serving spoons evolved slowly while countless generations of rural woodworkers carved these spoons; often during the long, dark winters.

Each woodworker strove to develop his skills with axes, a gouge or two and carving knives. These were among the most common tools available in a pre-industrial setting. Over time many spoon carvers developed their own variations of the basic styles, which tend to be subtle differences in woodwork coming out of a folk culture where there was little emphasis on creativity. As a result, the designs evolved into many variations, but all striving for perfection in form and function.

Most spoons are symmetrical in plan view, though some have an asymmetric bowl. To work well, a spoon must be relatively strong, and easy to hold and to use. The weakest part is the leading edge of the bowl; invariably endgrain. Over time, it can fray or even split. The bowl can take various shapes: egg-like, squarish, or slanted at the leading edge.

The best spoons incorporate subtle design refinements that transform them into small, but compelling sculptures

In Swedish spoons there is generally a rounded transition between the bowl and stem. In contrast, Norwegian spoons often have a clean break. The transition into the mid-section stem must also be strong. The diamond cross section of the stem is an especially attractive design feature in some Swedish spoons. It not only looks attractive, but also feels good between your thumb, first and second fingers. If the stem is narrow in plan view, the profile needs to be deepened for strength, like an I-beam. Beyond the middle stem there is often a transition section to a thin, but wider, flat area that I call the handle. This flat handle allows the spoon to rest comfortably between your thumb and the third or fourth joint of your first finger. In Scandinavian spoons the handle often ends with a decorative finial, creating a visual balance to the bowl at the other end.

The best spoons incorporate design elements that only become apparent as you rotate the object to view it at myriad angles. A good spoon will look better with time and successive observation and use. I think this is a standard by which to judge any art form.

Choice of wood

The wood you choose must be relatively strong, durable, and free of odour or taste when put into service. Any finish must also be food safe. Use hardwoods that have a fine texture. These will take details well and are easy to clean. Many species are suitable. In Sweden spoons are generally carved from white birch. I have also used black birch (considerably harder than white), hard maple, beech, cherry, dogwood (very nice) and holly (fine texture, but not particularly attractive). Apple and pear >

are excellent. Smaller shrubby species, such as rhododendron, can be used, but avoid coarse-grained woods like oak or walnut.

The softer deciduous species (tulip poplar, silver maple, linden) and conifers are usually not strong enough to survive the rigours that spoons experience. But these softer woods (even linden and white pine) are excellent for practising knife grasps, and for doing a practice spoon when you are learning how to develop a shape with a challenging form.

When possible, I prefer to use freshly gathered green wood. This is much easier to work than carving dry wood, but there are always risks of checks or splitting and warping during the drying process. As with most woodworking, it's important to avoid incorporating the actual pith which is often the starting point of radial cracks that develop during drying. If green wood isn't available you can also use dry stock. One year I made Christmas present cooking spoons from kiln-dried hard maple.

Blanks can be taken from small limbs or saplings that begin a little larger in diameter than the size of the intended spoon bowl. These can be straight, or bent 'crooks.' Small blanks are split (or sometimes sawed) in half lengthwise. I generally split larger stock into quarters. I then split off parallel-sided slabs. This rectilinear splitting avoids the dimensional taper that results from radial splitting.

Bent blanks allow you to develop profile forms with considerable curvature without compromising strength. Finding suitable crooks can be challenging. Willë Sundqvist once told me to "take spoon blanks when you find them". This means you should collect any good crooks and then carve them from dry wood if you can't get to them right away. With crooks, the curve needs to bend below and just beneath the bowl, and then straighten out. 'Banana' curves are not suitable. Since most spoons are symmetrical, the curve must also lay in a relatively flat plane. In real life, most spoons are carved from straight blanks. Where we live it's hard to find nicely-shaped crooks. The serving spoon that I made for this article still has considerable bend in profile view. For this large serving spoon I was careful to minimise the slope of the endgrain leading edge of the bowl. I also kept the stem deep in section.

Drew marks up the section he wants to cleeve from the log, making sure he avoids the pith, before splitting with a froe

Because I used a slab-shaped straight blank it was easy to clamp the stock to a workbench for the initial hollowing of the generous-sized bowl. I've used a straight blank about 7in in diameter and 12in long, sawn from a freshly-cut black birch that had fallen across our driveway. This tree had many small branches and buried knots so I had to search for a section with clear wood. If you haven't made a spoon before, I suggest starting with a smaller blank. A 3-4in diameter sapling or limb should work well. The exact size and proportions don't matter; work with any good stock you can come up with.

