

wood CARVING

Easy guide

Carve this fun
hedgehog
Snuffles

CLASSIC
CARVING
Gothic-style
candle stand

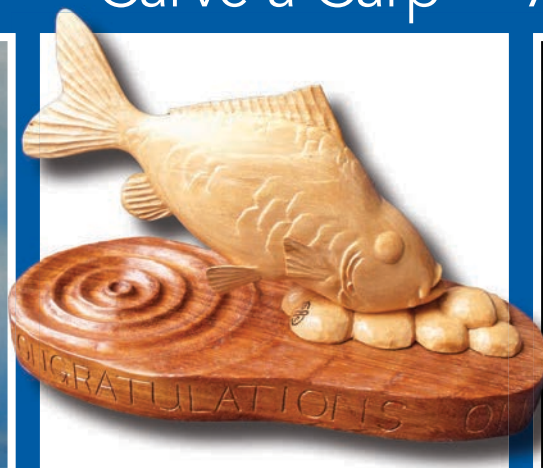
BOB JUBB
Variations on
carving rabbits



Red Grouse



Carve a Carp



Abstract Sculpture



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EDITOR Mark Baker

Email: markb@thegmcgroup.com

ASSISTANT EDITOR Briony Darnley

Email: briony.darnley@thegmcgroup.com

DESIGNER Oliver Prentice

**GROUP EDITOR – WOODWORKING
MAGAZINES**

Mark Baker

PUBLISHER Jonathan Grogan

CHIEF PHOTOGRAPHER Anthony Bailey

ADVERTISING SALES EXECUTIVE

Russell Higgins

Email: russellh@thegmcgroup.com

PRODUCTION MANAGER Jim Bulley

Email: jimb@thegmcgroup.com

PRODUCTION CONTROLLER

Amanda Allsopp

Email: repro@thegmcgroup.com

MARKETING Anne Guillot

SUBSCRIPTIONS HOTLINE

Tel: 01273 488 005

Fax: 01273 402 866

Email: pubs@thegmcgroup.com

PRINTER

Precision Colour Printing

DISTRIBUTION

Seymour Distribution Ltd

Tel: 020 7429 4000



Woodcarving (ISSN 0965-9463) is published bi-monthly by Guild of Master Craftsman Publications Ltd.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

(includes postage and packing)

	UK	Europe	Rest of the World
6 issues	£23.70	£29.63	£33.18
12 issues	£47.40	£59.25	£66.36

Cheques made payable to GMC Publications Ltd. Current subscribers will automatically receive a renewal notice (excludes direct debit subscribers).

Post your order to: The Subscription Department, GMC Publications Ltd, 166 High Street, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1XU

Tel +44 (0)1273 488 005, Fax +44 (0)1273 402 866

Email: pubs@thegmcgroup.com

Website: www.thegmcgroup.com

Woodcarving magazine will consider articles for publication, which should be sent to the Editor together with a stamped self-addressed return envelope. GMC Publications cannot accept liability for the loss or damage of unsolicited material.

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PHOTOGRAPH BY GMCANTHONY BAILEY

A sharpening session in the workshop

Problems for clubs



I know that what I write here may annoy some people and it picks up from my leader in the last issue. You know I will do everything in my power to help, in not only providing quality information, but also being a focal point regarding all things carving. But, (and here is the rub) I am constantly being asked to publicise events, and when I ask for some good pictures and text, 90% of the time we end up with nothing. I can provide help, but you have to be willing to do your part. When was the last time your club did something, but failed to notify the press?

Woodcarving clubs

I was saddened to learn of a club folding after 35 years. The person who wrote to me commented that the club had very few younger people joining, despite organising exhibitions, going to various events and publicising their presence in other ways. Obviously this club tried hard and faced problems all organisations have.

One comment that was made – and is often cited when taking to other clubs – is that at the last meeting no one wanted to take on being a chairperson or treasurer, with the current incumbents having to step down due to ill health. Needless to say, I was very sad when I read the letter, but the lack of people wanting to take an active role in running a club and the lack

of youngsters taking up hobbies and sports are all-too-often encountered problems.

All organisations need to be proactive and have a clear vision as to what they can and cannot do for their members, and then have clear aims and objectives with a plan and timeline as to how to deliver those with everyone pulling their weight and playing an active part. If such a club or organisation doesn't have these, what does it exist for?

A friend of mine belonged – note the 'belonged' – to a club and was exasperated at the apathy, lack of vision and politics being played out – he left saying to a few of his friends that he would prefer a benevolent dictatorship than a club run by committee.

There are many problems we cannot avoid, but it has to be borne in mind that any organisation has to balance everything and walk a very fine line to cater for the majority most of the time.

All groups face challenges, but we have to be relevant and current, proactive and all trying to work together by being willing to play a part if there is any chance of organisations continuing or developing and dare I say even growing? I await your responses with interest.

Have fun,

Mark Baker
Editor of **Woodcarving**

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March/April 2016



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Front cover image courtesy of
Jean Grace

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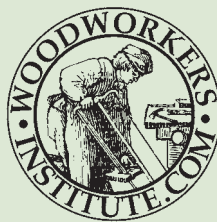
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The Woodworkers Institute web forum

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Woodcarving Round & About

We talk to the BDWCA and take your letters from the forum and important dates for your diary to bring you the latest news from the woodcarving community. If you have something you want your fellow carvers to know, send in your news stories, snippets and diary dates to Briony Darnley at Woodcarving, 86 High Street, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 1XN or to briony.darnley@thegmcgroup.com

BDWCA: Annual show results

*Peregrine Falcon
by Jack Crewdson,
Awarded Gold in
Novice Birds of Prey
and Winner of Best
Newcomer*



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF RAY LOUGHLIN

*Sparrowhawk by
Tom Fitzpatrick,
Winner of Advanced
Birds of Prey and
Artistic Award*



In the last issue of the magazine I mentioned that at our annual show in September 2015, the winner of the special award for Best Newcomer was an impressive Peregrine Falcon carved by Jack Crewdson. The Best Novice award went to Alan Pickersgill with his Eurasian Hobby.

Although the largest number of entries at all skill levels was in the Songbird category, Birds of Prey were also well represented. These are challenging birds to carve and paint and, as always, good reference material is essential.

Alan Pickersgill took reference photographs of the progress of the creation of his Eurasian Hobby and kindly supplied text to accompany them. We were then able to turn the text and photographs into an excellent reference

article to share with our members – in our membership magazine *Wingspan*. The carving was featured in the Winter edition and the Spring edition will show the painting process.

Some of our members actually keep Birds of Prey, so they can be a good source for the rest of us. At a recent meeting of our Essex Group, a member brought along his Harris Hawk and gave an interesting talk on how the birds are reared, gradually trained and how they hunt for prey in the wild. At one point they experienced the hawk flying as well.

Although the majority of our members are in the UK, we also have members in Europe – currently in Austria, Holland, Spain and Sweden – but also further afield in Australia, New Zealand and the USA. We have a special Regional Group – the VRG (Virtual Regional Group)

– that 'meets' monthly in an internet chat room and also has its own private Facebook group, which enables our distant members to keep in touch at any time.

Contact the BDWCA

For further information on the BDWCA, as well as membership details, visit www.bdwca.org.uk. Membership includes three issues of the 28-page full colour magazine, *Wingspan*

Contact membership secretary:
Mrs Janet Nash, 26 Shendish Edge,
Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire
Tel: 01442 247 610
Alternatively, please email:
pam.wilson@bdwca.org.uk

BWA: Multi-regions at shows

As already reported, the Harrogate Show in November was a great success, with four regions carving together on one stand. This has led to another event with multi-region input to be held at Newark Showground on the 18-19 March, 2016. The striking element of this multi-region input has seen more people asking how to form a region or club, as opposed to just wanting to join an existing club as an individual member. The diversity of this type of event also proved to be of benefit to members on the stand and public alike.

Essex region

This region's AGM will be

addressing the appointments of Treasurer, Events Officer and Library Officer. The group also scored another 'first' at a recent show by introducing a 'touchy feely' table where visitors could, and were, encouraged to touch the carvings. This proved very successful and was a busy spot. The region reports that it also proved to be a very good source of new recruits. This seems to be a very brave thing to do. However, it makes a refreshing change to seeing the 'please do not touch signs'.

North Wales

North Wales and Borders region are involved in a group project to carve 'The Stations of The Cross'

for installation (by Easter) to go into St. Asaphs Cathedral. This is the smallest and possibly oldest cathedral in Britain and has had a turbulent past since the 6th century. The Cathedral has been destroyed twice by fire. Henry III, Edward I and Owain Glyndwr all had their turn at destruction. So we hope the new carvings are going to be safe!

BWA AGM

Hertfordshire Region will be Hosting the National AGM this year at Hatfield House Riding School (conference centre). The venue also hosts the 'Living Crafts' fair at the same time and so should produce a great weekend on 7 May, 2016.



Members of Cleveland and Coniscliffe clubs on the first taster session of multi-region carving

Contact the BWA

Tel: 07749 769 111 Web: www.britishwoodcarversassociation.co.uk Or write to:
The National Secretary, 32 Beaufort Avenue, Kenton, Harrow, Middlesex HA3 8PF

Stains

Dear Mark,

In Peter Benson's article on colouring the finished article, he notes the problem of stains bleeding. What I have done is finish a piece with one or more layer of Danish oil, then put an additional layer(s) on areas to be highlighted with added wood dye to the required tone. The coating does not bleed, providing sufficient time is given for the lower coats to dry out.

While writing, I would mention that it was attending one of Peter's one-day workshops with my wife that started us off woodcarving some seven years ago. It was a slow start, but has now started taking up considerable amounts of our time. We have also made lots of new acquaintances!

Alan Robinson
Hertfordshire

Conversion chart

2mm	(⁵ / ₆₄ in)
3mm	(¹ / ₁₆ in)
4mm	(⁵ / ₃₂ in)
6mm	(¹ / ₄ in)
7mm	(⁹ / ₃₂ in)
8mm	(⁵ / ₁₆ in)
9mm	(¹¹ / ₃₂ in)
10mm	(³ / ₈ in)
11mm	(⁷ / ₁₆ in)
12mm	(¹ / ₂ in)
13mm	(¹ / ₂ in)
14mm	(⁷ / ₁₆ in)
15mm	(⁹ / ₁₆ in)
16mm	(⁵ / ₈ in)
17mm	(¹¹ / ₁₆ in)
18mm	(²³ / ₃₂ in)
19mm	(³ / ₄ in)
20mm	(³ / ₄ in)
21mm	(¹³ / ₁₆ in)
22mm	(⁷ / ₈ in)
23mm	(²⁹ / ₃₂ in)
24mm	(¹⁵ / ₁₆ in)
25mm	(1in)
30mm	(1 ¹ / ₈ in)
32mm	(1 ¹ / ₄ in)
35mm	(1 ³ / ₈ in)
38mm	(1 ¹ / ₂ in)
40mm	(1 ⁵ / ₈ in)
45mm	(1 ³ / ₄ in)
50mm	(2in)
55mm	(2 ¹ / ₈ -2 ¹ / ₄ in)
60mm	(2 ³ / ₈ in)
63mm	(2 ¹ / ₂ in)
65mm	(2 ⁵ / ₈ in)
70mm	(2 ³ / ₄ in)
75mm	(3in)
80mm	(3 ¹ / ₈ in)
85mm	(3 ¹ / ₄ in)
90mm	(3 ¹ / ₂ in)
93mm	(3 ² / ₃ in)
95mm	(3 ³ / ₄ in)
100mm	(4in)
105mm	(4 ¹ / ₈ in)
110mm	(4 ¹ / ₄ -4 ³ / ₈ in)
115mm	(4 ¹ / ₂ in)
120mm	(4 ³ / ₄ in)
125mm	(5in)
130mm	(5 ¹ / ₈ in)
135mm	(5 ¹ / ₄ in)
140mm	(5 ¹ / ₂ in)
145mm	(5 ³ / ₄ in)
150mm	(6in)
155mm	(6 ¹ / ₈ in)
160mm	(6 ¹ / ₄ in)
165mm	(6 ¹ / ₂ in)
170mm	(6 ³ / ₄ in)
178mm	(6 ⁷ / ₈ in)
180mm	(7in)
185mm	(7 ¹ / ₄ in)
190mm	(7 ¹ / ₂ in)
195mm	(7 ³ / ₄ in)
200mm	(8in)
305mm	(12in)
405mm	(16in)
510mm	(20in)
610mm	(24in)
710mm	(28in)
815mm	(32in)
915mm	(36in)
1015mm	(40in)
1120mm	(44in)
1220mm	(48in)
1320mm	(52in)
1420mm	(56in)
1525mm	(60in)

Carving in the modern world

Hello Mark – Happy New Year to you! Responding to your editorial in WC 148, I think in this modern technological world we have to face the fact that woodcarving, like many similar hand crafts is diminishing in popularity. Youngsters seem to want a quick fix on their smartphones or iPads, rather than making something with their hands. A similar trend is evident in bowls clubs and many other long established pastimes; when the old-timers pass on, or become unable to participate for health reasons, it is difficult to find younger people to take on teaching or organising roles. Also a number of schools have stopped teaching woodwork and replaced it with making elementary electrical apparatus.

So what can we do to keep carving and other woodworking skills alive? I think there are still plenty of people out there who appreciate hand-made things like woodcarving and turning, of which some would like to have a go at making them, if only someone could get them started.

The Sussex Woodcraft Society and

the subsidiary carving, turning and stick making groups and people who feed into it, have two main shows a year, plus smaller individual events. If a person shows interest in, say carving, at one of these shows, we invite them to come to a class to see what we do and whether they think they would like to do it. If they do, we ask them what they would like to carve and provide drawings and wood to enable them to do it and we teach them how to go about it. They nearly always see the project through, with very satisfactory results – and this spurs them to carry on.

Another factor is cost. One to one teaching by a professional can be expensive for some people, especially youngsters. At my class we hire a workshop room with benches from a local school, for one evening a week, and with insurance this comes to less

than £2 per student per week, and we give our teaching time for free. I am the overall leader, but we all help each other in our various specialities. Some are good at drawing, some carving in the round, some relief, or lettering, or sharpening, etc. This way the student gets the benefit of a number of good carvers and their skills.

We have 24 in our class, including three lads in their late teens or early twenties. One comes with his granddad, others have been brought along by friends. A number have been in the class for more than 30 years. Each carver has a project of their choice and the variety is always interesting for others to see, and get ideas from.

I hope this may give you an insight into what we do to promote woodcarving, Mark and I should be glad to clarify anything, should you so wish.

With kind regards, Bob



Bob is currently writing a series of articles, on small woodcarvings

Give it a try

Hello Mark,
I really enjoy *Woodcarving* magazine and in particular, the step-by-step carvings. There are no carving groups near me, so these are great to have a go at. Here is my version of the owl in issue 147. I get inspiration from the wood itself and other people's work, such as Ronnie Sexton. If I like it I try and carve it! Here are few examples of my work.

Karen Moore





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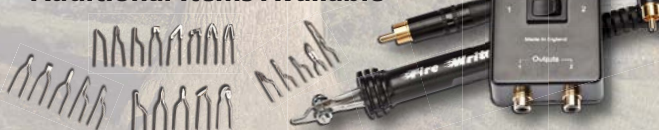
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Snuffles the hedgehog

Jean Grace embarks on her second carving project with this hedgehog design

Enthused by the success of my first carving, a snail featured in *Woodcarving* issue 141, for which I won best in the Beginner category in the Sussex Woodcraft Society annual show, I decided to embark on carving another small creature. Many of the club members do a lot of research, some even keep real reference material, one person even has a duck's head in their freezer! I decided that just doing research on the internet would be much easier. I have always been interested in British wildlife, particularly

small mammals, and came across some images of cute juvenile hedgehogs. So I did a bit more digging, using different words to search on, and finally I found an image I really liked where the hedgehog was just starting to uncurl from his ball – I had found my second project! My husband magically produced a suitable piece of lime (*Tilia vulgaris*) from his stockpile and I was away carving again.

Things you will need...

- Bandsaw
- Pullsaw
- A selection of carving gouges
- Foredom Flexi Shaft Machine
- Kutzall 19mm carbide burr
- Mallet
- Abrasives – P120-P800 and Micro-Mesh
- Carving clamp and vice
- Cut-resistant glove
- Optivisor
- Acrylic paints
- Sanding sealer

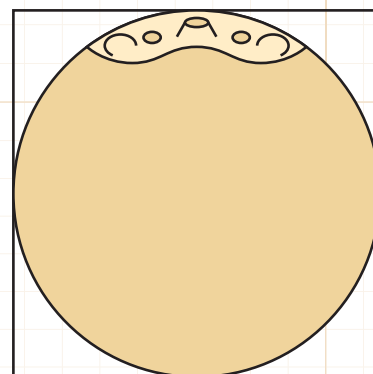
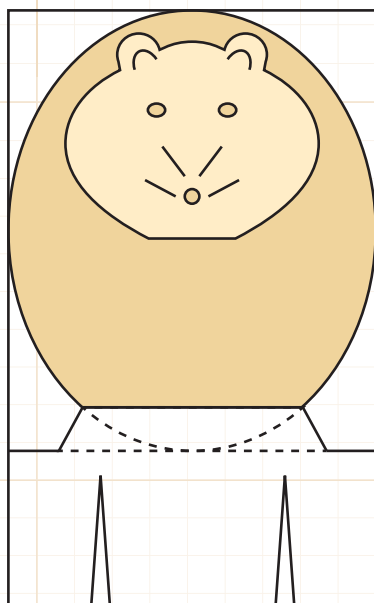
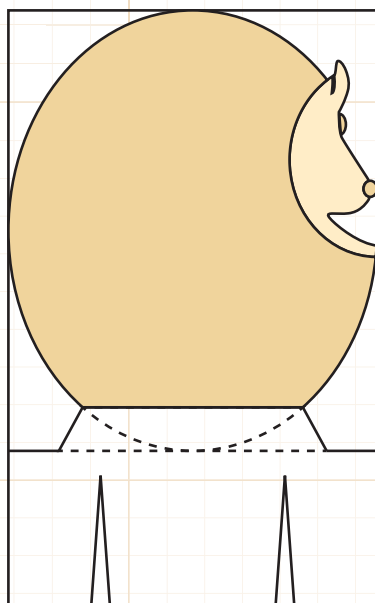
Wood:

- Lime (*Tilia vulgaris*)



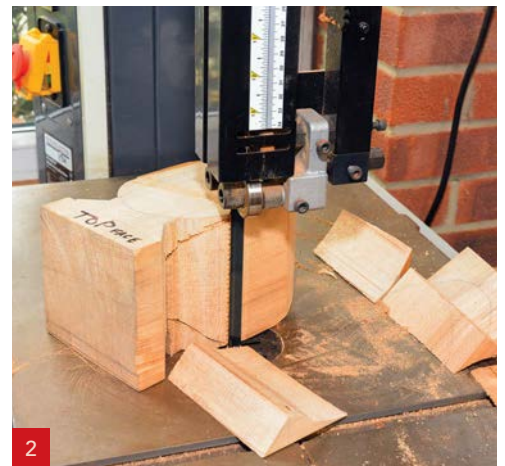
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jean Grace has been a member of the Sussex Woodcraft Society for several years, and has always admired carved wooden ornaments. With the encouragement of the club's members she was inspired to take up carving herself.
Web: www.NotJustRound.com





1 Having kept a selection of the pictures I found, I printed several out to help me draw, plan and profile outlines on my blank. I included a waste section to bolt to my clamp



2 Using a bandsaw I followed the outline and the overall shape quickly materialised. I left a good amount of wood where it joined the scrap block for stability while carving

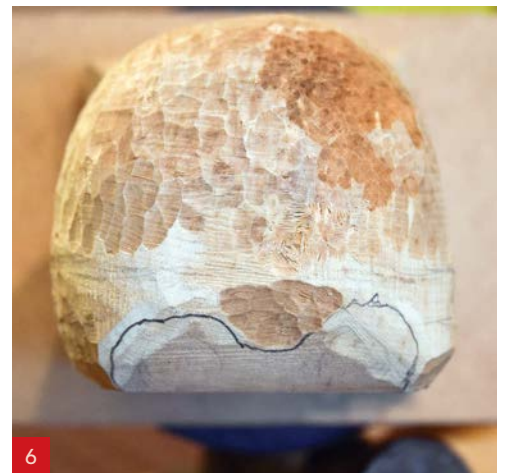
3 This left only the corners to knock off before my hedgehog started really taking shape



4 Most of the roughing out was carried out using a shallow gouge and a small one-piece beech mallet. Here I have marked the next section to attack

5 I learned from my previous project that I would have to keep redrawing elements as I carved them away, here the hatch marks and swirls indicate different depths

6 Remembering that some features go round the side as well, so here, on the top, I left plenty of wood to carve his ears later



7 At this stage I got a bit lost in terms of 'seeing' where I needed to get to next, so a lump of modelling clay enabled me to experiment quickly and change things as necessary

8 As I had never attempted a face before, I thought I should practise on a piece of scrap wood to get the idea of how to carve the different features





9



10

9 I was getting despondent at this point with what looked like a pig-faced owl! But I needed to leave plenty of wood to ensure I didn't inadvertently chop his nose off

10 Here my carving clamp has allowed me to turn the carving so that I can get comfortable and always cut with the grain



11



12

11 I needn't have worried about his face as, with a bit more carving, it started to take shape

12 Having got the basic shape to an acceptable level, I turned my attention to trying out the texture of his spines on an area that still needed further shaping. Clearly, I needed to have a re-think about how to make his spines

13 So, I experimented on scraps to determine how to cut 'spines' using different gouges, techniques for overlapping cuts and using colour to accentuate the effect



13

14 Having re-drawn his facial features yet again, I started carving his ears to ensure they fitted within the overall shape. Here I am undercutting with a shallow gouge

15 Finally I had got to the point where I needed to shape his bottom, so I cut him from the waste with my pull saw

16 When carving finer detail I found it much easier to be able to rotate the carving as I was working, both to gain easy access to the feature and to cut with the grain



14



15



16

➔ **17** Now I needed to work out how to carve eyes! Back to drawing, measuring and practising with different tools on more scrap wood

18 The best method I found was to stab in using a shallow gouge with a rounded profile

19 To refine his outside shape and remove the excess wood from his bottom, the structured carbide burr in my pendant motor was the speediest option

20 I then needed to add the texture back to the area I had power carved, this time holding him securely in carver's chops

21 Having satisfied myself that the shape around the face would work, I wanted to finish the body texture. Here I am applying sanding sealer so that the paint doesn't soak into the grain, particularly on the end grain areas

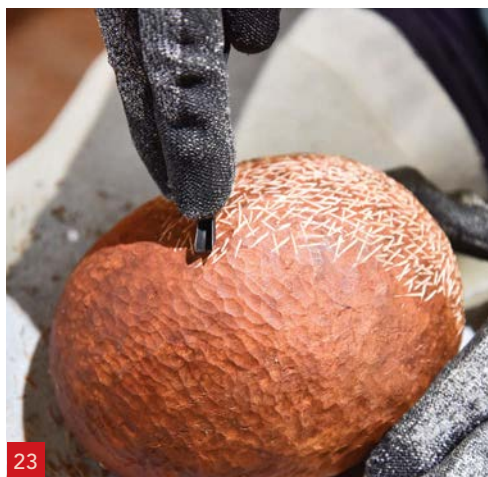
22 The next stage was to apply mottled acrylic paint to the area covered by hard spines

23 Then I started to carve through the paint to represent spines. My tests had determined that the additional texture provided by the rough tooled surface added to the overall effect

24 Now I could move back to concentrating on the bit I found most difficult, his face

Top tip

- 1 Use the waste from the first bandsaw cut taped back on to make the blank stable enough to saw again on its side
- 2 A ball-and-socket style carving clamp ensures you can hold your piece at any angle for quick yet stable access
- 3 I make a paper reference drawing from a research photo and use colour to indicate depth to get from a 2D drawing to my 3D carving
- 4 When you are trying to create the impression of something that is difficult to carve, such as a hedgehog's spines, try different techniques on a number of scrap blocks, writing notes on the back so you can replicate the effect on your carving





25



26



27



28

25 Back now to the acrylic paints to highlight his nose and eyes. I used my optivisor and a fine brush to ensure I painted accurately

26 It was essential to get the right colour for his eyes and a different colour for his nose, so I mixed them on my palette and tested them on scrap before committing to his face

27 In order to give more gloss to his eyes, I used a Micro-Mesh sanding stick to give just the right amount of shine

28 I carved the fine facial hair to match in with his body spines using a 60° V-tool

29 I finished Snuffles the hedgehog in time for the Sussex Woodcraft Society's annual show where I was very surprised when he won 3rd place in their Carving in the Round category. He had his very own 'Do Not Handle' sign, presumably to protect people from his prickles! ▶



29

Jennie Starbuck



Andrew Hall



Mick Hanbury



Wayne Mack



Tony Wilson



Peter Setton



Michael Painter



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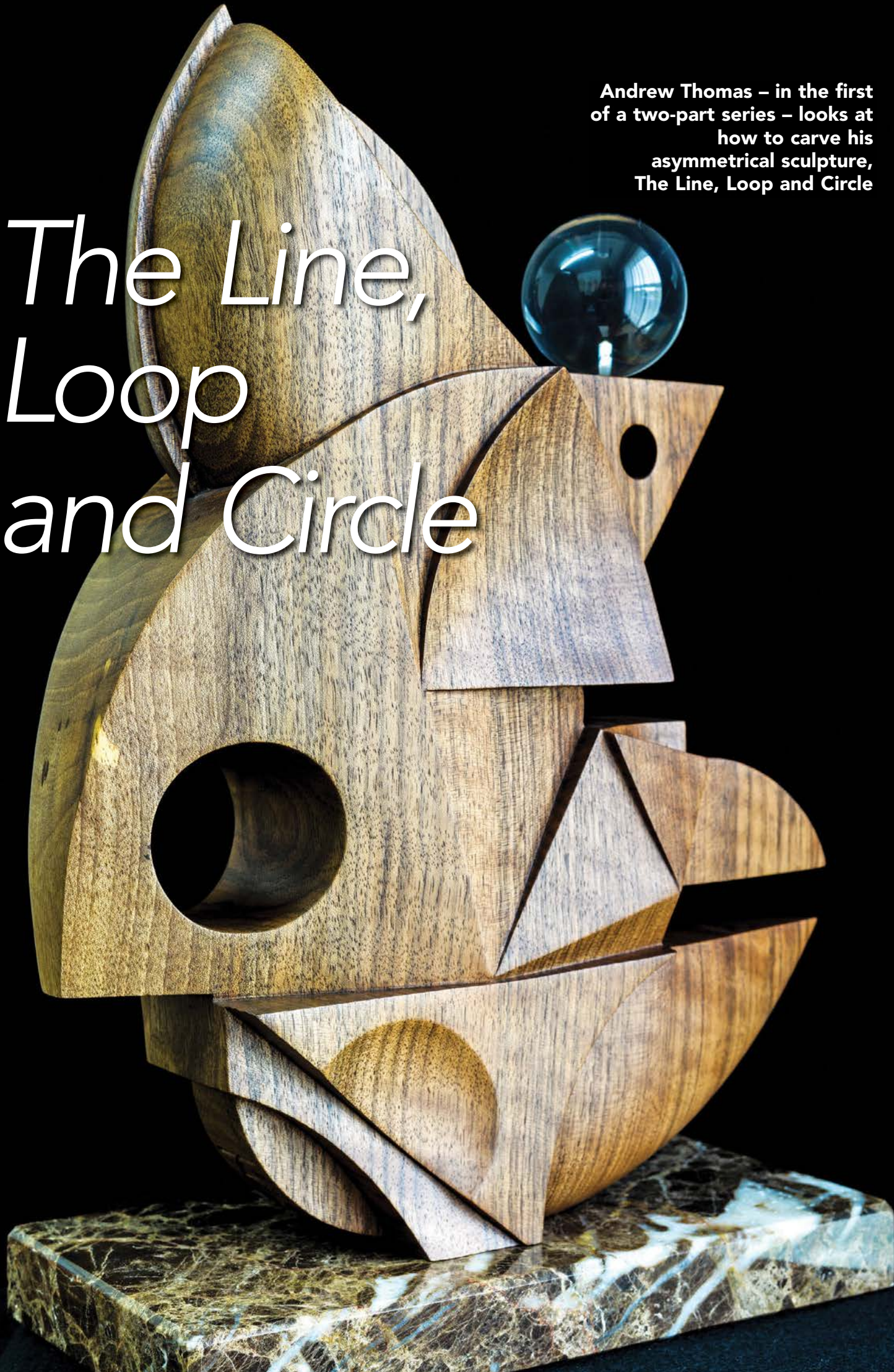
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(Ticket Hotline closes 14th March 2016)

Andrew Thomas – in the first
of a two-part series – looks at
how to carve his
asymmetrical sculpture,
The Line, Loop and Circle

The Line, Loop and Circle



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrew Thomas has been a professional sculptor since 1993 and rapidly gained international recognition for his 3D art, which has won him numerous awards and gold medals. His work is held in many fine art galleries across the UK and in private collections worldwide. Andrew delivers weekly woodcarving lessons for private students at both beginner and intermediate levels. See www.3dsculptor.com



To become experienced and accomplished with any medium requires the learning and practice of many different techniques, applied to a diverse range of subjects and forms. Once learned, these skills then become part of the artist's 'technical toolbox', which will naturally help to develop and expand their ability to design and produce increasingly more complex original works.

This sculpture has been designed to

incorporate a number of techniques that are extremely useful for a multitude of applications. The sculpture itself is an abstract design, featuring a variety of shapes and planes informally organised in an asymmetrical composition.

Design

Asymmetrical design is a far more creative and effective way to balance the relationship between the various details of the composition and the negative space. It gives the artist much more freedom to explore innovations utilising the various elements and principles of design, which can considerably enhance the impact of a two or three dimensional work of art. This naturally captivates the attention of the viewer and allows for a deeper experience as they explore the full three dimensions of the form and contemplate its meaning or essence. Conversely, symmetrical forms can be very predictable and far less interesting.

This project should be approached as an exercise, which will give you valuable experience of: creating piercings in the medium, straight line work, producing flat surfaces, subtle contours, and forming concave and convex surfaces. The design is completely adaptable and I would strongly encourage the readers to use their own innovations to modify

the elements of the composition.

Before you start working on the project, please read through the complete step guide and study the stage and finished images to see how the sculpture develops.

Things you will need...

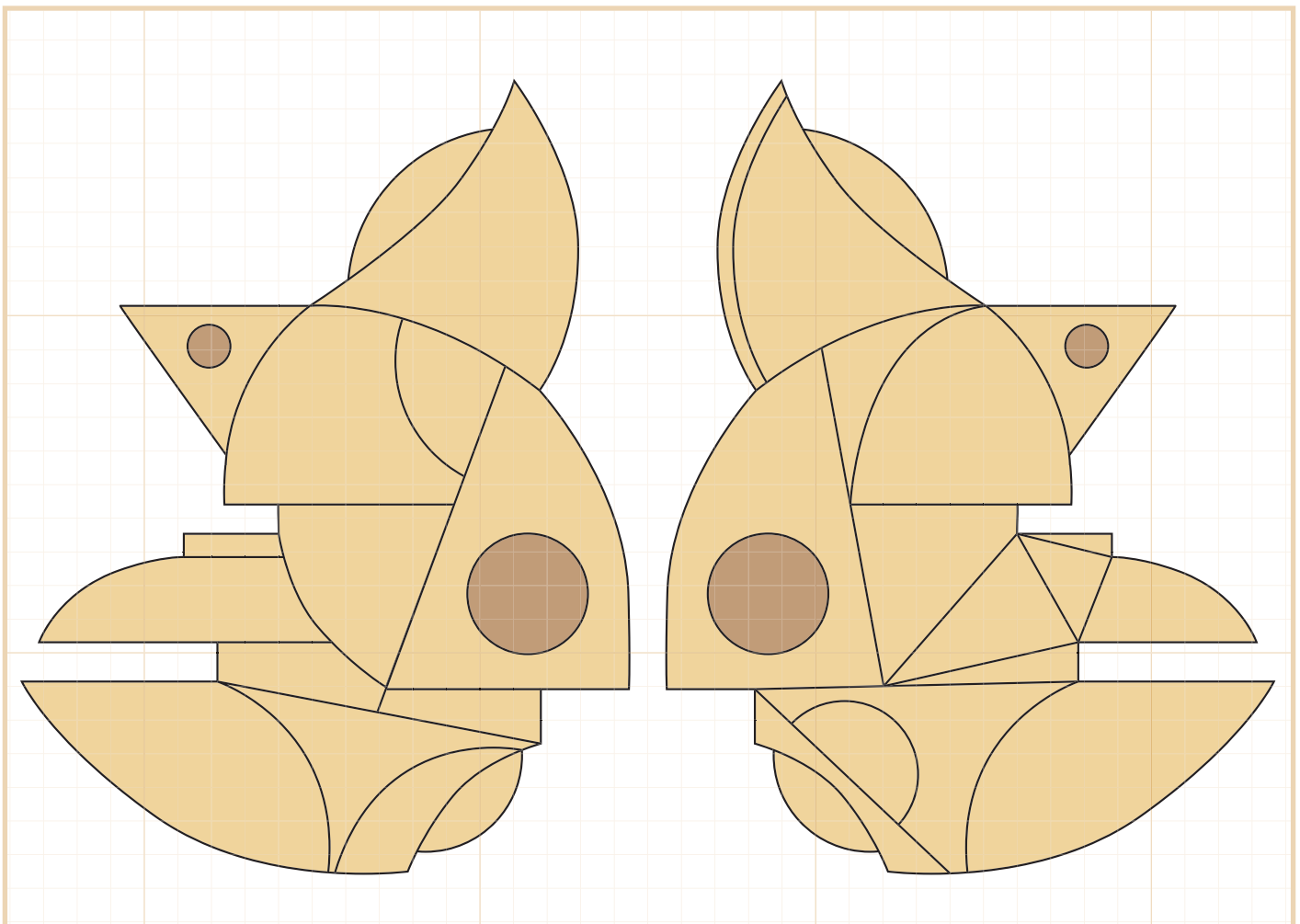
Tools:

Swiss gouges:

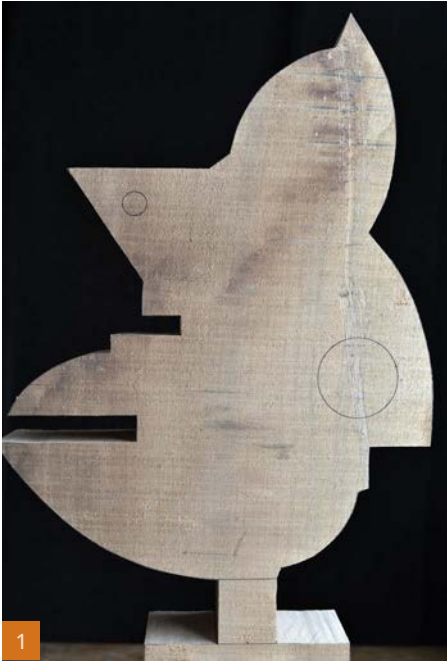
- No.7, 20mm
- No.8, 20mm
- No.3, 20mm
- No.2, 20mm
- No.1, 20mm or bevelled edge woodworking chisel
- No.2, 10mm
- No.5, 20mm
- No.12, 6mm
- Knife
- 16mm brad toothed wood bit
- Saw
- Steel rule
- 50mm acrylic ball
- 2.5mm HSS drill bit
- Stainless steel dowel pin at 20mm x 2.5mm

Wood:

- English walnut (*Juglans nigra*)
– 350 x 270 x 75mm



Procedure



Scan or photocopy the scale drawings provided, enlarging them to the correct size for your wood and print them out onto card to use as templates. Transfer one of the profile views onto your wood, ensuring that the grain direction is running vertically up through the block, and then cut this out. Transfer the left and right side designs in their correct positions onto both sides of the block and draw a centre line all of the way around the edge



Using a 16mm brad toothed wood bit, drill the smaller of the two holes first. Then using the same bit, work around the larger circle, making a series of connecting drill holes, just touching the inner side of the line. When you drill the final one, be aware that the centre of the circle will break free from the block



Using a No.7, 20mm gouge carve away the jagged drill cuts, neatly back to the line, all of the way around the circumference of the circle and in towards the centre from both sides of the block



Measure and draw two lines to divide the front edge section into equal thirds. Use a No.8, 20mm to carve away the bulk of the mass, down to the line on the front edge and sides. Use either a No.1, 20mm or a similar sized bevelled edge chisel, to carefully slice along the outer edge of the straight lines. Use a No.2, 20mm to pare away the waste wood along the line of the No.1 cut. Repeat these steps until you reach the straight level between the top and bottom. Then switch from the No.1, to a razor sharp knife, to cut the concave part of the straight line. Continue until you reach the design lines on the sides of the block, creating a square, sharp angle

Handy hints

Producing a perfectly straight line of cut with a No.1 chisel takes much practice. The most precise way to implement this technique is to make your initial cut into the straight line that you are following and then slide the cutting edge about $\frac{2}{3}$ along this cut so that there is a good proportion of the blade edge still in this original cut. This then perfectly aligns the cutting edge for the next cut, which can either be rocked from the side of the original into the space beside it, or tapped with a mallet



Now move to the rear edge of the block. Draw a symmetrical curved line onto both sides, from the centreline, down to approximately 50mm on the sides. Carve these hatched sections neatly back flat to the line. Once cut, this section now needs to be split into two equal parts down along the centreline. The left side...



... remains the same height and the right side is lowered by approximately 6mm. Slice down the line and lower the height of the right side. Then, shape both sides of the section to produce a gentle flowing curve across its surface. The position at the base is cut back in 5mm from the side edge and then carved around towards the rear and front edges



This next section to be removed is the first on the form that can be done quickly and efficiently, using a panel saw, or similar. There is room for artistic licence here, but the main detail to note is that the angle of the protruding section should be made off centre



8
Draw your lines onto the wood and use a saw to cut off the waste. Then, use the No.2, 20mm and the knife to cut flush back to the line and produce the curved edges along the design lines on both sides



9
Further room for artistic licence here, as this rear section that houses the larger pierced hole should also be formed asymmetrically. Use the same techniques and tools to form it as step 8



10
It is essential to use the edge of a steel rule, or similar to verify that the sides of the section are made perfectly flat. Verify this and adjust if necessary



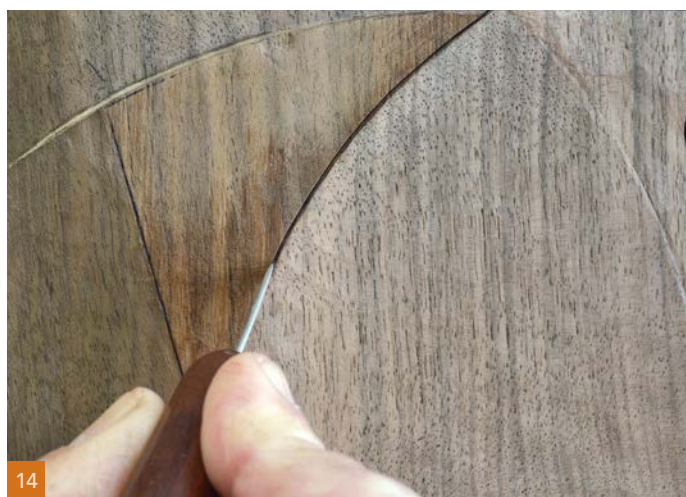
11
The next section is different on both sides. This side is convex in its form and the opposite side concave. Measure approximately 15mm in from the front edge and use the saw to cut along the side...