After sawing a piece of wood to length carefully inspect both ends looking for cracks which usually originate at the pith. If there is a crack, orient your initial split along it, or incorporate the crack in a section that will be rejected. Split the piece into halves. Use a club for the striking tool, not a steel hammer. Inspect the splits. Your blank should have relatively straight grain. In most cases reject pieces with any knots.

Use a water-soluble pencil to draw an outline of the blank on one end. For this spoon the end view was 3in deep by 4in wide. It's important to locate the high point of the spoon below the pith of the blank. This is one of the more important rules for preventing radial splits from occurring during drying. If your blank is a large one like I used you can also split off some of the waste wood at the sides. I decided to orient the spoon with the bowl rim facing up towards the split.

Smaller spoons

The bowl cavity on this large server is roughed out on a workbench with a gouge and hammer. For smaller spoons I generally sit and hand hold the blank while I hollow the bowl with a gouge and/or spoon knives. Use your axe to hew off some of the rounded bark surface so that the blank will lay flat with the split up. This doesn't have to be particularly good hewing.

Draw a centreline on the split face. I use a plastic quilter's ruler so that I can see both sides of the centerline. Follow the grain. Extend the centreline down each end and along the bottom. Next, sketch the plan view. Draw everything somewhat oversized. For this server the bowl is not symmetrical. This is a right-handed serving spoon and the softer slope on the left side of the rim will be ergonomic and add some visual interest. In plan view the mid-section of the stem is the narrowest part but don't let it get too skinny. It gradually swells and flattens to make the handle.

Sketch the side view. The leading edge of the bowl starts about 40% below the top of the blank. I want some nice curvature in the profile view, but it's also important to remember that the leading edge of the bowl is endgrain which is not strong in a thin-section wall. This slope should not be too steep. The stem requires depth in the side view because it is narrow at this area in the plan view. For this spoon I drew the bottom with a long convex curve that rises slightly to a definite transition point a little more than half way from the leading edge. From the transition there is an upwards sweeping concave curve that terminates about 3/4in below the top of the blank. The lines on the upper surface mimic the lower curve. The bowl rim slopes downhill and is in a flat plane. Beyond the bowl there is a transition to a concave curve that continues past the transition point on the bottom. This is followed by another shallow concave curve that terminates at the split top of the blank. At this stage don't be concerned about the lines on the sides that create the attractive facets and the diamond-section mid-stem.

NEXT ISSUE *Drew Langsner will be carving the shape of the bowl and stem, and finishing his large serving spoon.*

The finer work cleaning up the blank is done with a small axe, chopping away the bark. The hewing doesn't have to be particularly good at this stage

"Notice how the leading edge of the bowl," explains Drew, "starts about 40% below the top of the blank so that the spoon has a nice curve in profile." Drew uses a plastic ruler (left) which is clear so you can see both sides of the line to position it accurately. It is good to start hollowing the bowl when you can still clamp the blank securely (below left)

Back to Le Shack

The adventures of an editor's visits to the *Quercus* French HQ

Le Shack may be new to many readers (hopefully). It was featured issue-by-issue in *Living Woods*, the magazine that liked the idea of living off-grid in the middle of the woods, near a river. It had been bought as a bargain bolthole in 2004, and became the backdrop for numerous *LW* tests and projects. Many trees were felled and then planked to make the compost loo, there being no drains, just a well. Various attempts were made to design a hot-water system, at one stage creating a wood-fired stove inside a filing cabinet.

It had been built by a M. Paris as a family fishing hut for holidays, 100yds from La Selune, a dammed river that flows into the Baie du Mont-Saint-Michel. The poplars and firs that had been planted to protect the 1-acre property had over-grown, and Le Shack, (or Le Shackeau by some) as it came to be named by *Living Woods* readers, was hidden by brambles and branches.

There was the moment when it turned out the compost loo had been built on a neighbour's land

For some years it was visited rarely since my daughters Lara and Sasha were eight and six, and not that keen on the thorns, the midges and the lack of facilities. Early on we'd visit the local *piscine* in St Hilaire du Harcouet for swimming and showers, and to enjoy proper *toilettes*, with nothing more than a chemical loo back in the wild.

Eventually water came to be syphoned from the well using a hand-powered Guzzler water pump, and the smelly Porta Potti (which someone had to empty between visits to the swimming pool) was replaced by a hand-built compost loo. It was a triumph, the inside lined with flowery wall-papered chipboard panels when a dividing wall was demolished within Le Shack. An area of woodland and bramble had to be cleared for willow posts to be sunk into the ground, which much later came to grow again and cover the building with foliage.