12
... line, tapering from the back section that you have just formed, down to the 15mm depth. The upper design line is curved and must undercut the section above it. Use the No.2, 20mm, the knife and No.1 chisel to form the convex curve across the surface, from the upper undercut, down to the lower saw cut and neatly finishing off the inner edges



13
Swap to the opposite side next. The concave surface on this side should reflect the same angle as the opposite side. Draw this angle on the front edge. Then use a No.5, 20mm, working from the design lines on the left and lower sides, across to the concave line on the edge

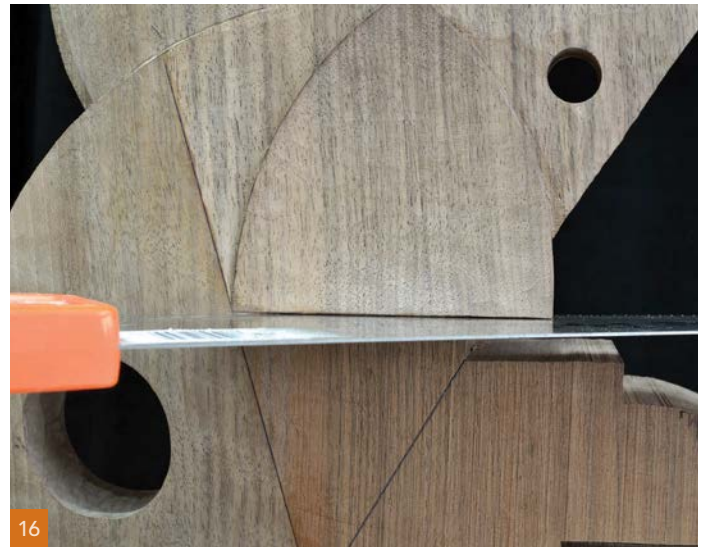


14
You should now be left with a flat area immediately to the left of the concave section that you have just carved. This little section should also be formed with a very slight concave surface. Ensure that your knife is sharp and then cut a slice carefully following the design line



15

Use the No.2, 10mm to pare the wood away, from the design lines above and to the left, across the flat surface into the knife cut. Repeat until you reach a depth of 3-5mm



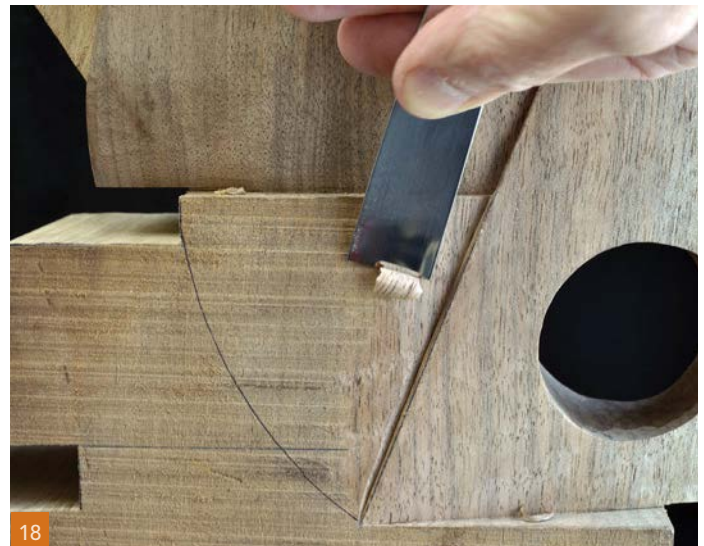
16

The triangular section below the concave section should taper from the surface on the left, down to about 12mm deep at the outer edge, undercutting the section above and be formed completely flat. Use the saw to cut along the upper line and the No.1 to follow the lower one



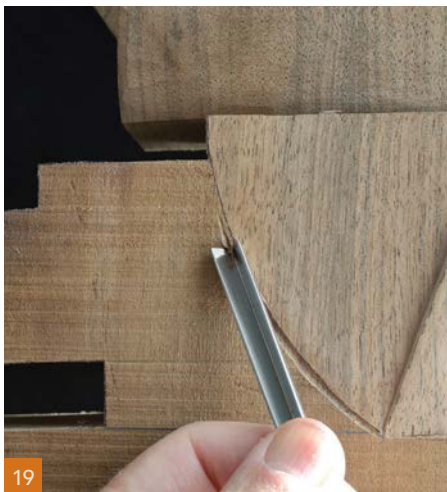
17

Use the No.2, 20mm and 10mm, to pare the wood away and produce the flat angle required. Verify this with the edge of your steel rule



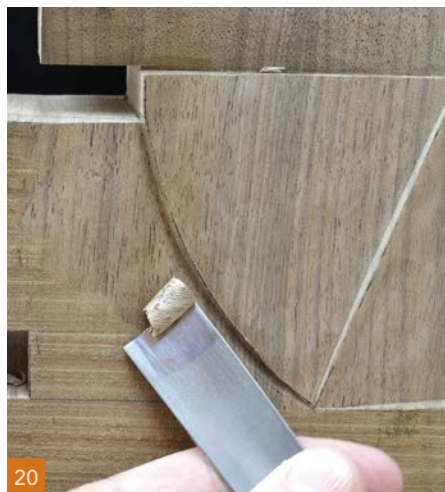
18

Move to the opposite side again next. The section next to the large pierced section is formed with a very slight concave surface. Use the No.1, 20mm or knife to follow the straight line to the right. Use the No.3, 20mm to produce the subtle concave shape across the surface



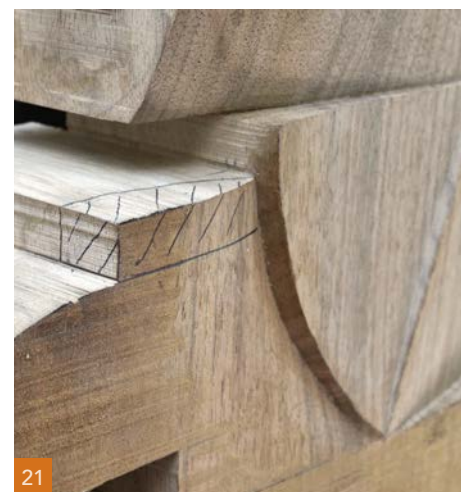
19

The design line to the left of the section can initially be delineated with a 'V'-tool, which is a very useful tool to master, but be aware that it does have a tendency to slip



20

Pare the wood away to the left of the cut and then repeat steps 19 and 20 until you reach a depth of 5mm. Once cut, you need to form the section to the left of the one just carved



21

Measure 15mm out from the centreline on the front edge of your wood and mark this position. Measure and mark 25mm out from the centreline on the inner edge



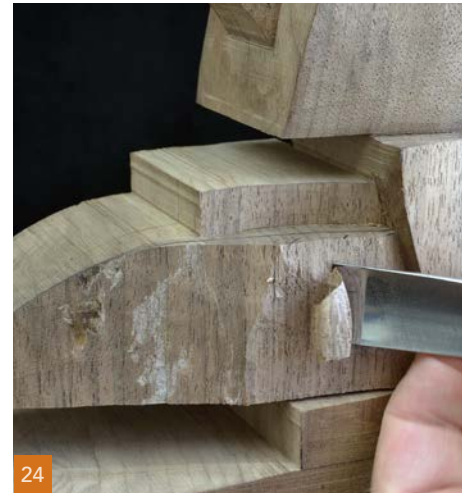
22

Use the knife and No.2, 10mm to create a sweeping curve, from the mark on the front edge back to the mark on the inner edge. Ensure that all surfaces are square and flat. The protruding section underneath the small section that has just been formed...



23

... is the next piece to shape. This should once again be made asymmetrically at the forward most edge. Draw a straight line in the position of your choice on the front edge, back to the position where it emerges from the main body on the inner edge. Use the saw to cut along the lower line on the side, until you almost reach the position you have just drawn



24

Use the No.5, 20mm to pare the wood away until you almost reach the line, then swap for the No.2, 20mm to carve flush back to the line. The lower saw cut will need to be sharpened with the knife to produce a neat, square inner edge. Use the edge of the steel rule again to ensure that the surface is flat and make any necessary adjustments



25

The opposite side is a lot shorter than the one I just cut. This side should also be marked off-centre on the front edge and carved flat and square. Draw the line from the front edge back to the rear design line. Now cut along the line at the rear edge down to the design line



26

Use the combination of the No.5, 20mm and No.2, 20mm again, to pare the wood back neatly, square and flat back to the design line and check with the rule to ensure the plane is level



27

The final job to do in part one of the project, is to finish off this side of the small section above the piece that has just been carved. This is similar to step 22, but the angle of the cut is slightly higher, in respect of the design line on the side. Measure 20mm out from the centreline...



28

... and mark this on the front edge of the wood. Measure and mark 28mm out from the centreline on the inner edge of your wood. Then, use the knife and No.2, to create a sweeping curve, from the mark on the front edge back to the mark on the inner edge

In part 2...
we will look
at refining
and finishing

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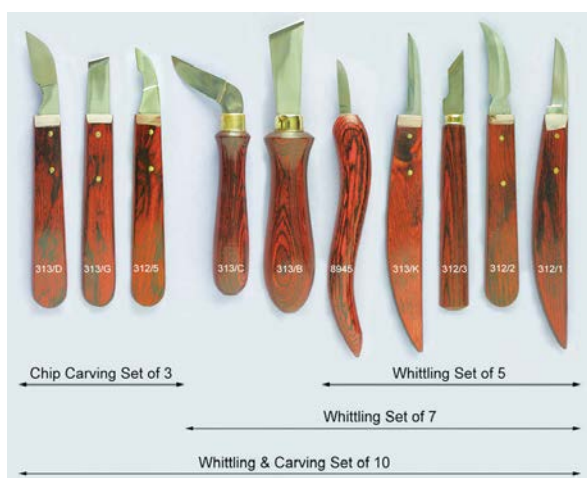


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Gothic candle stand

Steve Bisco carves a 'medieval' masterpiece in fumed oak



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steve Bisco has been carving as a hobby for more than 25 years, specialising in decorative carving and period styles. He is inspired by a love of historic buildings and aims to capture the spirit of a period in pieces for display in the 'home gallery'.



Much as I like making thin and delicate carvings in limewood (*Tilia vulgaris*), it makes a refreshing change occasionally to carve a block of solid oak (*Quercus robur*) into something heavy, dark and Gothic. As most Gothic carving was done for churches and cathedrals we usually need to adapt the style for domestic use, so I have created this candle stand inspired by the roof bosses found at the junctions of the ribs in a Gothic vaulted ceiling.

The Gothic style (see panel, right) uses a wide range of decorative features and medieval carvers rarely made two bosses the same. But despite this wide variation there is an unmistakable style that distinguishes Medieval Gothic. It is based mainly around stylised plant forms depicted in a fluid and organic style known, somewhat paradoxically, as 'stiff-leaf'. Although it is indeed 'stiff' because it is carved in wood or stone, the effect is of an organic growth creeping along a frieze or wrapping around a boss or capital. This is the look I have gone for with this design. Each 'leaf' emerges from under the base and curls upwards to clasp the candle in the embrace of its leaf tips. The stem of each leaf is 'pierced through' as is commonly found in Gothic carving.

It can be problematical sourcing thick pieces of seasoned wood, as kiln-drying doesn't penetrate much beyond 100mm thickness, so you may have to look for old oak beams or use 'green' oak that has been air dried from logs. 'Green' oak carves more easily, but expect some shrinkage cracks as it dries out.

For an authentic medieval look you can darken the oak by 'fuming' it with ammonia (see panel on page 27). This is a very simple process using 'household' ammonia, which is sold in hardware stores as a strong cleaning fluid, and an airtight plastic crate.

Things you will need...

Tools:

- No.3, 20mm fishtail gouge
- No.6, 25mm gouge
- No.3, 10mm gouge
- No.8, 8mm gouge
- No.5, 7mm gouge
- No.9, 16mm curved gouge
- No.5, 13mm curved gouge
- No.8, 8mm curved gouge
- Straight V-tool
- 25mm flat chisel
- 10mm skew chisel
- 3mm chisel
- Round wood rasp
- 20mm drill bit

Wood:

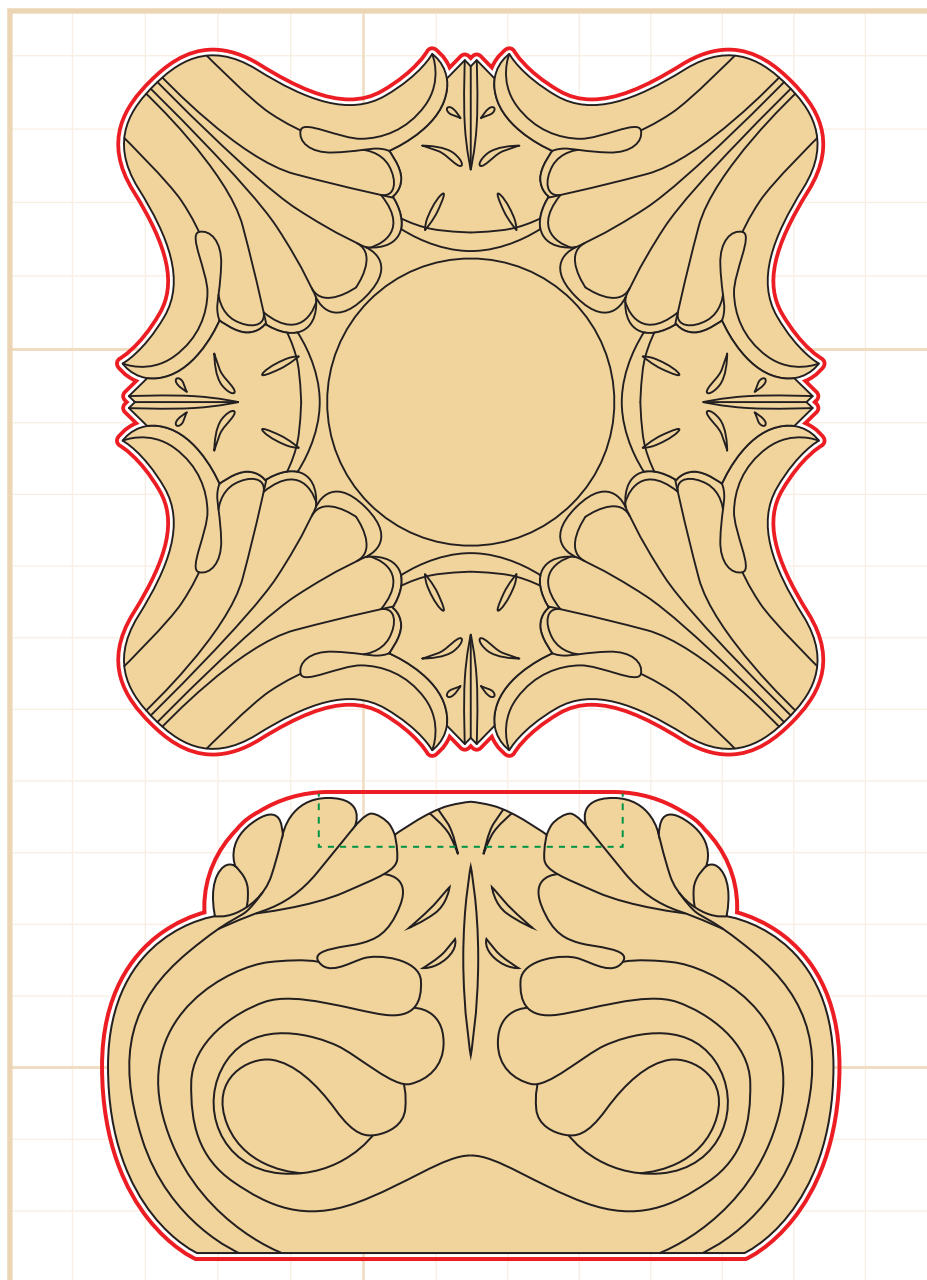
- Oak (*Quercus robur*) 200mm square x 125mm thick

Finishes:

- 'Household' ammonia for fuming
- Dark wax polish for finishing

Using the pattern

You can enlarge the pattern to any size that suits you, but I made my candle stand 200mm square x 125mm high. You can reproduce the pattern on an enlarging photocopier, or you can use a scanner or digital camera to copy it into a computer. Either way you can print the 'plan' pattern onto an A4 page – or the US standard sheet – to get it to the size you want. The side pattern is for reference only.



Gothic style

The Gothic style started around 1150 in France and spread quickly to Britain's churches and cathedrals. Its key features were pointed arches with large windows and delicate tracery, together with steep crocketed pinnacles, flying buttresses and clusters of thin columns soaring upwards to ribbed vaults and carved bosses in impossibly high ceilings. Carved ornament abounded in wood and stone, much of it featuring stylised plant forms such as the 'stiff-leaf'

ornament used extensively on capitals, bosses and friezes. The wood used was nearly always the oak that was growing abundantly in the surrounding forests and noted for its durability.

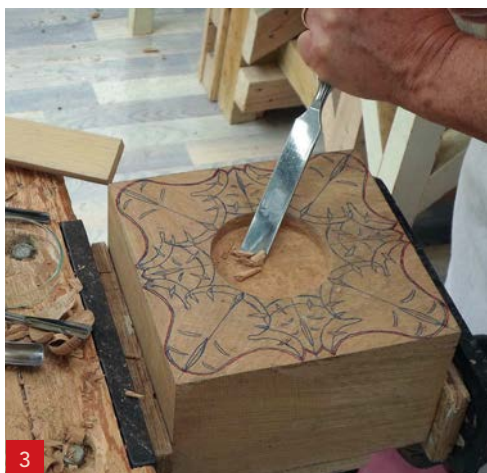
Medieval Gothic lasted until around 1500, before returning in the spectacular Victorian Gothic Revival that dominated the 19th century. One of the best source books for Gothic design is Pugin's *Gothic Ornament*, first published in 1828 and still available today from Dover Publications.