In reality few proper hand-tools were used as chainsaws and a lawnmowever became more useful than anything, though a battery-powered DUC302Z Makita chainsaw becoming my favourite means of felling and pruning trees, charged by a generator. You can't have everything. A good way of attacking the brambles proved to be either with the ancient Hayter mower, often set very low to eradicate root systems. Better still were a pair of thick chainsaw gloves, a pair of secateurs and a spade. You'd snip a few bramble branches, ideally from the same root, about 18in above the ground. Then you pull with a series of quick jerks to see if the roots will emerge. It's good to be quite gentle. If they won't budge, and before you pull a back muscle, worry the roots with the spade till you can overcome the enemy.

When I started having epileptic fits, about a year after the cycle crash that killed *Living Woods*, driving to Le Shack was prohibited with the aid of friendly chauffeurs. So I took to bicycling there, by train, ferry, bicycle, train and bicycle again. It was a great route, but limited the number of tools I could carry. In the end I took what I came to need in a small bag: a passport, keys, some Euros, a folding Silky saw and secateurs.

I regained my driving licence recently, so will be able to make more frequent visits. Not being able to make such trips easily has at least benefitted *Quercus*, which was inspired by an early form of Lockdown in 2018. Actually, as some will know, the initial idea came from time spent with John Brown, who I had recruited as a columnist during my time as founding editor of *Good Woodworking* magazine. He became a father figure to me, and as I said at his memorial and in the Preface to *Good Work* (written by Chris Williams, published by Lost Art Press, and reviewed elsewhere in our pages) inviting him to write a monthly chairmaking was the best publishing decision I have ever made. That most readers turned to John's words first is the measure of a brilliant column, and was enough to help make *Good Woodworking* the top-selling title in its market.

Perhaps, perhaps, *Quercus* will match that choice of a new contributor back in 1993. I had long wanted to launch a magazine of my own, and my roots in chairmaking (my parents ran a small cane and rush seating business in High Wycombe) had often and on tempted me to produce a magazine dedicated to chairs. John and I shared that vision, and one of us (not sure which) came up with the name of *Quercus* in about 1996. I was busy doing other publishing things, working as Editorial Director for a medium-sized publishing company. So it was John who started typing out a plan for content, production and distribution. He sent notes to the likes of Drew Langsner and *Fine Woodworking* magazine, the former giving *Quercus* a plug in his Country Workshop's newsletter while FWW presumptiously requested a subscription.

Being asked by Chris Schwarz of Lost Art Press to write a Preface to *Good Work* (taken from the name of a philosophical essay John wrote for *Fine Woodworking*), inspired me to sort the many letters John and I had written to each other in the 1990s. From the pile emerged John's Questionaire re *Quercus*. I have no idea who Tom Rasputin might have been, but the handwriting is certainly John's scrawl, and the list suggests the mind of a part-time editor. His questions speak volumes, just as a publisher might ask of a growing team. The problems, challenges or opportunities, however you prefer to face a

The purchase of a Guzzler hand pump transformed getting water from the well by Lara while her sister Sasha was pulling brambles. A converted filing cabinet proved to be an excellent stove for a warm bath. My friend Becky gave me a set of Barn's beautiful spoons

launch, are split into Production and Content, touching and overlapping from time to time. “These are inevitably interli[n]ked,” he noted, “but to simplify I am ignoring sequence at this time.” Archaeologists are bound to be mystified, but family and friends will recognise the author’s analytical approach and his commitment to the enterprise.

The corporate approach

John never took anything half-heartedly, and was peeved when I didn’t share his passion for the magazine, and in particular his earthy ambitions. I was then driven by a corporate approach to magazine launches, searching for ways to ensure the magazine would ‘wipe its feet’ and make a profit by advertising and sales.

Quercus had been intended more as a journal than a magazine, with the bookish size to match that of *Hortus*, a scholarly periodical for gardeners that is all words with a few images. Each quarterly issue (or edition, depending on one’s definition) is still 90 pages long, and as much a book as a periodical, and perfect bound just like a book. Presumably then, 25 years ago, we envisaged it to be heavy paper, probably to match John’s own *Welsh Stick Chairs*, which had put him on the map in the first place.

Times have changed. Of late, the ‘bookazine’ has become a favoured style for cottage publishers and authors, and for anyone using it as a calling card, a shop window, just as John did his original book. Today it’s called Print on Demand (POD), each copy produced overnight by companies like Amazon when a digital version is not enough for readers who prefer paper. That way the publishers (like us) don’t have to pay for a long print run, nor manage payments for sales and the labour-intensive costs of sorting deliveries. There are various obstacles, not least the high price of printing one copy at a time, and the extra weight for postage.