1



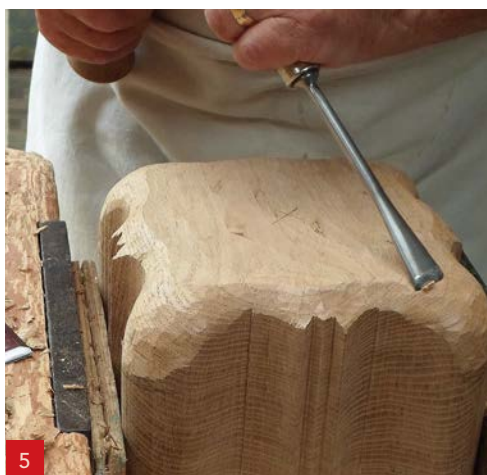
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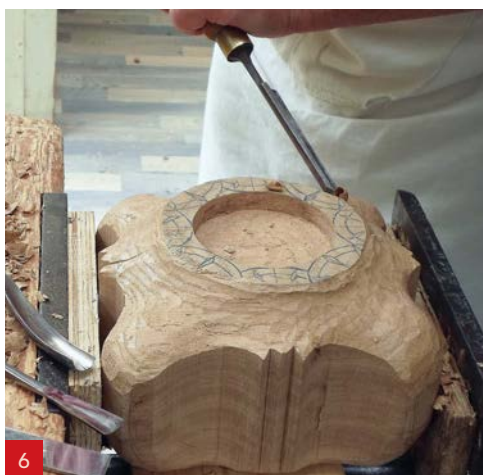
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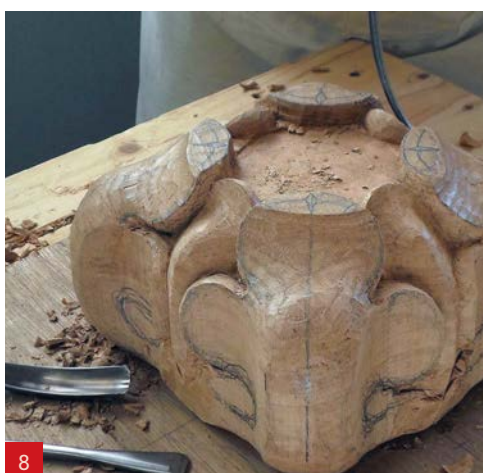
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6



7



8

Preparations

1 Get some oak 200mm square x 125mm thick. 'Green' oak is easier to carve than fully dried oak, but a block this thick may develop splits as it dries. You will also need a glass, metal or ceramic dish into which an 80mm thick 'church' candle can sit. I used the base of a 90mm Petri dish – the base is 85mm diameter x 12mm deep – which you can buy cheaply online. You will also need carbon paper and a full-size copy of the drawing

2 Tape the drawing, with the carbon paper under it, securely to the block and trace the top pattern onto the wood. Place your candle dish in the dead centre and draw round it

Roughing out the block

3 Chisel out a circular recess 12mm deep x 85mm diameter in the top centre into which your dish will fit snugly. If your dish is a different size, adjust the pattern to suit

4 Cut away the surplus wood outside the top pattern. Use a bandsaw if you have one or make handsaw cuts down to the line and chisel away the surplus wood

5 Place the block upside down, preferably in a bench vice, and roughly shape the underside as indicated by the side drawing. Err on the side of caution and don't remove wood you may need later

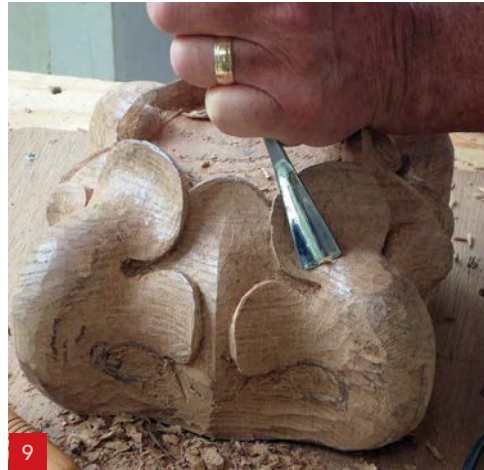
6 Now put it the right way up and, again using the side drawing as a guide, chisel away the surplus wood from the upper parts. Leave a ring about 18mm thick around the centre hole. This will become the tips of the leaves that hold the dish

Carving the features

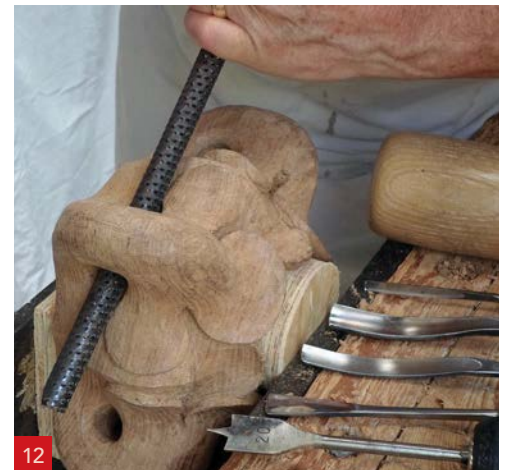
7 We can now start to shape the leaves. Secure the wood, either to a backing board by screwing into the underside as I have done, or to a carver's clamp. Carefully measure and draw the position of the four main leaves. Use a V-tool to make a defining cut around each leaf

8 Separate the main leaves by carving out the four smaller leaves between them. Scoop out the hollows at the top and sides of the small leaves until you get them back to the depth illustrated. Round over the top of the leaf so it sits snugly around the circle where the candle dish will sit

➔ **9** Now to the most significant feature of the carving – the four trefoil leaves. Shape the curve of the top leaf where it clasps the candle dish. Cut the two ‘eyes’ in each leaf with a No.8, 8mm gouge and scoop out hollows around the edge of each trefoil so that the whole thing wraps around the corner of the block. You may need to adjust the smaller ‘in-between’ leaves again to achieve the wrapping effect. Carve the corner ‘stem’ so it is the right thickness and flows smoothly from the top to the underside



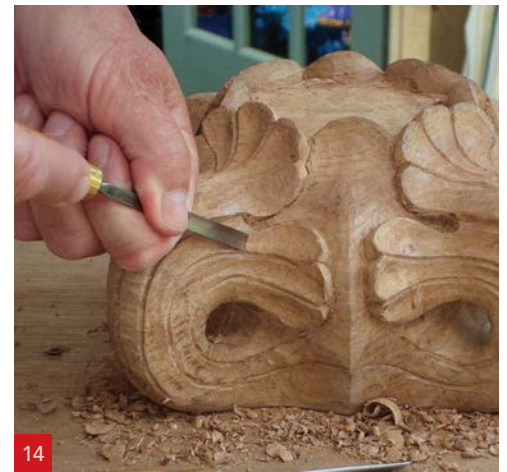
10 To shape the lower parts we need to place the piece back in the bench vice, with some wood in the candle circle to protect the leaf tips from the vice jaws. Hollow out under the lower part of each leaf and shape the stem so it merges smoothly into the base of the ‘in-between’ leaf



11 At this point we can drill through the ‘pierced’ corners with a 20mm drill. Take extra care to place the centres all in the same position – 37mm up from the base and 45mm out from the centre line. Try to get the drill holes to line up from both sides of the corner

12 You can use a wood rasp and gouges to finish the hole neatly and carefully shape the stem around it

13 With the shaping finished, we can now begin to carve the surface detail. Use a V-tool to cut a deep vein from the ‘eyes’ of the corner leaves back along the stem, gradually getting thinner towards the bottom. Divide the top segment of the main leaf into five sections using the V-tool and reshape the top edge. Scoop out the top three sections into concave hollows and merge the V-tool cuts into a large central vein down the middle of the stem



14 Divide the side segments of the main leaf into three sections and use the V-tool and a small gouge to run grooves and veins round the sides of the stem and into the lower centre

15 The small in-between leaf can now be finished with several deep ‘gashes’ using a No.3, 10mm gouge and a V-tool. There are two curved gashes made in the top of the leaf; a deep one straight down the centre; and then two more curved gashes each side of the centre line





16a



16b

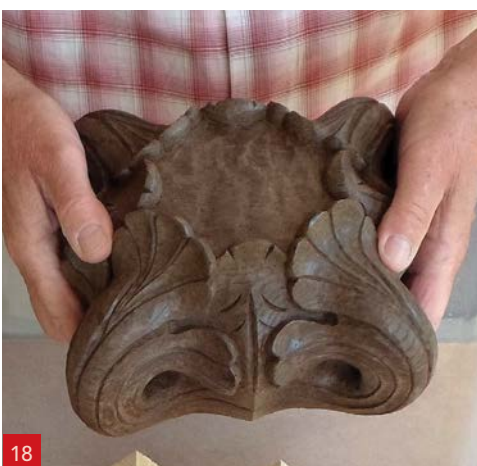
16 The candle platform can now be levelled off around the leaf tips, and the underside of the stems can be tidied up in the vice. The carving work is now completed and should be left with a good tooled finish. Photos 16a and 16b show how your piece should look from the top and diagonally

Finishing

17 For an authentic medieval look it is possible to darken the oak by 'fuming' it with ammonia. To do this, get an airtight plastic tub and put about 50–80ml of 'household' ammonia (see panel below for more details about where to buy this and how best to use it) into a shallow dish. Wear eye protection and rubber gloves when pouring the ammonia. Work in a well-ventilated space and try not to get too close to the fumes as they may sting your throat and eyes. Place the carving in the tub, raised above the dish on wooden supports, and then seal the tub



17



18

18 Leave it until the oak 'ages' to a pleasing dark brown – about 6–12 hours depending on the temperature, the concentration of ammonia and the amount of tannin in the oak. Open the tub, stand back while the fumes disperse and take out the carving

19 The finished carving now looks like a relic from the Middle Ages. Go over it with a dark wax polish and set in place the glass dish and 80mm-thick candle



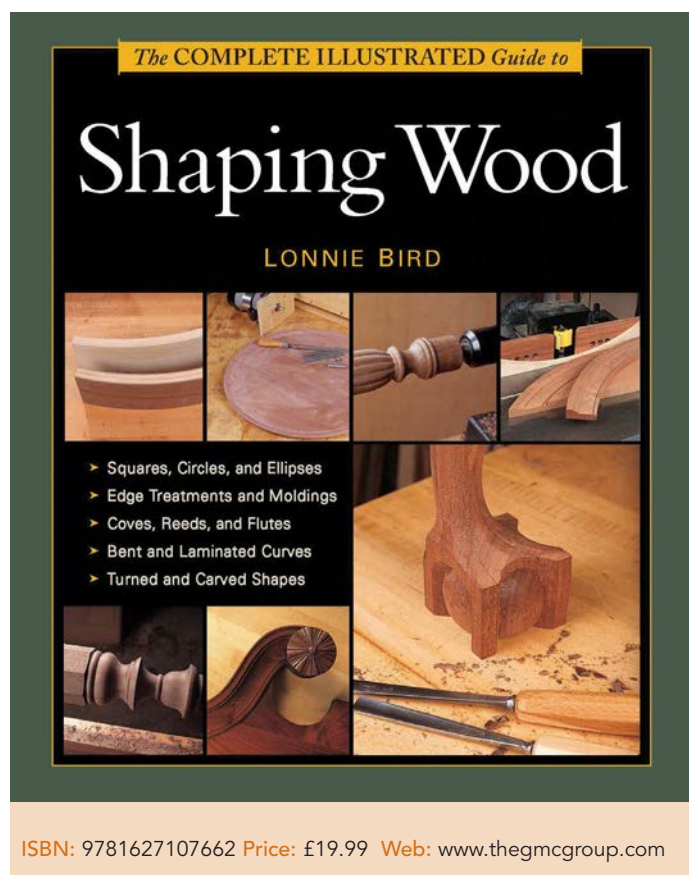
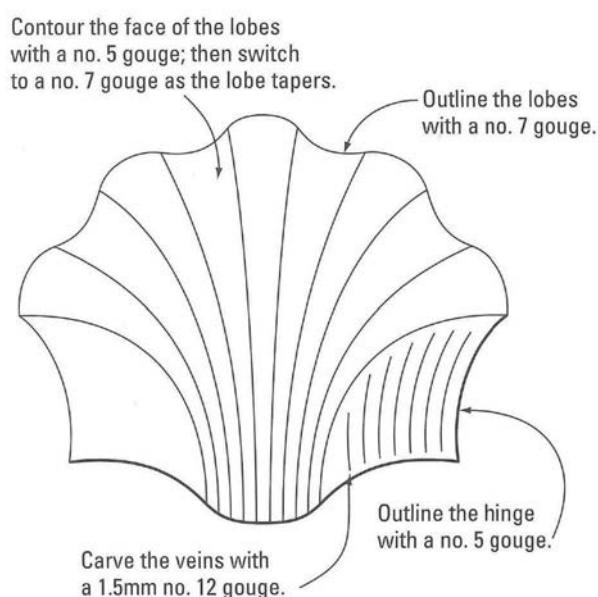
19

Fuming oak with ammonia

Ammonia fumes change the colour of oak to a rich dark brown by acting on the tannins in the wood. It looks more natural than stains as it replicates the natural darkening caused by centuries of exposure to air, but at the rate of about a century an hour! The tannins are only present in the 'heartwood', and the paler 'sapwood' near the bark will not be darkened, so avoid pieces with sapwood. Use 'household' ammonia, a product sold in hardware stores as a strong domestic cleaning fluid. Although the fumes are quite pungent, it is safe to use in a well-ventilated place using rubber gloves and eye protection. You do not need industrial ammonia, which is a more hazardous substance.

Carving a shell

In an abridged extract taken from *The Complete Illustrated Guide to Shaping Wood*, Lonnie Bird carves a simple decorative shell



The first step is to draw and proportion the shell that you would like to carve. All carvings, including shells, can be varied in size and proportion to fit with the design of the furniture to which they're applied. The shell shown here (A) is a five-lobed example that I designed for a Pennsylvania armchair.

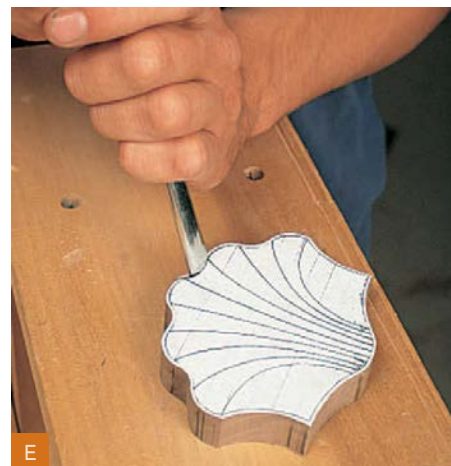


When you're satisfied with the drawing, make several photocopies of it. Next, glue a copy of the drawing to the stock for the shell (C). After carving, this shell will be glued to the front seat rail of the chair; it's important that the grain in the shell runs from side to side to coincide with the grain in the seat rail.

The next step is to select the gouges for carving. The sweep, or curvature, of the gouge should closely follow the outline that you sketched earlier. For the lobes on this shell, use a 14mm no. 7 gouge. For the area around the hinge, use a 25mm no. 5 gouge. Although the narrow gouge could be used for both, the wide gouge is more efficient and easily yields smooth, uninterrupted curves around the hinge.



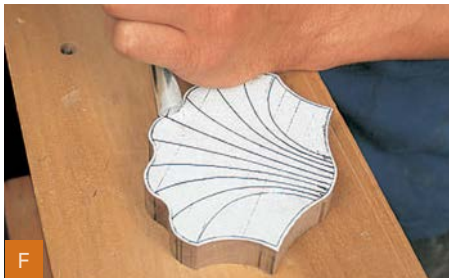
The next step is to bandsaw the outline of the shell to remove the excess stock. It's important to saw approximately $\frac{1}{16}$ in. from the line (D) because the final outline of the shell is created with carving tools.



Next, begin incising the perimeter of the shell with gouges (E). Be aware that the grain at the top center lobe has a tendency to split off.

To avoid this problem, position the corner of the gouge beyond the stock when incising the concave areas that flank the center lobe (F). This will prevent the center lobe from splitting (G). The entire outline will later be inverted to become the base of the shell, so it's not necessary to incise beyond $\frac{3}{16}$ in. deep (H).

When incising the outline of the shell, it's important to keep the cuts vertical. To achieve this, you'll need to angle the gouge away from the work for the concave cuts. This will compensate for the bevel on the edge of the tool. Also, concentrate on keeping the cuts interconnected and flowing uninterrupted around the shell.



When you're satisfied with the outline of the shell, you're ready to move on. The next step is to glue it face down to a short length of inexpensive stock. Afterward, the clamps are positioned on the scrap stock to give you full access to the shell for carving. Don't use a lot of glue – the shell must be pried up after carving. Besides, a small amount of glue is all that's necessary to hold it firmly (I). Clamp the shell to the board and allow the glue to thoroughly dry (J).



The next stage of the process is to contour the face of the shell. But first mark the high point of the contour. The point is centered left to right and slightly below center from top to bottom (K). Now select a 25mm no. 2 gouge for shaping the contour. The goal of this process is to produce sweeping curves from left to right and top to bottom (L). After paring the face of the shell, the only original surface remaining will be the highpoint that you marked earlier. Watch the grain direction and cut with the grain or across; you'll want to produce clean shavings, not splinters. Carve the surface down to the $\frac{3}{16}$ -in. perimeter that you incised in the first step.



After carving the contour, you can remove any remaining facets with a smooth file (M). Avoid using sandpaper though – the abrasive grit will settle in the pores of the wood and quickly dull your tools later in the process.



The next step is to draw the lobes as a guide for carving. Using your original drawing as a guide, locate the points of the lobes with dividers



(N). Then divide the base of the shell into equal spaces (O). Next, connect the points by sketching smooth, flowing curves (P). To achieve visual



balance in the carving, spacing is important. Examine the curves closely and, if necessary, redraw any that need improvement.



Now you're ready for the next stage of carving. The first step in this stage is to incise the hinge area. Hold a 25mm no. 5 gouge nearly vertical to create a steep wall (Q) and carve this area gradually until you reach the layout line (R). Finish the inside corner with a 6mm no. 7 gouge. Take long, sweeping cuts to blend the wall with the hinge area (S).



The next step is to outline the curves on the face of the shell with a V gouge. For greatest control, take several light cuts and progressively deepen the V. Also, as you carve the V's, watch the spacing and flow of the curves; if necessary, make corrections as you deepen the cuts (T).



Next, carve the convex lobes. Start by contouring the ends of the lobes with a 12mm no. 5 gouge (U). As the lobe tapers back, the curvature becomes tighter, so you'll need to switch to a 10mm no. 7 gouge; then a 6mm no. 7 gouge. Gradually, as the lobe reaches the apex of the shell, switch to a 4mm no. 7 gouge. Finally, the curve on the face of the lobe diminishes.



Next, carve the concave rays between the lobes (V). Beginning with a 10mm no. 7 gouge, work back gradually; then switch to a 6mm no. 7 and, finally, a 4mm no. 7 gouge. As you carve the rays and lobes, use the gouges to blend the curves (W). During the entire process, stop periodically and hone the gouges; sharpness is the key to accuracy and control. The final step is to carve the veins into the surface of the hinge. These tiny U-shaped grooves break up the flat surface to add more interesting detail.



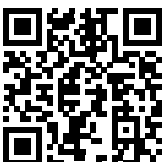
Starting at the outer edge, sketch each vein with a pencil (X). Keep the spacing uniform and follow the curve at the edge of the hinge. Next, use a 1.5mm no. 11 gouge to carve the veins (AA).