But it was exactly that system that reinvigorated my interest in editing a magazine again, having stopped five years ago after a rather serious bicycle accident. My brain got bruised, and the multi-tasking, prioritising and concentration that are in the top drawer of editing expectations were knocked out of synch. I longed to edit, but it’s a young man’s sport month after month, let alone setting out with a launch.

To cut a very, very long story short-ish, I ended up last year (2019) living in a narrowboat on a canal in Oxford. Walking along the towpath one afternoon, I noticed a flyer stuck in a porthole asking passers-by to sponsor First Mate, Bobby on a charity cycle ride in aid of homeless people in Oxford. It’s a good local cause as there are many of them around town. Ironically, working a shift for homeless people when I came to Oxford over Christmas 2018 to search for a boat, had in itself stimulated me to move to the city of Dreaming Spires in the first place when I shared a sink with an unrecognised freelance contributor from *Living Woods* magazine. Meeting Rikki Therival, as she turned out to be decided me that Oxford is a special place. Hence me promising Bobby MacKenzie a cake when on completing, near my boat, his cycle ride for Shelter.

The miles took their toll, and when Bobby got late I walked along the canal to bring him sugary sustenance for the final straight. Once we met, his father Richard and I got talking along the way, and I learnt he’d written a book about living on

There was the visit alone soon after buying Le Shack when not only did the trailer end up in the trees, where is is stuck for two years, but then I went and got the car stuck in the gravel

a narrowboat (*Family Life on a Narrowboat*), and was self-publishing on Amazon, for Kindles online, and by Print on Demand for Luddites. "Could one publish a magazine this way?" I asked, ears pricking and brain intrigued. "No reason why not," Richard suggested. "Each issue would be just a sequel and Amazon likes successful authors to keep writing for more sales."

Designing the masthead

So I retrieved that Questionaire of John's and began planning and designing the magazine. I had the bones of a layout, my talented friend Christian Day who designed *British Woodworking* and *Living Woods* for me, having already devised the masthead and the typography. Yet I just couldn't find the motivation to proceed. Over the five years since the accident I had yearned to find new purpose, sure that I'd never edit again, warned that it would be self-defeating to try. I had been blessed that editing had been my passion for 25 years; a hobby as much as a career. When people asked what I did in my spare time I'd reply: "Editing magazines". It was the backbone of my life, ribs being metaphorical interests forever attached to my editorial spine, to which I could resort when necessary.

Though the compensation case was covering my living costs, I discovered pride and self-respect and beer vouchers in finding odd jobs. So along the way I was a kitchen porter in a branch of Côte restaurants, a picker and packer in the mail order warehouse for Cotswold Outdoor, site worker at a country park near Cirencester and somewhat bizarrely a wood-chipping-assistant for a tree-surgery outfit run by a pair of father and son Travellers. I lost that job when one day I foolishly asked too many questions and was unceremoniously thrown out of the truck beside the road. Despite one of the many neuro-psychologists I'd been seeing telling me that menial jobs were a waste of my time, when I arrived in Oxford I worked as a chippie for a boatyard and most recently as a cycling Deliveroo rider, largely transporting burgers from the City Centre to young students lounging in the halls on the top of very steep Headington Hill. I discovered an intriguing psychological point riding up that slope, quite surprisingly noticing that the later rides on an evening shift took much less effort than the first. It just shows how Franklin Roosevelt's phrase 'there's nothing to fear but fear itselt' may relate just as much to challenging exercise as it does to facing a precipice or a ghost. In the end it was lacking fear (perhaps because my near-death crash had inspired a false sense of immortality) that advised me to retire my Deliveroo career, when one evening I fell off trying to avoid a 'sleeping policeman' and the next fell off and twisted my handlebars going through a red light. I cannot lie. I was at least wearing a helmet both times.