The completed carving should be crisp, flowing, and full of visual details (BB). You can smooth the carving lightly with 240-grit sandpaper to blend the facets. But be careful not to spoil the sharp details. ▮

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Tips for carving baby rabbits

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BOB JUBB

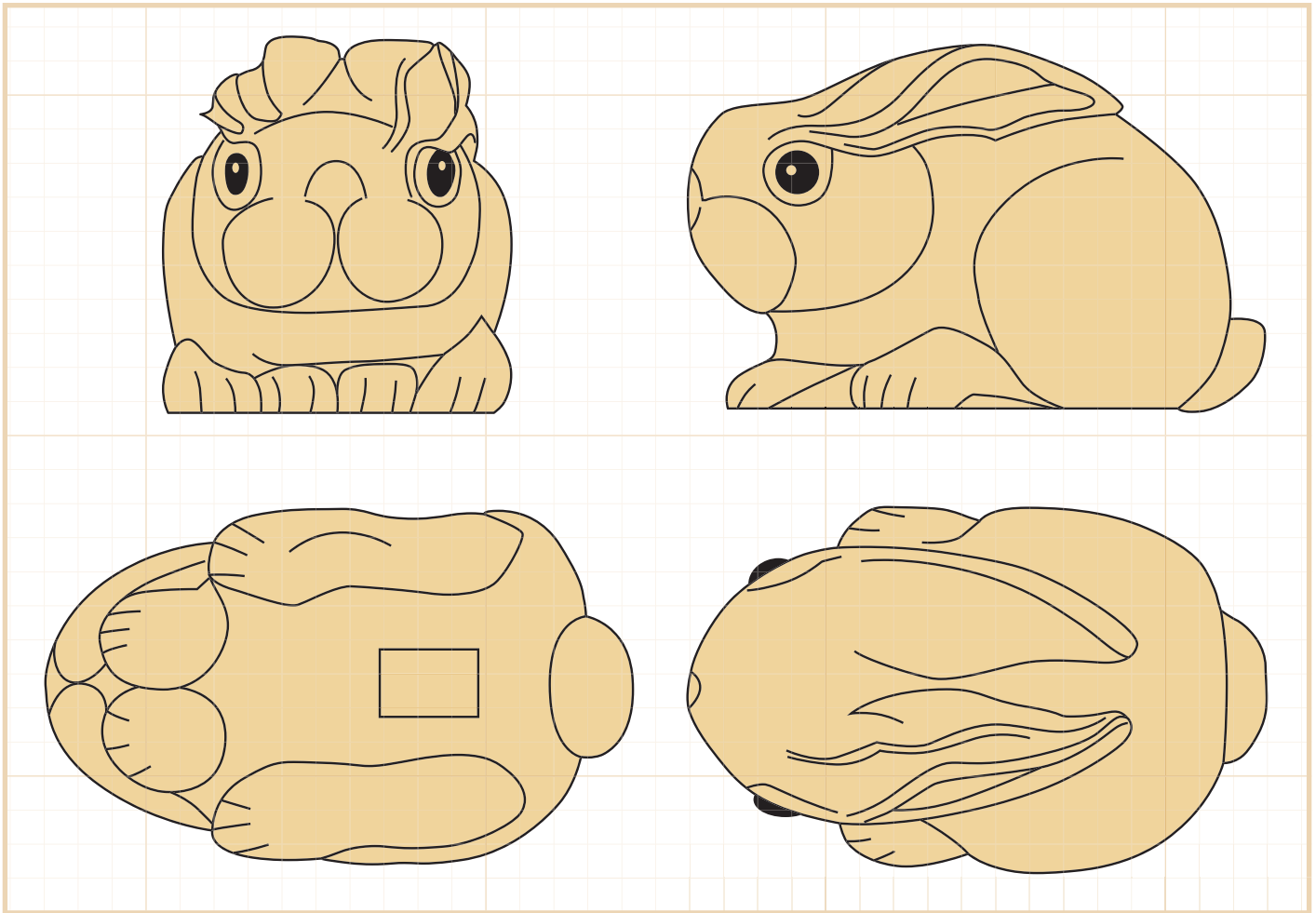
Bob Jubb shares his ideas for carving baby rabbits



I have always seen wild rabbits when we have been out walking in the countryside and, as a kid, I tried in vain to catch them. I have seen ones that are very small in size and just out of their burrows up to fully grown and varying in colour, of brown through to jet black. I know they do a lot of

damage to farmers' crops, but they are a really nice looking animal and I thought it would be a good subject to carve.

The first one I carved was a baby rabbit, which is the one shown here. It was based on a resin cast model owned by a friend. The second was a rabbit standing up on its back feet.



Alternative designs



Carving tips

The first baby rabbit I carved was in boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens*). This is a hard wood to carve, but is great for carving fine details, such as fine hair cut in with a 1.5mm 'V'-tool. The eyes were inlaid with African blackwood (*Dalbergia melanoxylon*), but buffalo horn could also have been used.

The grain runs along the wood from nose to tail. I have also carved this in cherry (*Prunus avium*) and lime (*Tilia vulgaris*).



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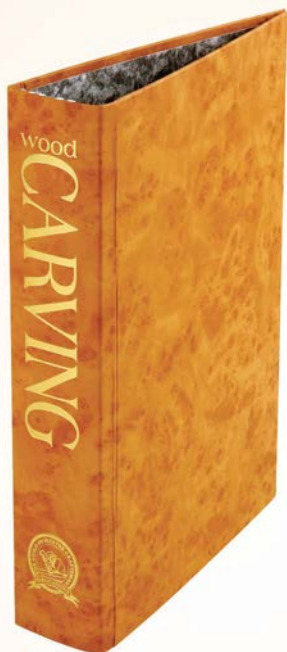


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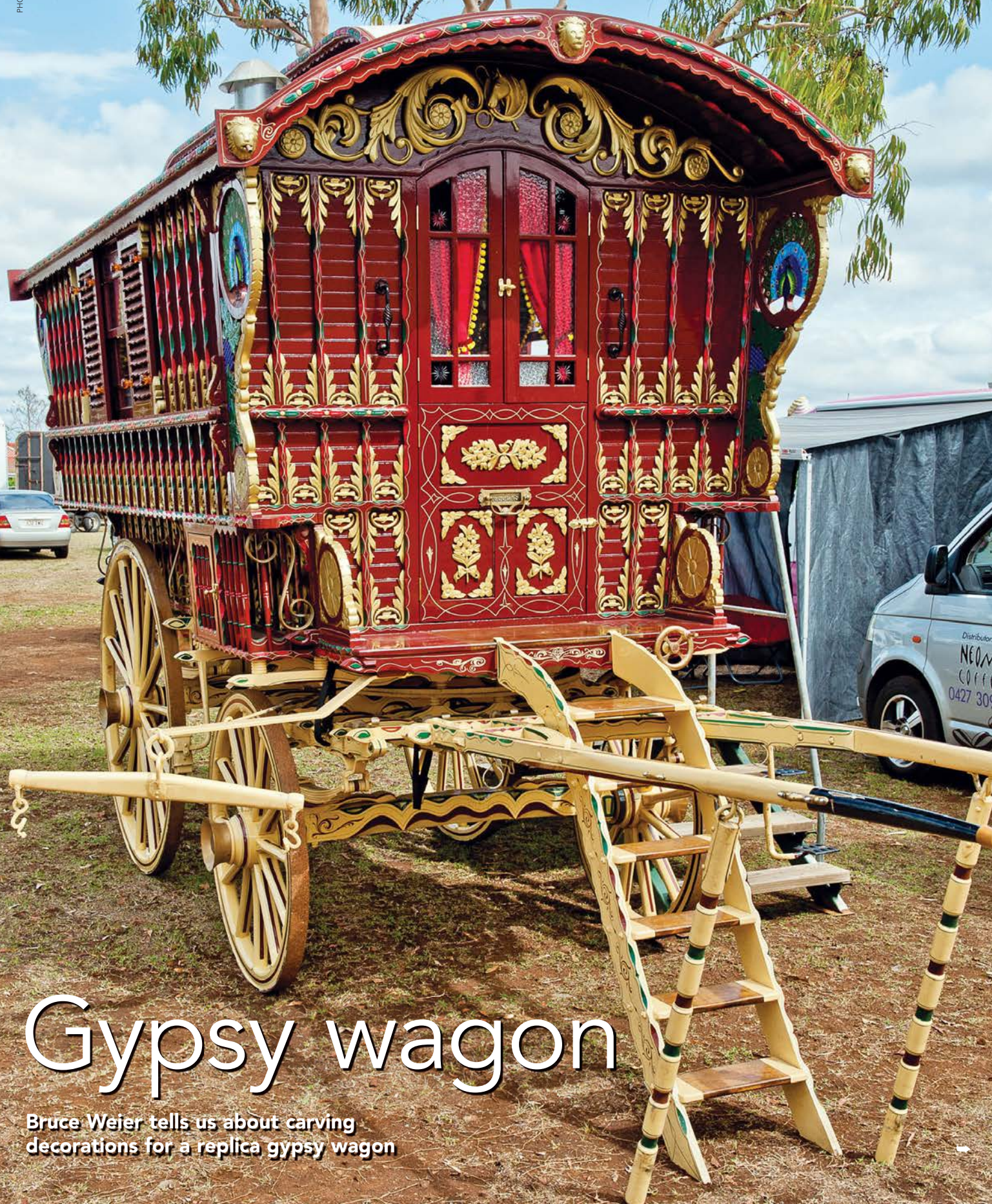
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Gypsy wagon

Bruce Weier tells us about carving decorations for a replica gypsy wagon

Out of the blue in July 2010, I had a phone call from an unknown fellow called Harry Howarth who had been told by the local tool shop owner that I 'was the bloke who would help him out' with his project. He asked if I could do some carvings for him on a gypsy wagon. I was not familiar with this type of wagon, but having recently completed carvings for a reconditioned 1860 German horse-drawn hearse, I assumed that this project would be similar and as straightforward. I replied that I would be glad to help him out. Little did I know what was coming my way! Harry arrived at my workshop later that day with the plans for a Dunton & Sons 1914 Ledge Wagon, which he wanted to be built, as it would have been in bygone times, without using any electrical tools! Needless to say I was stunned with the number of ornate carvings required with this commission for both inside and outside of the wagon.

Harry's dream was to enter his horse-drawn gypsy wagon in the many heavy horse agricultural shows that occur regularly around Australia. Marks are awarded by the judges for both

horse and wagon. He put the cart before the horse and enthusiastically asked me to go ahead with the project before he had even purchased a suitable Clydesdale horse to do the hard work. I am not altogether sure that he fully understood just how long it would take to build the wagon, complete the carvings, and have a sign writer work his artistry.

Starting the carvings

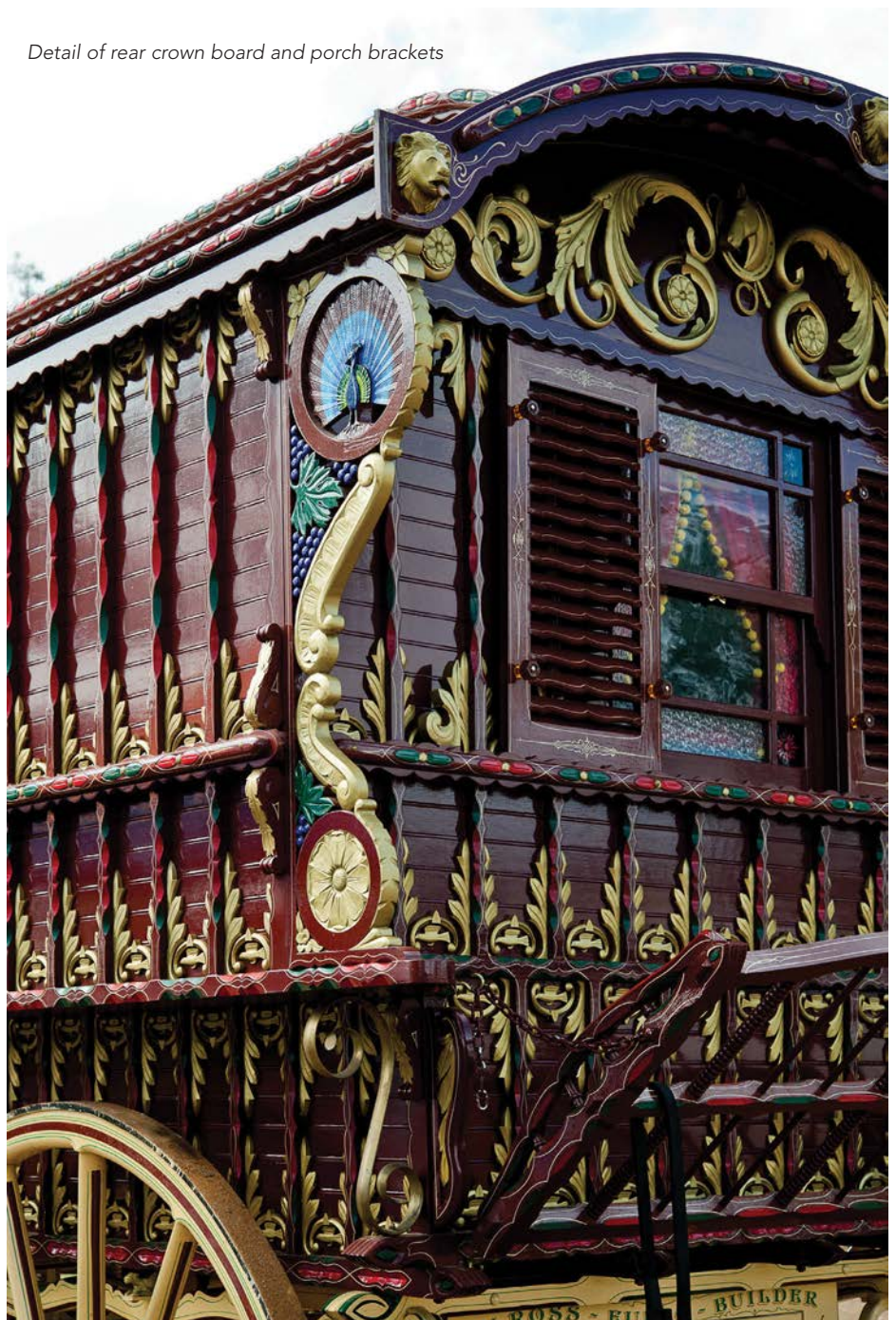
Bill Ross, an experienced Queensland wooden boat builder, travelled around the UK and liaised with the local gypsy wagon restorers. He found out all he could on Ledge wagons and returned, with much enthusiasm, to start work on the body of the wagon. Meanwhile I had studied the plans carefully and submitted many drawings of my ideas for the external carvings. Along with the traditional carvings of shutter stops, corbels, ivy leaves, grapes, acanthus leaves, horses, gargoyles and gryphons, Harry had requested that I incorporate as many birds as possible, as exotic birds are a passion of his. Thus the peacocks became the feature of the porch brackets.

External carvings

My task of carving and turning the embellishments for the wagon in Australian white beech (*Gmelina leichhardtii*), took the best part of four years, working intermittently with other commissions. I began my part of the project with the easier external carvings, comprising 1,008 birds, leaves and c-scrolls, which I was informed by my colleagues, were more monotonous to paint than to carve! These were then fixed to the painted body of the wagon. I was on a roll! I then carved the six gargoyles for the drainpipes and two gryphons for each end of the central bolster of the undercarriage. My confidence was growing! I then concentrated on the two, 2m wide by 450mm deep by 40mm thick, crown boards above the front door and rear window. These comprised of acanthus leaves and horses' heads. Next came the most challenging part of the commission: the four double-sided porch brackets, 500mm wide, 1.2m high and 40mm thick, decorated with peacocks, grapes, grape leaves and Tudor roses. This demanded much concentration and carving on my part.

The external carvings were finally completed in July 2012. My work was done for the moment. The task of assembling the various components of the wagon took several weeks. It was the artistry of the sign writers/pin strippers, Ian Stewart-Koster and his son Andrew, that brought colour to the project.

Detail of rear crown board and porch brackets



Interior carvings

Harry researched on the internet for the finalisation of the wagon and subsequently sent to America for the wheels and the cut glass mirrors for the interior. The handmade German glass windows were etched in Tasmania. At last the exterior of the wagon was completed.

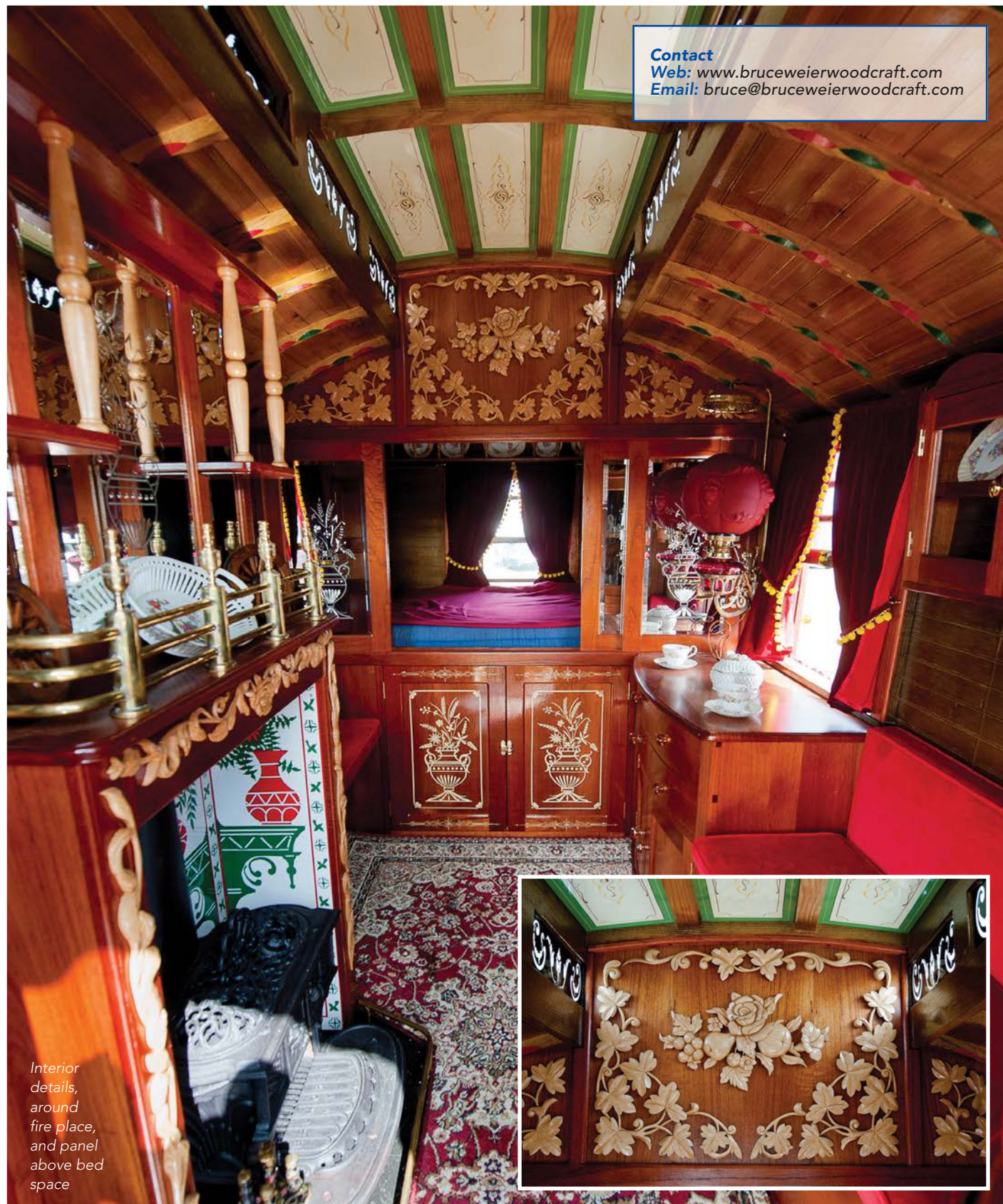
Early in 2014 Harry approached me to complete the internal carvings. The carvings around the fireplace were branches of leaves, which totalled about 2.5 metres in length, 50-100mm

wide and 12mm thick. There were two larger carvings one above the door and the other above the bed space, 2m wide by 450mm deep by 12mm thick. These comprised of ivy leaves, roses and fruit. I carved around 1,500 separate carvings in total. This challenging project was finally completed both inside and out in November 2014 and was ready for display at the upcoming summer agricultural heavy horse shows. Harry was a happy man! ▶

Contact

Web: www.bruceweierwoodcraft.com

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Interior details, around fire place, and panel above bed space

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In the workshop with...

Peter Walwin

The acclaimed woodsculptor, woodcarver and maker of fine furniture on Rodin, Einstein and how he doesn't always follow his own advice

PHOTOGRAPH BY PETER WALWIN/CLARE ROBERTSON. ALL OTHER IMAGES BY PETER WALWIN



Fetch, one of Peter's recent collaborative projects with artist and blacksmith MissFire

Gloucestershire-based Peter Walwin hails from what some might regard as a slightly unusual profession for carvers. He originally qualified as a chartered engineer. But after he left the field in 1984 his attention soon turned to woodworking. He is now a member of the British Woodcarvers Association as well as several art societies with whom he regularly exhibits. His pieces have won a number of awards and his expertise has often been requested on judging panels.

Peter has a long association with the Nature in Art Gallery and Museum in Twigworth, Gloucester, where he has run woodcarving courses and frequently been an Artist in Residence. The gallery also exhibits some of his work while other pieces have found their way into the hands of many famous people, among them the Duke of Westminster, the Sultan of Brunei and Viscount Linley.

His carving also graces some of the UK's most historic buildings, including Westminster Abbey in London.

A more recent development is his collaboration with artist/blacksmith Clare Robertson, creatively known as MissFire. The result has been innovative sculptures that combine metal and wood and have attracted great interest.

How, when and why did you start carving?

As a child I was always making things, model aircraft in particular, which involved carving propellers. I always had a penknife.

What and who are the greatest influences in your work?

The natural world, birds, seabirds in particular. I also find the work of [French sculptor] Rodin an inspiration and hold a fascination for the human hand.



Peter diligently carving King Alfred

If you were to offer one piece of advice to a fellow carver what would it be?

Try to think through the processes of carving your piece before cutting timber. In particular how you are going to hold it. I do not always do this!

What music do you listen to and which book are you reading?

I have no great interest in music, but enjoy Classic FM in the workshop. I enjoy biographies, but I am currently trying to get my head around [Albert] Einstein's *Relativity* without much success. I think I will soon go back to a biography.

What is your silliest mistake?

I was carving a complicated leaf pattern on a prestigious walnut (*Juglans nigra*) architrave and suddenly noticed I had omitted a leaf. A restoration job fortunately redeemed the situation.

What is your favourite type of carving?

Wildlife, particularly birds and trying to exploit the beauty of the timber.

And what would you say has been your greatest challenge?

Carving a replacement leg for a miniature antique deer in ivory. Interpreting the style of the piece and getting the colour to match.

What is the one piece of equipment or tool that you would not be without?

The bandsaw is the most useful piece of equipment in the workshop; it's frequently used.

If you could change one thing, what would it be?

I have sometimes thought that it would have been better to change career at an earlier age, but on reflection, perhaps not. I have been very fortunate.

Tell us about the piece you are working on...

I have three carvings on the go at the moment: an owl and mouse recently used as a demonstration piece; a pine martin which will be emerging from a natural hole; and a replacement handle

in pear (*Pyrus communis*) wood for a valuable silver teapot for a regular client.

Name one thing on your carving 'to do' list...

To carve an African figure from a large block of mahogany (*Khaya ivorensis*) that I was given years ago.

If you could have one piece of equipment, what would it be?

The bandsaw is already in, so perhaps the chainsaw that enables me to 'rescue' interesting logs and rough out carvings.

Given one wish, what would it be?

Reasonably good health to enable me to maintain the ability to be creative ▶

Contact

Website: www.peterwalwin.co.uk

HANDY HINTS

- Plenty of sketching
- Learn about the shape of your subject in 3D with Plasticine or clay
- Think how you are going to hold the piece
- Save off-cuts on which to test finishes before applying them to your carving

LIKES AND DISLIKES

Likes

- The feeling of producing a clean cut with a sharp tool
- Putting down the power tool and picking up gouge and mallet
- Exploring the beauty of timber other than lime (*Tilia vulgaris*)
- Applying oil to a finished piece and seeing the colour emerge
- The expression on a client's face when they see their commissioned piece for the first time – that is when I have got it right!

Dislikes

- Carving ebony (*Diospyros* spp.), hard, brittle and black dust everywhere
- Carving a large number of items the same if each one is fairly complex
- Noise and dust from machinery
- The intermediate stage of a carving when it has become recognisable but you realise how much work there is still to do
- The client who wants something similar to an existing attractive design but wants the proportions changed. Never satisfactory!



Ferret emerging from a tree stump



A client's late pet, Bonnie, being immortalised in cherry (*Prunus avium*)



Peter's 9ft Barn Owl was initially sited at Center Parcs' Longleat village



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Carving a red grouse

Mike Wood takes flight with a red grouse in lime

The red grouse (*Lagopus lagopus*) is a mid-sized bird typically found in heather moorland and uplands in the north and west of the UK and across Ireland, although its population is in decline. The adult red grouse is particularly distinctive with wings that make a whirring sound when taking off in flight. The grouse has reddish-brown feathers over its body, highly visible red combs above the eyes (although on females the red is not so bright) and white legs. Its diet consists of heather flowers, seeds, shoots, cereal and berries.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mike Wood has been carving all his life and professionally since 1986.

Carving mostly birds, he is self-taught and takes great inspiration from the American bird carvers. To see more of Mike's work, visit: www.mikewoodbird.co.uk



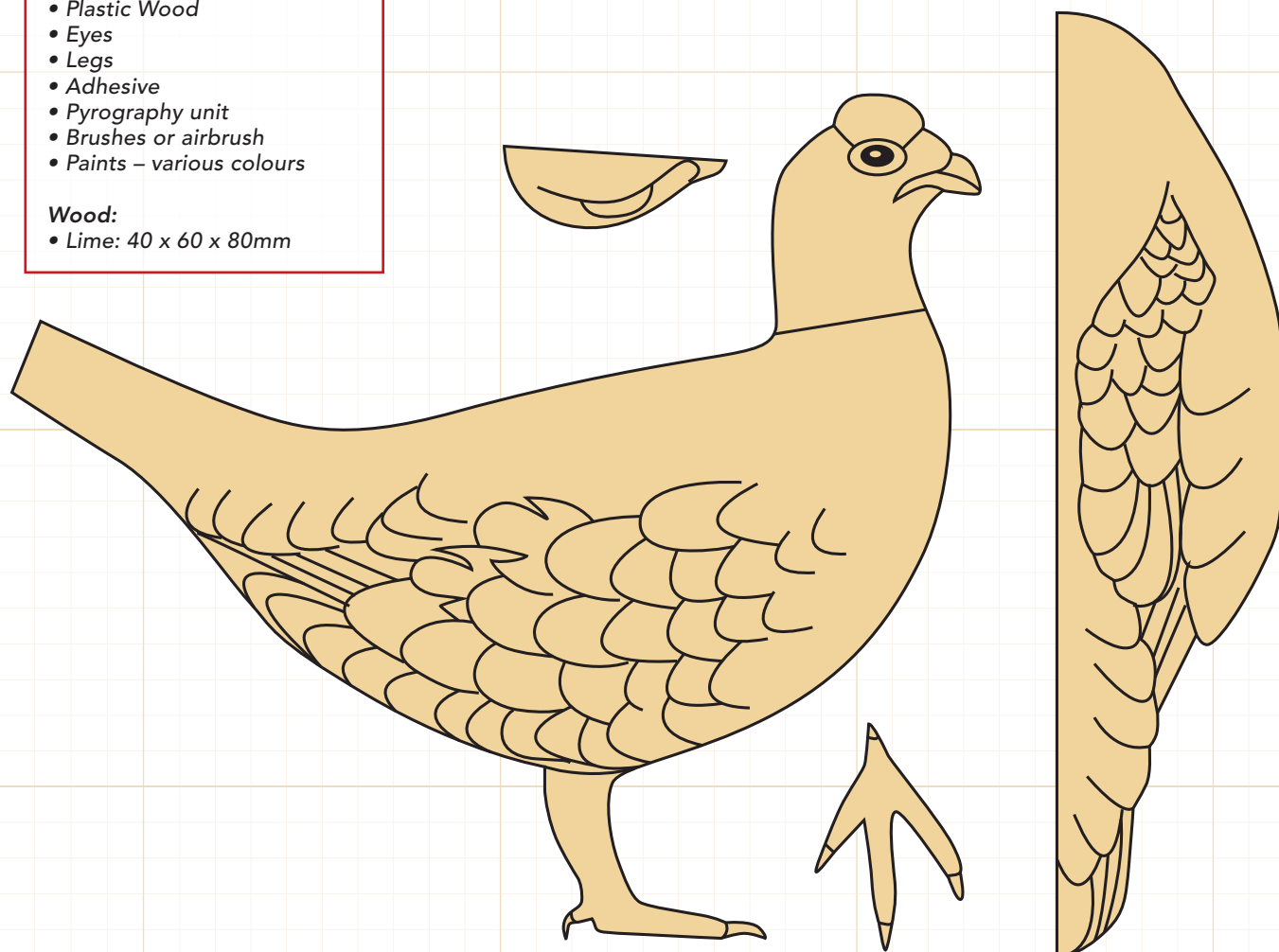
Things you will need...

Tools:

- Rotary power carver
- Rotary burrs – a flame, a straight cutter and a diamond ball-ended cutter or similar
- Rotary drum/bobbin sander
- Plastic Wood
- Eyes
- Legs
- Adhesive
- Pyrography unit
- Brushes or airbrush
- Paints – various colours

Wood:

- Lime: 40 x 60 x 80mm



1 Create a cutout of the pattern, select your piece of wood – I used lime (*Tilia vulgaris*) – and use two parts, one for the head and one for the body. Cut them roughly to shape with a bandsaw, large-frame or coping saw or similar. It does not matter which method you use to cut the blank, but trimming it now to get closer to the size you will use is a big time saver. It is much easier to saw it at this point than carve it off later

2 Starting with the head, use a rotary carving unit with a tapered burr or hand carving tools and rasps to achieve a rough shape





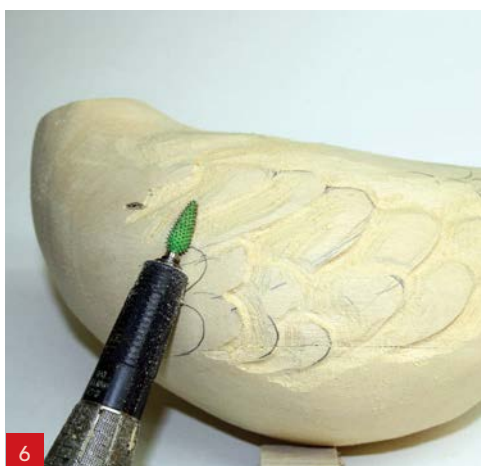
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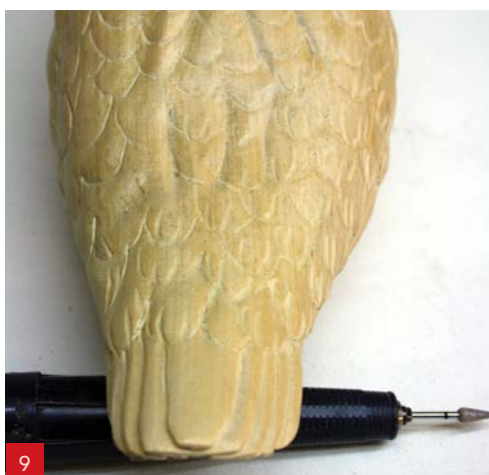
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8



9



10

3 Next use a sanding bobbin in a rotary unit to sand the head smooth. If you do not have one of these, use a fine rasp or similar followed by fine grades of hand abrasives. Once smooth, draw in the grouse's eye and head detail

4 Now fit a parallel burr in your rotary carving unit and cut in the eye holes. You can use a gouge or even a drill with the right-sized bit, followed by abrasives, to do the same job. Also start to create the texture on the cheeks and the combs above the eyes. You can use hand carving tools and any suitable files and knives for this stage. The route to creating these details is not important unless time is an issue. For many, it is not that hand carving the piece isn't viable just that it is slower

5 Refine the head detail with a small diamond ball in a rotary carving handpiece. Riffilers or 'V'- and 'U'-shaped gouges of various sizes work well, too. Now use Plastic Wood or a similar compound to fit the eyes, which I bought pre-made. You can purchase them from specialist suppliers and they come in all shapes, sizes and colours to suit various projects. Once the eyes are embedded in the Plastic Wood, remove and squeeze out any excess before blending and refining the shape around the eyes

6 The next stage is to refine the main body. You can use an angle grinder with a toothed wheel/disc files and carving tools, but aggressive abrasives will also work. After the initial shaping, which should include all the main undulations of the body form and the large shapes of the wings, draw in the wing feather positions. With a taper or flame cutter burr in a rotary carving tool, rough carve the side feathers

7 Use a sanding bobbin to get the body smooth before drawing in the feather detail

8 Use a high-speed unit and a bull-nosed stone (ceramic or diamond) to soften the edge of the feathers

9 With a ruby point or similar, carve in all back feathers and tail

10 For the final stages, use a small white stone to soften all underfeathers. Remember other types of cutters and tools can be used to create the same effect

➔ **11** Fit the head in place using glue. Make sure that the meeting faces are flat and smooth so you can get a good bond. Once secure, blend the head feathers into the body feathers

12 The base is a piece of pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) first shaped like a rock and then scorched. Next, wire-brush to create an undulated surface. The feet are cast. I do this myself but feet can also be bought to suit the bird being created. Once cast they are positioned but not affixed to the base. Drill a small 3mm hole through the feet and place a length of 3mm copper rod through the foot into the base and on this rod, drill and fix some shaped lime to create the legs

13 Glue the legs to the foot and leave to dry. Then, cover the cast feet in Epoxy Sculpt – white in this case – and texture to look like fine feathers. This should all done with the feet off the stone base

14 Begin to apply the bird's very fine detail. Using a pyrography unit fitted with a scalpel-edge tip and a fine wire tip as required, define the shape of the feathers and burn in all of the shafts on the back of your grouse

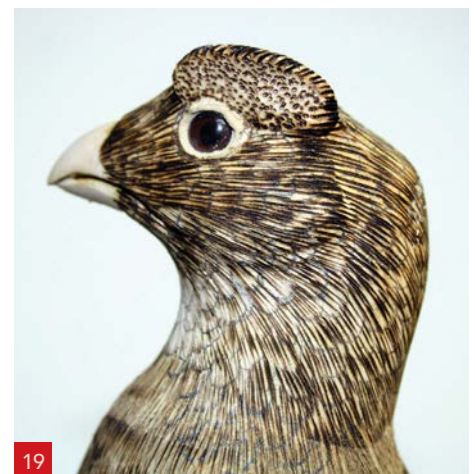
15 Now deal with the side feathers...

16... and then burn in undertail and belly detail

17 Once the body detail is completely burnt in...

18 ... draw in all head feathers

19 If all has gone well, you should have a finished head with all the feathers marked and ready for painting





20



21

20 Your carved bird ready to be painted

21 A close-up of the finished painting on the feet. Note the addition of a small stine-like effect top layer on the rock. Such detail is up to you, but if you intend to try to create something realistic, it's worth going the extra mile to create these details



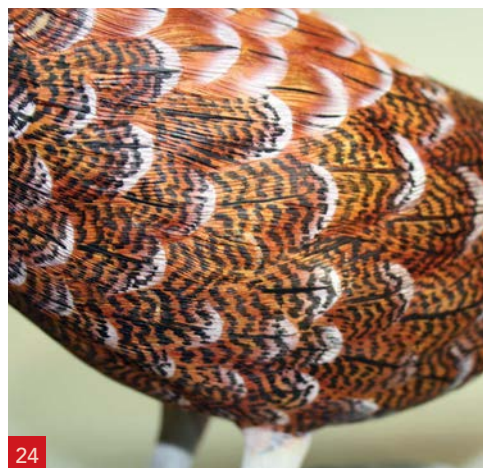
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22 Undercoat the bird using white gesso and a small amount of yellow ochre to make a pale cream. Coat the whole bird. Once done, mix burnt sienna mixed with a small amount of red violet paint in the edges of the main feathers. I use an airbrush for this but a brush can be used, too

23 Using the same colour blend give the bird several washes to achieve your desired effect. The initial feather detail will still show through the colour washes and be darker than the areas that were not highlighted. You'll need to use burnt sienna to create the mottling detail on the neck and feathers. Next, using an airbrush and template, edge all feathers with white. Then paint all shafts in dark brown with a fine rigger



23



24

24 Now you need to start painting the vermiculation

25 Paint the edges of the primaries pale grey

26 The breast vermiculated is a mixture of black and burnt umber. I have created light 'barring' with the colour I used as the undercoat. As always, check your reference material. It is the fine detail that can make or break a project visually, so it's worth spending the time to get it right

27 Your finished red grouse



25



26



27

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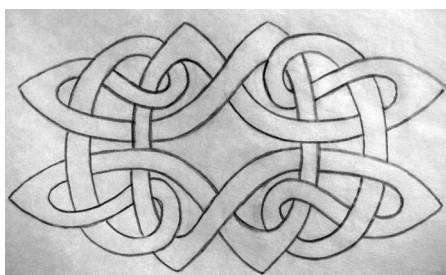


Celtic conundrum

In the concluding part of his Celtic knot series, David Western ties up the carving process

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dave Western is a professional lovespoon carver and the author of two books on the subject. He carves to commission and also teaches carving classes. His books, *The Fine Art of Carving Lovespoons* and *History of Lovespoons*, are both available through GMC Publications. You can find out more about Dave and his woodcarving by visiting his website: www.davidwesternlovespoons.com



The completed four-knot design achieved at the end of my opening Celtic knot article



Gluing a photocopy to your workpiece is the easiest way to get started on your carving

In the opening instalment of my article (see *Woodcarving 148*), I explored the knots, lines and designs involved in carving a Celtic knot. Here, I expand on the carving process in more detail, showing how doming, hollowing and curving knotwork can be fun and also provide the basis for stunning ornaments, brooches and jewellery.

All being well, you should by now have drawn a design you are happy with (or used the four-knot arrangement that I used in my step-by-step guide). You'll find that a photocopy of your design,

fastened to your workpiece with glue stick, is the quickest and easiest method to prepare your piece for carving. The photocopy ensures the image stays clear in your mind, keeps your unders and overs in order and stops your piece becoming dirtied by carbon or graphite stains. If you lack access to a copier, you can trace your design onto the wood with carbon paper or you can draw it directly onto the surface.

I recommend beginning with fairly thin material until you gain some experience and confidence, especially if you plan to fret out your knot. Doming, hollowing and curving knotwork is lots of fun and results in really dramatic pieces, but is not without its challenges. For a beginner, I would suggest material in the 6-9mm thickness range for a first carving.