By the way I had already failed applications to become a kitchen porter in the Shelter Cafe in Oxford for being too old, I think, and then for Waitrose because I was too self-motivated and independent. I think that asking for advice from fellow assistants was considered poor form compared with requesting guidelines from a manager. So much for John Lewis being a Partnership. Meanwhile my part-time shifts for the boatyard had evaporated, mainly I suspect, because I was too diligent and didn't quite understand the need to bodge since the boats were needing quick repairs in short hours between rentals. Finally, I applied to be a Traffic Warden, attracted by the part-time

Le Shack was decorated by family and friends and a box of chalks. The wood store was created from half a dinghy after it hit a rock and sank in the river

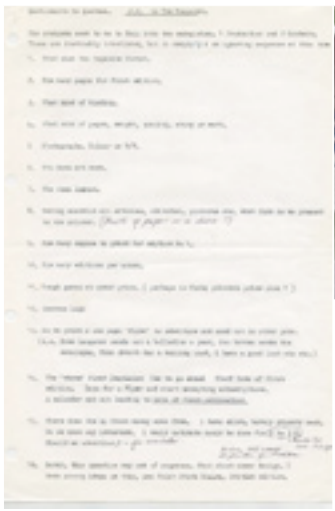
rota system and by the fresh air and by chatting with drivers. Parking cars had been my favourite job when working for the Cotswold Country Park, reminding me of the time I parked cars at Wimbledon for the tennis tournament.

Changing course for Quercus

On Finals day there were far fewer cars to park, so we started arranging rows by colour and then by nationality. It was doing that once that a gentleman came up to me and asked me to commit a crime. "My car is missing a hub cap," he said. "That car over there is the same as mine and has four. I'll give you £10 for taking one of those as a substitute for the one that's fallen off." To show me how he took the replacement off the other car and rested it against his front bumper. "All you have to do is tap it onto my naked wheel." As I hope you might expect, the moment he'd left the field, I took the hub cap and put it back from whence it had come. I was at least offered an interview with the Oxford Community Assistant recruiters, but failed because I couldn't remember enough number plates during an online test the interviewer had described as a pushover considering my ability to answer questions so coherently during the interview.

This failure coincided with a change of course for *Quercus*. One sunny Saturday I went on a cycling tour of Oxford with Extinction Rebellion campaigners. Dissatisfied by the pseudo-religious enthusiasms, I felt, perhaps in an egotistic way, I could offer a more valuable contribution for our threatened species than chanting. And then I remembered how we had planned to launch *Living Woods'* sister, *Barefoot*, aiming to promote sustainability. I was driven by the title and the logo, and tried as hard as I might to get the magazine going. Of course, ultimately, the subject matter is just too wide and varied and scientific that I couldn't cope, and having built up some content and a team of local contributors, I gave up this New Year.

I chose to calm down and do some reading, enjoying the peace of Oxford's many inspiring libraries. And then, of course, Lockdown appeared on 23rd March. Like many people, I decided to make something of isolation, and give *Quercus* a go. It is a pleasure to be in contact with old friends, by email alone, and hope dearly the new magazine will work. Instead of



***A vendre* indeed. Bought in 2004 Le Shack has proved to be a set for many *Living Woods* projects and tests. Now, perhaps, it will come back to life as a base for *Quercus* in France, even if John Brown and I had not expected this to happen**

Print on Demand we have gone for a traditional approach to print, with sales of paper copies and digital copies organised by Warners, who also do the printing and delivery. It makes things simple for me. Aware that we let subscribers down when both *Living Woods* and *British Woodworking* had to be closed, we are sending out the first issue for free, and then only selling the quarterlies one at a time, rather than by subscription, to ensure we don't owe anyone anything this time. Knowing that so many readers will be happy to see *Quercus* thrive and survive, it is hard to know how we can deal with this without forcing people to make the embarrassing request for an in-kind refund.

Just as Greta, our new Joan of Arc, had made Climate Change the elephant in the room for 2019, Lockdown became the media 'darling' for 2020. There is a telling similarity, and with that and economics in mind we have chosen to print *Quercus* on thin, recycled paper, with an earthy feel, and send out most copies inside a potato starch wrapping, inspired by the brilliant *Guardian Weekly* paper, which I thoroughly recommend. Heaven only knows how this will be received. No Guts, No Glory. If all else fails I'll have to retreat to Le Shack.

As the grounds have been cleared, so children like Sash and Sylvie have begun to play, but my friend David has been the most frequent visitor, with knocking in stakes for a failed bridge to the river just one of our mad ideas, just as Barefoot was one of my obsessions for a while

The Master of the Hut

The maker of more than 1000 specialist planes, *Bill Carter* does it all in a small cabin

You may or may not have heard of Bill Carter. The likelihood is that you have considering he has made more than 1000 planes over the last 25 years, but there've been precious few articles about his work and you won't find him at many shows. Perhaps that's because he frequents the world of the tool collector, and perhaps because he's not had to promote what he makes. He only works in the summer, when his shed is warm enough, and rarely has a plan about the next tool he's going to make. He doesn't take commissions lest he has to produce something he doesn't want to make.