Carry out all drilling, sawing or background shaping before you start to shape the intersecting lines

Beginners might also find a softer, more homogenous wood, like lime (*Tilia vulgaris*) a great starting point. Avoid anything figured or excessively hard, like maples (*Acer spp.*) and cherry (*Prunus avium*), until you have gained more experience. Even though figure can impart tremendous vibrancy, it is difficult to cut cleanly and can be very frustrating.

If the knot is to be fretted, I drill all my holes and make all my saw-cuts before I begin any carving. If the background surface is to be lowered or shaped in any way, I do it before beginning any of the knotwork.

I've learned through bitter experience that it is best to make my initial 'over and under' cuts as shallow as possible

(generally in the neighbourhood of approximately 1-2mm) to ensure that my drafting was correct and that nothing untoward eluded me on the drawing. When I am satisfied that all the intersections are accurate, I begin cutting to a more finished depth of approximately 3-4mm.

When I'm then happy that the intersections are all uniformly carved, I begin tidying up the line work. If the lines are more ribbon-like, I will often dome them a little bit to give them more life. If they are square or organic, I will often ease the edges very slightly to gently soften the line's appearance.

With fretted knotwork, it generally looks best to carve both sides of the piece. Remember that the intersections

on the back are the exact opposite of those on the front. As with the front, begin with very shallow initial cuts, as it is very easy to become disoriented and lose the over/under rhythm.

With the carving completed, it only remains to give the knot a bit of sanding and filing to smooth any rough spots and to clean up the fretwork.

I don't generally get too carried away with finishes on the knotwork and tend to limit it to a couple of coats of Danish oil or a thinned linseed or tung oil preparation.

Avoid surface finishes such as varnishes or plastic treatments because they tend to build up in the intersections and give the finished piece a murky or gooey appearance.



Shallow initial cuts give you a second chance if things go wrong or if you have miscalculated with your drafting



Be careful not to lever the chisel at the intersections because you run the risk of snapping off the crossing section



Easing the edges with a slight chamfer cut gives the knotwork a softer, more 'touchable' look



The knot becomes more defined when both sides have been carved



Even though the knot is essentially complete, some fine finishing will help to smooth out the surfaces and edges



A light coating of penetrating oil is perfect for Celtic knotwork. Avoid any treatments that might build up in the intersections

WHAT COULD POSSIBLY GO WRONG?

Unfortunately, carving Celtic knotwork is not without risk. There are a number of things that can, and frequently do, go wrong.

The most common problem is an error with the overs and unders. Despite your best efforts, it may happen that your drawing or your carving gets a little bit out of order and you are left with an unwanted repetition. If you are careful about making your first pass over the design a shallow one, it is generally fairly easy to level out the bad cuts and begin again. However, if the cuts have been made too deep, it may be necessary to re-level a larger area of the design to hide the problem. When this happens, it is a good idea to fair the levelling over several intersections so that a noticeable 'hole' isn't left after the repair.

Generally, knotwork that is carved on a background is unlikely to get snapped,

however it is possible that a chisel slip can knock a chunk off the knotwork and require repair. If possible, recover the chip and re-glue it to the break. Should the chip be lost, try to match it with a piece of similar wood.

A good tip is to try to retain as many of your off-cuts as possible, especially when fretting. They can come in incredibly handy when trying to repair a break or chip, especially when you require something very close in grain pattern or colouration.

The worst problem that you can encounter is a break. Most often, it is the act of putting too much pressure on delicate areas during the carving process that causes this to occur. Some breaks are fairly easy to repair simply by gently applying some glue and pulling together the two parts with masking tape or with some judiciously applied wedges.

Be careful not to generate too much force when you clamp, however, as you don't want to snap off adjoining areas.



Mark the offending intersection clearly before you begin cutting



Take off as little material as possible to get the intersection level again. You may need to do this over a larger area to disguise the issue



Restore the over/under order by re-cutting the intersection. Be very careful to avoid overcutting the material



Chisel slips can knock chunks out of your line-work. Try to retain the chip if possible or hunt through your off-cuts for a similar match



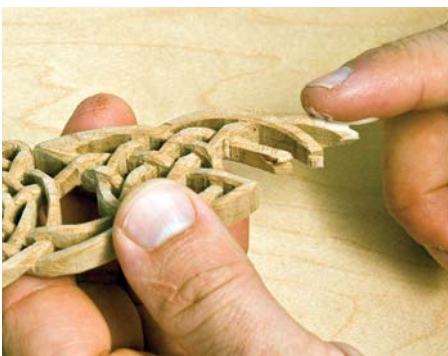
Apply glue to the chipped area and to any nearby damage and carefully replace the severed or replacement piece



Fasten glued piece with some masking tape, a clothes-peg type clamp or, as here, with a small wedge of wood and leave to set



Breaks can look bad, however if all the pieces are available and fit back together tightly, a repair can usually be undertaken



Dry fit the pieces together to make sure everything fits then apply glue to all the areas that need to come in contact with each other



With your breaks all glued, hold the pieces together using restrained hand pressure and ensure everything fits properly



If clamps are required, be careful they don't distort the joint or generate so much force that they break another area

➔ Even if a piece seems to be broken irreparably, it may be possible to glue in a replacement section. This is a bit tricky because broken ends have to be squared as much as possible to achieve tight joints before glue

is applied. It might not be possible to make a perfect repair, especially if there has been splintering, but it is certainly better to try to fix a piece than to have to abandon a carving on which you've worked for hours.



The broken section is cut away and an oversized replacement is glued in place



Shape the replacement to match the original flow of the knotwork

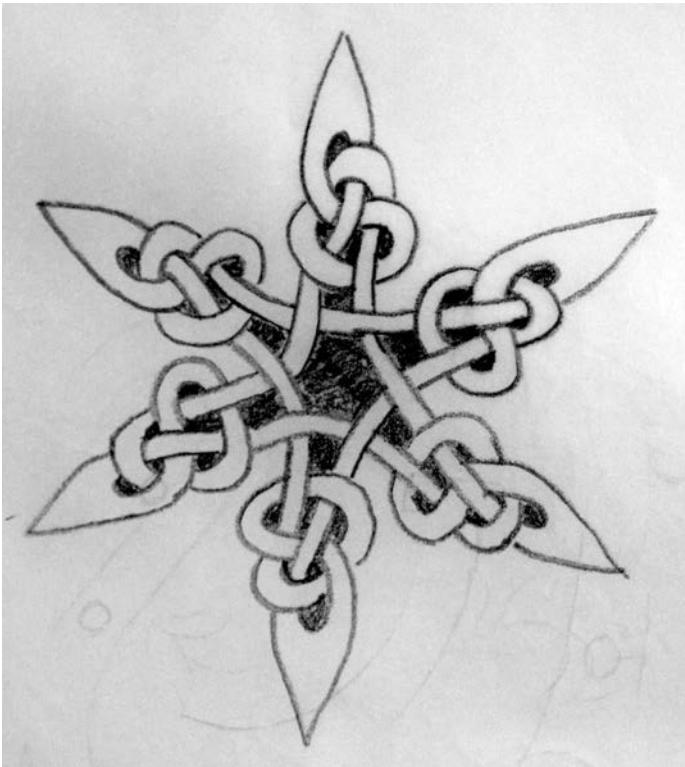


Sand out the area, apply your finish and then cross your fingers

WHAT TO DO NEXT?

One of the real pleasures of Celtic knotwork for woodcarvers is that it has so many decorative applications. From items of jewellery, such as earrings or brooches, to ornamentation on functional items like cutting boards or clocks to freestanding sculpture, there is no limit to what can be done with this remarkably versatile art form. The possibilities are endless.

You could start your knotwork techniques practice with the nice little Celtic star pattern below. It would look lovely hanging from a mantelpiece, worn as a brooch or, you could be super organised and save any that you carve now for 2016's Christmas tree! Sorry, too soon to mention..?

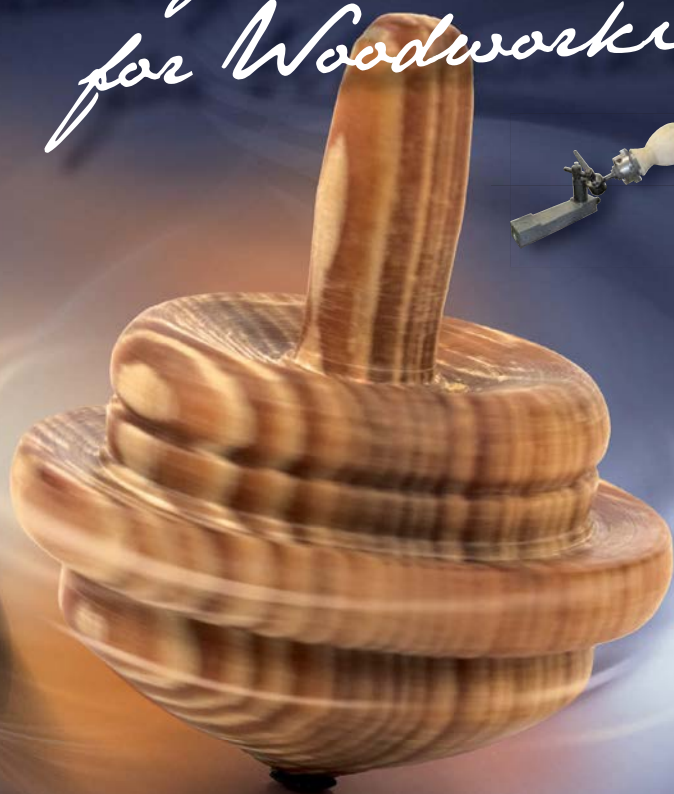


Inspiration

For additional inspiration, here are two carvings in the Celtic style which illustrate both simple and more complex knotwork. ▶



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Old carving tools – good or bad buy?

Peter Benson looks at whether cleaning up old tools is really worth it...

First of all, in my opinion, it is never a good idea to buy sets of carving tools, unless you are sure that you will use all the tools in the set. Often, when anyone suggests that he or she wishes to try woodcarving, some well-meaning relative or friend goes out and buys a set of tools. Unfortunately, many such sets contain only one or two tools that will be used frequently and several more that may never even get taken out of the box. If a new carver doesn't belong to a class or group where they might get the chance to try various tools before buying any, purchasing new tools can be a bit of a lottery. The alternative is to look in tool sales or boot fairs for secondhand tools, which can often be purchased at a fraction of the cost of new tools. With a little perseverance and patience it is possible to get hold of almost any

design of tool that you might want.

If there is a local class or club it is very likely that secondhand tools will appear quite frequently. Over the last few years I would think I have been asked to find owners for around a dozen selections of tools whose previous owners have either passed away or given up carving for one reason or another. The majority of these have been in perfectly acceptable condition and have been bought by carvers for less than half the new price. This brings up the question of "How do I know if these tools are any good and what needs to be done to make them suitable, if anything?"

The last batch of tools that came my way were from a time I was asked to clear the workshop of a prominent sculptor, artist and woodcarver whose health and age prevented him from continuing. In all

there were around 150 carving tools that looked as though they hadn't been used for around 20 years. They were covered in rust and mould, looking very sad. I must admit that I wasn't too optimistic about getting some of them into any sort of decent condition.

The first thing I looked for was how far the rust had developed down the inside of the bevel, so each one was cleaned off with a wire brush and emery cloth on the inside to establish the extent of any pitting. If this is extensive it may not be possible to get a sharp edge, especially if the tool is thin. If you see this pitting on a tool offered for sale, only think about buying it if there is a reasonable thickness to the blade as you may need to put a small bevel on the inside in order to get down to solid metal. More about this later.

First attempt

This gouge was very rusty, but well worth working with. Initial cleaning was done with emery cloth and after this each side was polished on a buffing wheel with good results. These results are shown in the second picture. There is no guarantee that this will always turn out well and if looking to buy similar tools, you might like to carry a small piece of emery cloth to test the inside flute of the gouge.

However, not all tools worked out as well as this one and the next two pictures show a less successful clean up attempt. No matter how much this tool was cleaned there was a bad area of pitting a little way down from the edge. In this case, there is enough good metal between the cutting edge and the pitting to give a few years of carving before anything else needs to be done. I would buy a tool like this and worry about further treatment when it proved necessary.



Initial cleaning with emery cloth



The back with the rust removed and the bevel formed



The flute suffers from localised deep rust patches



Even after cleaning and polishing pitting was evident

The next tool

The next tool is a different matter as the pitting is close to the cutting edge and, no matter how much sharpening is done, a clean cutting edge could not be attained. However, there is enough steel on this one to make the grinding of an inside bevel worthwhile, bringing the new cutting edge into sound metal. Sometimes no matter how far through you grind the second bevel you still have pitting. In this case the tool may not be any good.

How, then do you cut this inner bevel? The best, but slowest method is to use a suitable shaped slipstone and cut the bevel by hand. It is important that it is

cut flat in order that a sharp cutting edge is maintained. Any rounding or 'backing off' will reduce the efficiency of the tool.

The other problem that can arise when buying second hand tools is whether there is any life left in the tool. Many available tools are spoon gouges and chisels in various states. Many of these have lost a large part of the cutting area and are only of use if you wish to use the metal to make specialist tools. Only buy tools like this if there is obviously a good deal of life left.

When looking for second hand tools take no notice of what the salesman tells you about the quality, examine the tool and make up your own mind. Many are

grossly overpriced and should thus be avoided. A good new tool should cost you around £20 nowadays and I would not recommend that you pay more than half that for a second hand tool if it was cleaned, polished and sharpened. You can halve that again if it is rusty.

My advice, then, is to join a club or group and be guided by the experienced carvers and keep an eye open for any tools offered for sale. Alternatively look in markets and boot fairs but be selective and only buy something that you actually want and will give you a good period of use. You might have fun haggling over the price. ▶



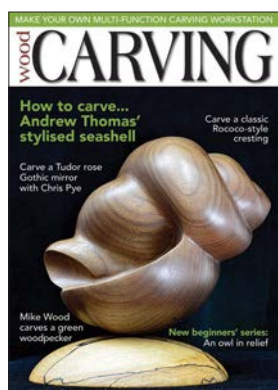
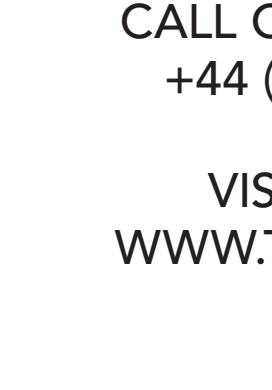
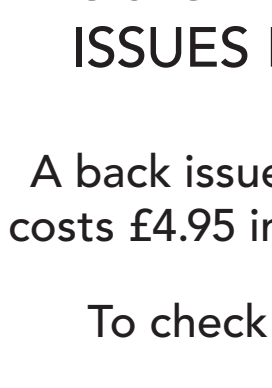
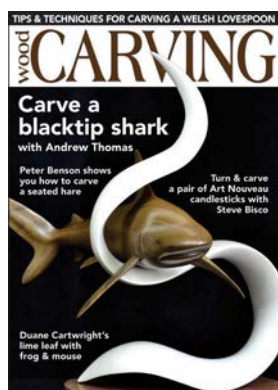
Deep rusted areas are evident



Cleaned up but still pitted



When cleaned and polished this will last years



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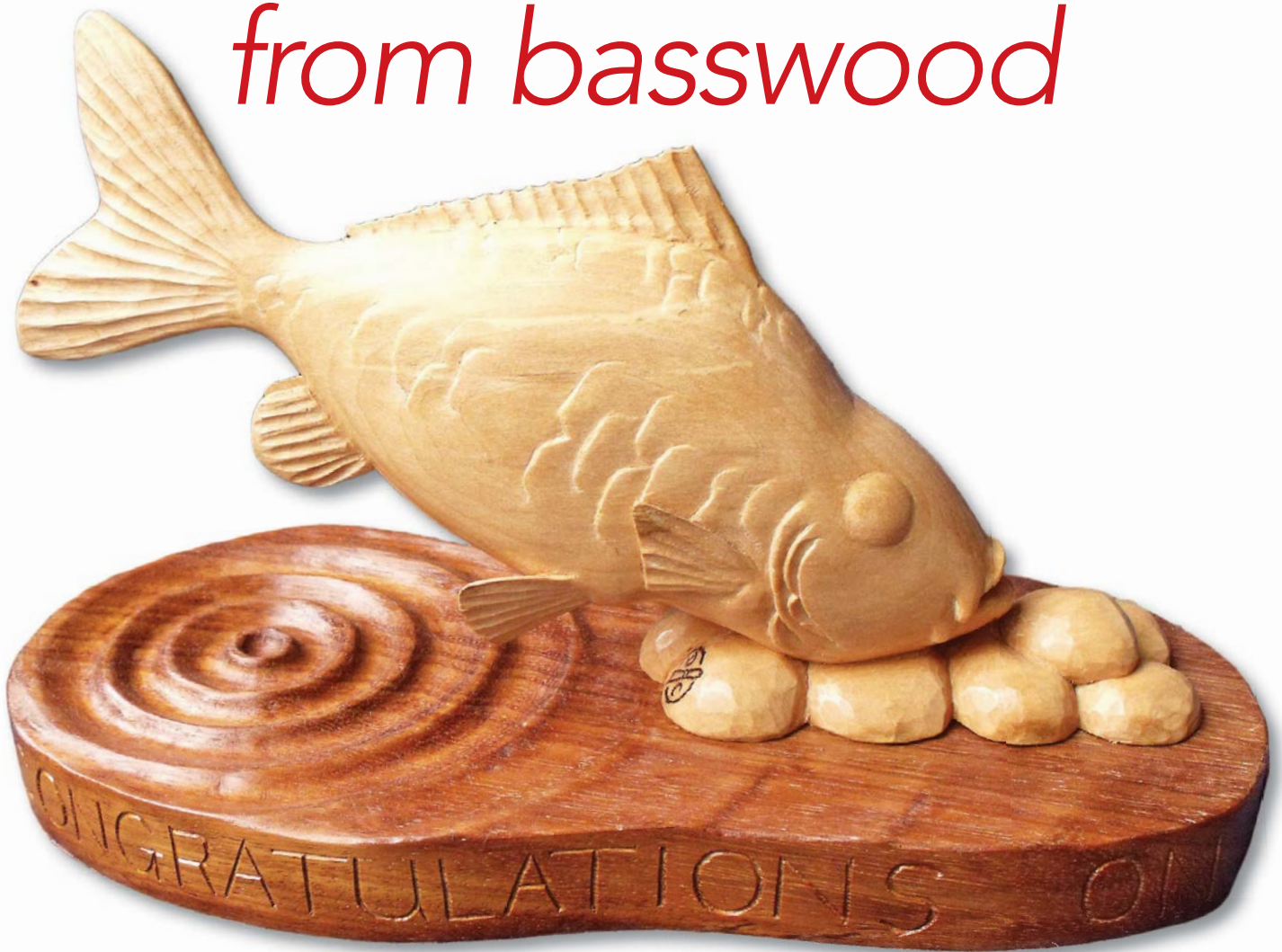


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Mirror carp from basswood



Duane Cartwright drew on a personal triumph for his carp and pebbles on a mahogany stand

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Duane Cartwright is a self-taught woodcarver based in Hartland, North Devon. He has been carving on and off for about 15 years. His interest in carving began while undertaking an apprenticeship in antique furniture restoration. His work can be found in the UK and as far away as Australia. To see more of Duane's work, visit www.duanescarving.blogspot.co.uk



Things you will need...