Bill is, quite simply, an anachronism, and he is the man behind an unlikely woodworking tip that we will bring you in the next issue of *Quercus*.

That's not to say Bill's not already well known. The Canadian planemaker Konrad Sauer counts him "an inspiration". So do Karl Holtey and CR Miller. Obscurity is a thing of the past now, since Bill and his wife Sarah discovered the Internet, and have 31 videos on their YouTube channel.

There is a real charm to Bill's work, a sense that his planes are made to an appropriate finish and accuracy, but with heart and soul and a passion for British planemaking heritage. "I copy the rarest of English and Scottish planes," he explains. "Other planes are more ornate: Dutch planes are carved all over the oche but English ones are always bog standard. Some Scottish planes were more decorative, but they were usually one-offs." Bill limits himself to a cupid bow decoration on the bridge, the bottom of the wedge or sides of some planes, and various Sheffield-made marks of his own, plus colouring techniques to give the tools some age. "I spend a lot of time messing with them; I can't leave them alone," he says, laughing. Bill Carter laughs a lot.

A growing demand for his planes contrasts with his shoestring approach to making them. To access the best materials cheaply Bill recycles old plane irons and the brass backs of tenon saws. "I've made a lot from parts of locks, and I even infilled brass channel. I used to pay my accountant in planes and swapped one once for a Mercedes!" >

The joiner toolmaker

Bill became a full-time planemaker, specialising in original mitre planes, in 1987, having already made wooden and metal planes while working as a joiner and cabinetmaker, then at Leicester Museum. “I wish I’d started years ago as most of my woodworking career was in shopfitting.”

His experiences reflect the history of British planemaking. For centuries planes were made by woodworkers themselves, for their own use.

“Just before 1700 people began making planes for other woodworkers,” he says. “By the 1800s there were 1000 makers turning out wooden planes. The very earliest [metal] mitre planes were produced between 1750-1775.” According to Salaman’s *Dictionary of Woodworking Tools* the mitre plane was so called because it was used for the shooting of mitres, and the tome says that it was a descendant of the block plane. The blade is held at about 25°, and ground at 35° with the bevel facing upwards to give a combined planing angle of 60°.

Bill aims to recreate those early days when he makes a plane. He uses no power-tools, other than a bench grinder. All the work is done with hacksaws, hammers, peining tools, chisels, files and all sorts of woodworking and metalworking tools. How he makes a mitre plane is documented on a simple CD slideshow he sells for £10, as a nod towards new technology. With typical generousity he let us reproduce a series of images showing the making of a small mitre plane (see below), though there are many more we couldn’t fit in.

Despite its raw simplicity, the CD is an evocation of Bill’s passion for planemaking. Though he admits tool collecting can become addictive, making is a much more casual occupation. “Seldom do I know where they [new planes] are going to go.” The miniature mitre plane he makes on the CD is typical of his techniques., with a curved bronze body. Though he often uses old tenon saw backs for the body, in this case he starts with a sheet of bronze, which he hacksaws to width. Bill then makes himself a wooden template from an older template to guide his hacksaw when he comes to cutting the tails on the body.

The tails are cut and bronze waste is removed with a hammer and chisel, then the sockets are filed level. Similar sockets are cut on the ends of the flat bronze strip, and holes are drilled and then filed square for the bridge. The body is then bent around a bit of pipe and the front and cap are inserted, and the excess peined.The sole is made from steel, in two parts so that Bill can create the thinnest possible mouth. He files the angled escapements and then joins the pieces with a tongue and groove to keep them level after assembly. Alternatively you can drill the joint after assembly and insert a pin, but Bill favours the t&g approach, using the hardened steel jaws of his vice to guide a hacksaw when he comes to cut the shoulders.

“Seldom,” Bill says, “do I know where new planes are going to go.”

It all looks so simple, and you can see why woodworkers take up the challenge of quietly making something with such accuracy that can be used to produce projects in wood. “One or two collectors have gone on to make their own planes,” smiles Bill, moving onto one of the many stories and anecdotes that interrupt our interview all morning. Tears of laughter were flowing when he related the time a pot of the nitric acid he uses for antiquing fell over in his car, and burnt a hole through the floor. Another time he went round to a friend with half a dozen planes to repair some damage to a tabletop, taking so many tools so as not to have to worry about sharpening. They were soon talking and drinking and eating lunch and Bill never got round to doing the table. The same thing happened the next time he visited with his planes, though eventually the repair was sorted on the third attempt when Bill persuaded his friend to let him get to work!

He is a regular visitor to David Stanley and Tony Murland auctions, where much of the action happens in the car park between dealers and collectors. He jokes about the deals that are hatched, and about the times a plane might pass back and forth. >

Skewed mouth

The mouth on the small mitre plane Bill is making on the CD is square to the body, but he also makes planes with a skewed mouth, though he's not convinced it makes much difference to the woodworking experience.

Cramping them up for fitting to the body is awkward because the skew mouth will tend to shift. With the two sole pieces of his little mitre plane joined with the tongue and groove joint, Bill offers up the body to transfer the dovetail marks. These are cut into the steel, and the sockets are filed. By filing away the sharp corners on the bottom face of the pins Bill can pein the 'double dovetail' that mystifies most woodworkers.

Once the sole is 'rivetted' in place Bill moves on to the infill, for which he favours boxwood (*Buxus semperivirens*), though he often uses rosewood (*Dalbergia* spp.). "If you want to make a plane, use boxwood," he says. "There is no pith and no sapwood on box."

Bill always cuts the infill from one piece of wood so that the grain, colour and tensions are consistent. "With English planes the grain is most often along the length, but occasionally it is across the width." On some old Norris planes the grain on the front infill was across the width of the plane. The irons are usually cut from old ones he's collected, and are found hanging up at the back of his shed, where he also keeps an ever-changing collection of Italian scooters.

Bill has a lapping plate now for levelling the soles of planes. He does drill the back of the body of some planes with an electric drill for the cheesehead screw you'll find on old mitre planes. This is just to keep the infill in place, though he's come across people who have tried to use it to adjust the blade.

The earliest examples had countersunk screws in the sides, back and front to hold the infill in place. The little mitre plane he's made is simply marked 'Carter London'. "Leicester is such a long word, and if I put 'Carter London' it is the same number of letters and looks neater," he said in an interview with handplanecentral.com. Some of the planes still have the marks from the tenon saw backs they once were.

Oh, and just in case you were wondering, Bill Carter's planes work beautifully. Of course.

Bill & Sarah now have 31 videos on YouTube and a book, Making a Tiny Boxwood Smoother *(£22.50 inc. p&p). You can contact them at billcarterwoodworkingplanemaker.co.uk.*

There are now 31 videos on YouTube of Bill making a small plane

Greenwood Tools

From axes to adzes we've found a wealth of tools made by hand

Along with carving tools, BeaverCraft (beavercrafttools.com)also produce leather strops (left) with their L54 prepared with a green polishing compound. As well as a small carving axe (above), Kalthoff (kalthoffaxes.se) also have a sharpening stone in a tidy leather pouch. Meanwhile, Allan Williams (allanwilliamswoodworker.com), who makes Windsor chairs, also produces travishers, largely in cherry, walnut and maple. They are made in 4 1/2in and 12in radius

Petrograd Toolworks (petrograd-tools.com) was founded in 2008, producing carpentry, woodworking and carving tools, including various drawknives (above). Far from St Petersburg, Josh Burrell (joshuaburrell.co.uk) makes adzes in Leicestershire, having learnt his skills in his father's forge. "Adherence to traditional practice," he says, "can produce works that are in many cases indistinguishable in style and efficacy to tools made in the 'Golden Age' a century ago." Over the Pond Deepwoods Ventures (below, right) (deepwoodsventures.com) makes a wide range of carving knives and tools, just as Matty Sears (@mattysearsworks)is hand-forging a growing range of tools in Portland, Oregon

John Brown's Legacy

Ben Willis looks at two landmark new publications exploring the Welsh stick chair and its most famous maker, John Brown

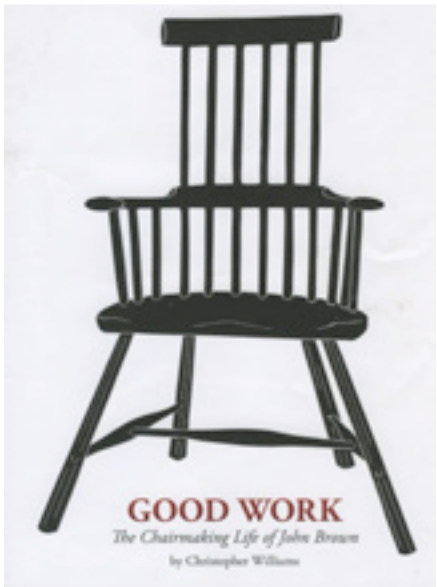
The many unnamed and unacknowledged Welsh chair makers of history can scarcely have imagined the extent to which their craft would come to inspire future generations. From humble roots deep in Wales' rural past, the Welsh stick chair, as we now know it, has in recent years attained the status of a national treasure, a folk art form with an appeal that extends far beyond its homeland.

To the latter-day chair enthusiast, the burgeoning popularity of Welsh stick chairs is not so surprising. Relatively simple in form and construction, yet boldly sculptural in presence, there is plenty in these chairs to please both traditional and modern tastes. As Chris Schwarz of Lost Art Press, publisher of one of two new books on the topic, puts it, Welsh stick chairs achieve the feat of appearing simultaneously ancient and modern. It is surely this ability to span the ages, to forge a living link with the largely unknown artisans who laid the foundations of the craft that lends the Welsh stick chair tradition its enduring vitality and will doubtless ensure its health for many years to come.

The current buzz around Welsh stick chairs makes the timing ideal for two richly satisfying new books on the topic to hit the shelves. Chris Williams' *Good Work: The Chairmaking Life of John Brown*, published by Lost Art Press, and *The Welsh Stick Chair – A Visual Record* by Tim and Betsan Bowen, published by Pethe Press, are a wonderfully complementary pairing, offering much intriguing new detail and inspirational insight to existing material on this quintessentially Welsh design icon.

Williams is perhaps uniquely placed to take on the task of authoring the first and most likely definitive biography of John Brown. A hugely successful maker of Welsh stick chairs, he spent almost 10 years working with JB, as he was fondly known, absorbing his methods and philosophy, and gaining unique insight into the man. Few with an interest in Welsh stick chairs specifically or chair making generally will be unfamiliar with John Brown. It was he who first coined the term 'Welsh stick chair' and through his

writing (in his seminal 1990 book, *Welsh Stick Chairs*, and his columns for *Good Woodworking* magazine) he brought what might otherwise have been an overlooked vernacular branch of chairmaking to a wider audience. He was the embodiment of his art form: Welsh through and through, idiosyncratic, uncompromising to a fault, JB's personality can be seen vividly in the charismatic chairs he made.



Williams' chapters offer a fascinating insight into John Brown, his techniques and peculiarities. There is much here for chairmaking aficionados to relish, a level of detail on his making methods that John never included in his own book. Further meat on the bones is provided by JB himself, through a collection of 19 of his most noteworthy columns for *Good Woodworking*.

There is also plenty on offer for the non-chair-nerds, with the chapters penned by Williams alongside others who knew John well: Nick Gibbs, his editor from *Good Woodworking* (and now of *Quercus*, on which John was a collaborator); Anne Sears, John Brown's second wife; David Sears, his nephew; and his son Matty Sears, now a toolmaker. The result is a delightfully rounded account, both of the maker and the man beyond the bench. Life in his orbit was not always easy, but neither was it ever dull.

Tim and Betsan Bowen, meanwhile, provide some wider historical context to the John Brown story. Over many years spent collecting and selling Welsh country antiques, the Carmarthenshire-based husband and wife duo have had the privilege of coming into contact with some of the finest surviving examples of Welsh stick chairs.

Cataloguing 31 of the chairs that have passed through their hands over the years, as well as a number of other pieces of Welsh vernacular furniture such as pig benches and cricket tables, their book serves as both a visual record and celebration of a fascinating strand of Wales' folk art history. It's a beautifully put together work, with each piece presented through lush photography and a written account of historical facts. For anyone with an aesthetic or maker's interest in Welsh stick chairs, this book will doubtless be an inspiration. With the making, buying and general appreciation of the Welsh stick chair in the ascendant, the story of this cherished art form almost certainly has further to run. Together these two books stand as a definitive account of where it has come so far.

Ben Willis is a chair maker and teacher www.benwillis-woodcraft.co.uk.

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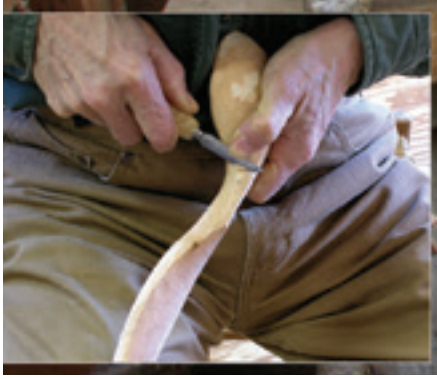

A History of Real Bodgers

Richard Arnold Discovers Trying Plane Offset

James Mursell on Shaving Angles

Smoothing Japanese Irons