- No.3, 8mm
- No.3, 20mm
- No.6, 8mm
- No.7, 12mm
- No.7, 20mm
- No.8, 16mm
- No.9, 5mm
- No.9, 8mm
- No.9, 14mm
- No.11, 2mm
- No.11, 3mm
- No.11 spoon, 2mm
- Hooked skew
- Dividing callipers
- Small carbide burr
- Laser level

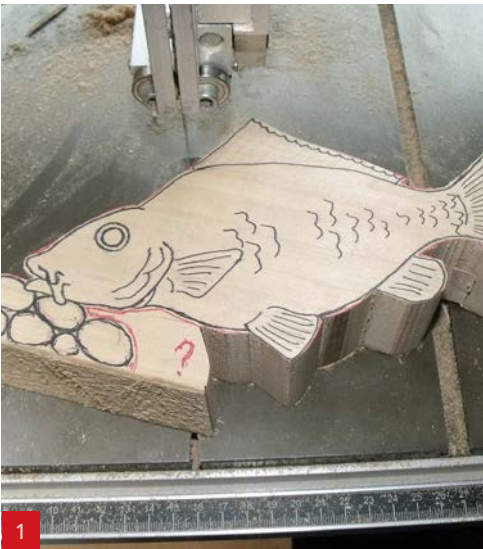
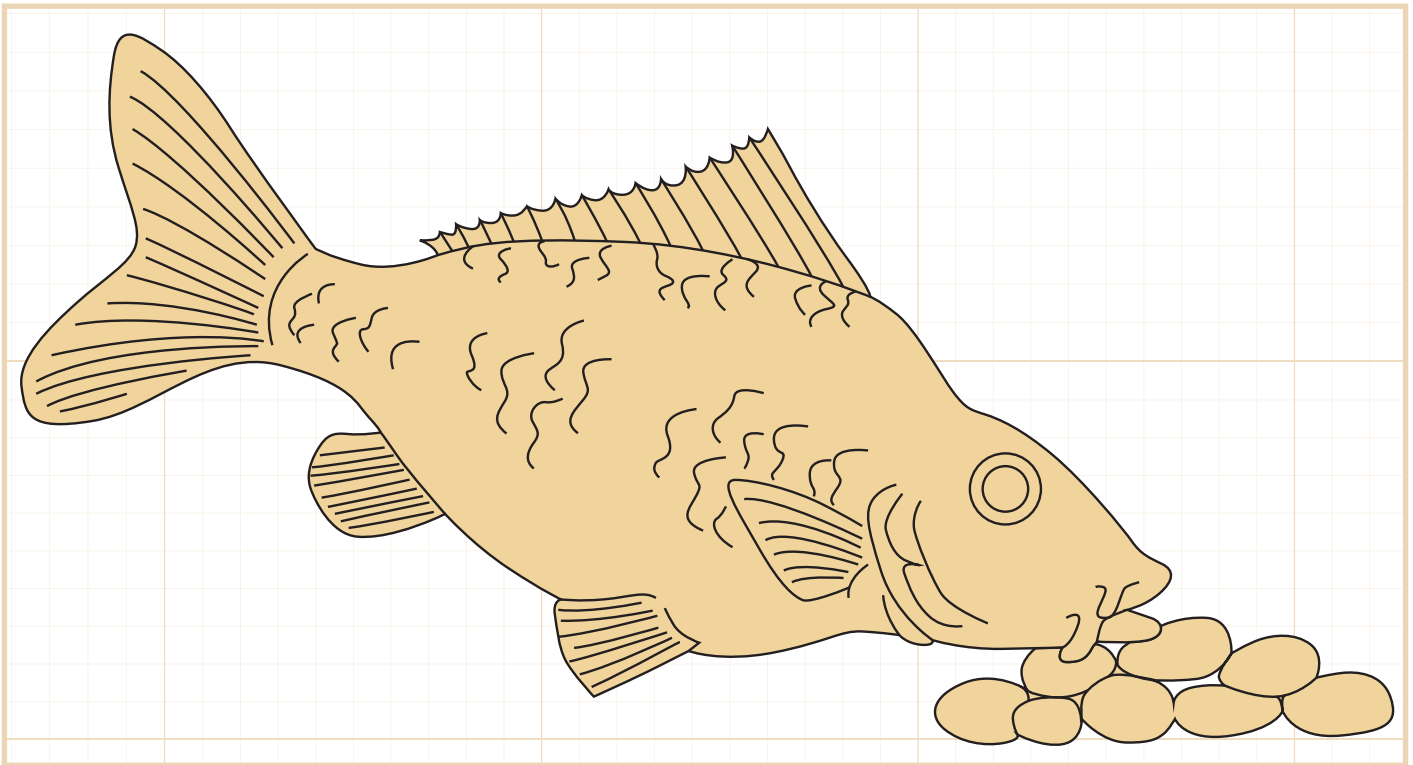
Wood:

- Carp – basswood (*Tilia americana*)
280 x 150 x 50mm
- Base – mahogany (*Khaya ivorensis*)
300 x 140 x 30mm

When I was asked to carve a carp in the round, my first task was to decide which species or strain to highlight. There are many different carp around the world, ranging from the humble goldfish to the big mirror carp found in British waters. I opted to carve the latter as it's an easy carp for most people to identify, plus it's the biggest fish that I ever caught!

Decision made, the first thing to do is to gather your reference material and photos. When it comes to the layout of the scales of the mirror carp make sure to use the pattern from only one fish's photo because every mirror carp will have a different pattern layout of scales.

Once you have your reference material together you can either use the pattern provided here, or, if you choose, adapt it and make your own.



1 Select a suitable piece of wood with the grain running along the length of the fish, print the design at the required size and glue in place. Then cut away the waste wood. I decided to leave an extra piece of wood under the pebbles to add stability and enable the carving to stand freely. If you are intending to add a base to your carving, this extra piece of wood is not important. If you want the pebbles to be the base, however, then you will find that an extra bit of wood will help the carving to stand more easily

attaching a fixing block to the underside of the pebbles make sure the block of wood doesn't overlap the back of the pebbles, as you will need to gain access to the underside of the fish. Next, draw a centreline all around the edge of the carving and then mark a 5mm line on both sides of the centreline on the dorsal fin and tail to add movement to the fish and to make the tail curl



2 Use the glue and paper method to attach a scrap block of wood to the underside of the pebble area. Once dry, attach to your carving vice. Alternatively, use a larger scrap of wood, then use G-clamps or similar to secure the carving to a table top. When

3 Now using some dividing callipers and the printed design, copy the important parts onto the opposite side, including the placement of the fins and gills. If you don't own dividing callipers then make some cardboard templates from the pattern to help when transferring the important features. Now using a No.9, 5mm or similar and sketch/carve around the fins to separating them from the body. Using a deep gouge to sketch out the fins will make it much easier to adjust and change them later if required



4 Next use a medium sweep gouge to start shaping the body. The top of the fish is slender and the belly is plump and rounded. Use reference material to check on the shape of a carp; it's worth remembering that the male fish tend to have a slender, more torpedo shape whereas the females generally have a fuller, more rounded belly

5 As you're shaping the top of the body redraw a line where the dorsal fin attaches to the body, making sure both sides are the same; measuring from the top of the dorsal fin down to the body will help. Then with a deep gouge carve along the line defining the the body from the dorsal fin. Keep the dorsal fin about 10mm thick

6 When shaping the underside of the fish, draw the rough placement of the anal fins. They splay out from the centreline whereas the other fins are more from the sides. Check reference material for the species of carp you're carving as different species' fins can vary

7 Before carving the tail, to about a 10mm thickness, draw on the amount of curvature you want to add. Note: too much can make the tail look bent and weaken it

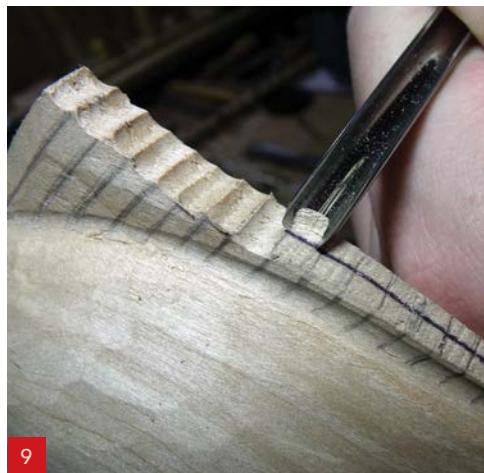
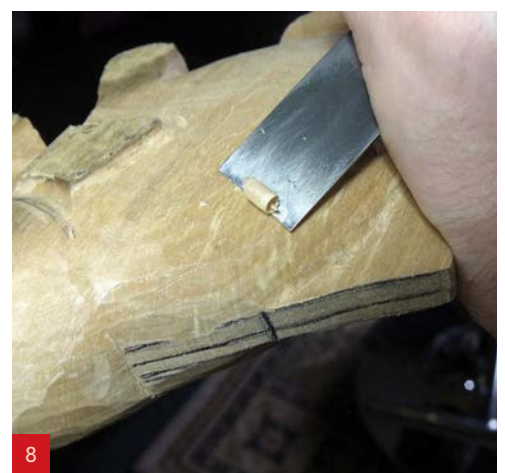
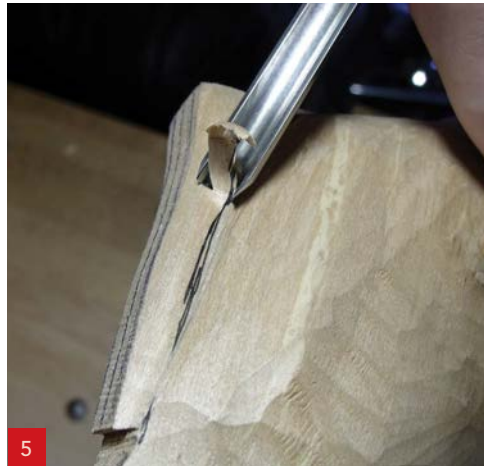
8 Use a shallow gouge to round over the head and body, refining the overall shape ready for redrawing the detail and features

9 Start by drawing the rays of the dorsal fin; there should be between 15 and 23 rays for a carp. Now, using a deep gouge with a slicing cut carve across the dorsal fin creating the ridges on the fin. With the ridges carved the dorsal fin can now be made thinner by carving down both sides equally. At the same time continue shaping the top of the body and head

10 As the body takes shape start to angle the fins. The pectoral and ventral fins slope inwards towards the body, while the anal fins splay out from the centreline underneath

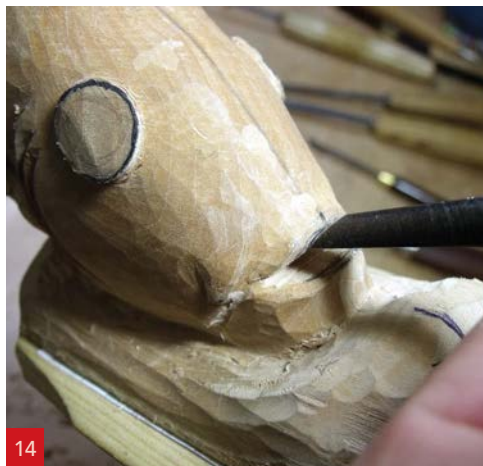
11 With the fins in place and the body shaped, you can start to remove the waste wood between the ventral fins. Use a hand saw to cut down between the anal fins. Then use a hooked skew to clean up and carve in between the anal fins, keeping the fins thick for now will prevent breakages and allow for adjustments later if required

12 Now draw the eyes in place. Use the pattern and reference as a guide and draw lines from one eye over to the other. Double-check the placement of the eyes before making any cuts. If they're out, it will make the whole carving look wrong. Use the best-fitting sweep to create a circle around the eyes, then cut in and take down the area around the eyes, so they protrude by a few millimetres





13



14



15



16



17



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19



20

13 Now redraw the gills, barbels and the shape of the pectoral fins and how they attach to the body. Then, using a No.11, 3mm or similar, carve around the barbels and refine the pectoral fins. While carving in the barbels use a deep gouge and carve a groove over the top lip from one side of the barbels over to the other side, refining the shape of the head. Rough shape the bottom jaw; don't undercut the lower jaw yet

14 With a medium sweep, gouge carve the mouth's inside top lip. Use a fish tail gouge to cut in the corners of the mouth up to the barbels. Only hollow the mouth as deep as your gouges can make clean cuts. A spoon gouge can help clean up inside of the mouth

15 Use a 'V'-tool or similar to sketch in the gills. Cut in and refine them with a fish tail chisel

16 Now, use a shallow gouge reversed to round over the eyeballs. Beware of the wood grain direction as it's very easy for a part to chip off and you can end up with an oval shape

17 Using your reference material draw the placement of the scales onto the carving. Try to make the layout and size of the scales the same on both sides of the fish. Once you're happy with them, use a veiner to sketch them in. Then, use a shallow gouge to take down the area around the scales. Try to keep the scales an equal depth

18 Now you can start to thin the pectoral/anal fins and tail. Taper the edges so they appear thinner, but not so thin that they break or become weak. Also remember to allow for some grooves to be carved in on the outside edge

19 Next draw some lines on the fins and tail; the ray lines need to match the grooves already created on the dorsal fin. Use a deep gouge that best fits the width between the lines you've just drawn and with a slicing cut create the rays. When carving the tail's rays make sure they line up on both sides and support the tail while carving the grooves

20 With the ray grooves carved, you can undercut the pectoral fins, which will create a bit of shadow (making the fins appear thinner and more lifelike). You may need to touch up any scales that go under the pectoral fins

➔ **21** Once you are happy that all your carving on the fish is complete you can move on to creating the pebbles. Start by drawing/mark them out. Then use a deep gouge to sketch in the pebbles. Now use a shallow gouge reversed to round over and shape them. Use a knife or hooked skew to carve in and clean up in between the pebbles and undercut the bottom jaw of the fish at the same time

22 If the carving stands freely on the pebbles you can finish your project here. Alternatively, you can begin to make your preferred base on which the carving will stand. My customer requested that a message be written or carved on the piece, so I made the base sufficiently deep so that I could carve the message around its edge. I also chose to carve the base with a droplet ripple on it. After choosing a piece of wood from which to make your base, place the carving onto this and draw around the pebbles. Under the tail draw a small circle, then from this draw some larger circles radiating out from it, creating a ripple effect. Draw it so that the ripples spread out across the base up to the point where the pebbles join the base. Use a carbide burr in a rotary grinder to carve the ripples. The inner ripples should be the deepest and as the ripples spread out they get shallower. Next drill two holes through the base so you can then screw through it and into the pebbles to secure the carving and make sure it is firmly affixed to the base

23 With the carving complete give the fish and base a sanding. Start with 120 grit or similar and sand with the grain as much as possible. Remember to proceed carefully so as not to remove the detail on the carp. Give the carving a good brush down before moving on to the next grit size. Once finished, give the carving a coat of sanding sealer. The sanding sealer not only protects the wood and gives a good base



for your chosen finish, but also shows up any imperfections that can be fixed before applying the final finish. Once you're happy with your carving, apply your chosen finish and add some crushed velvet to the underside of the base and you're done. ▶



Top tip

When attaching a fixing block to the underside of the pebbles make sure the block of wood doesn't overlap the back of the pebbles as you will need to gain access to the underside of the fish; the block can protrude from the front and sides of the piece, but not the back of the pebbles

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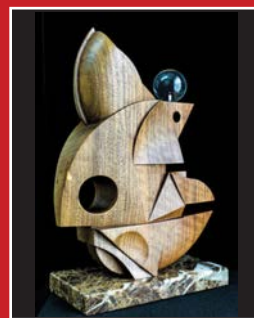
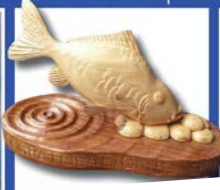
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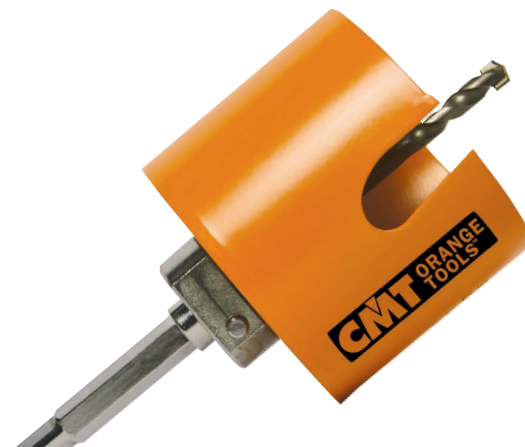
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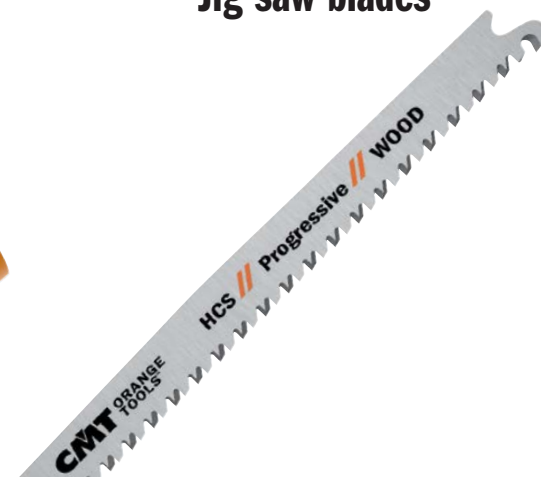
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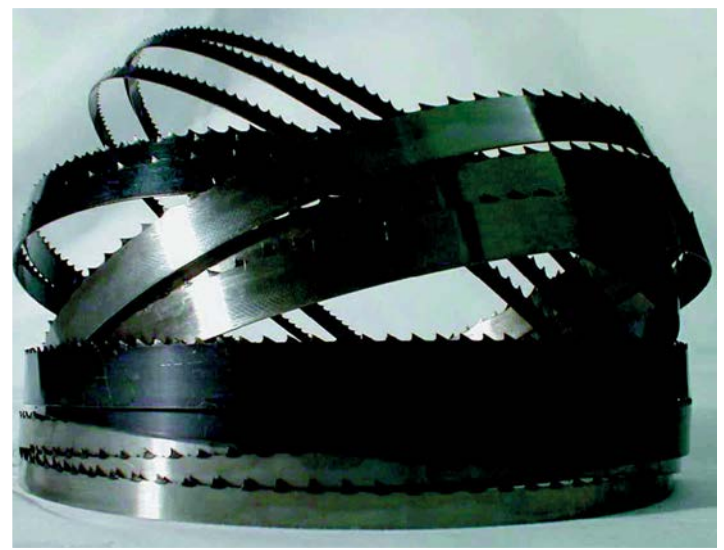
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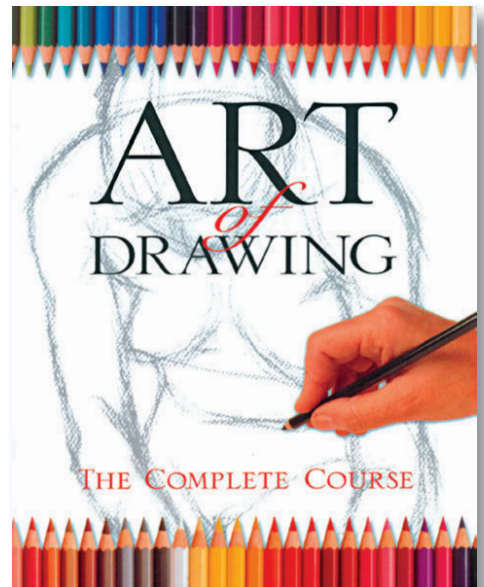
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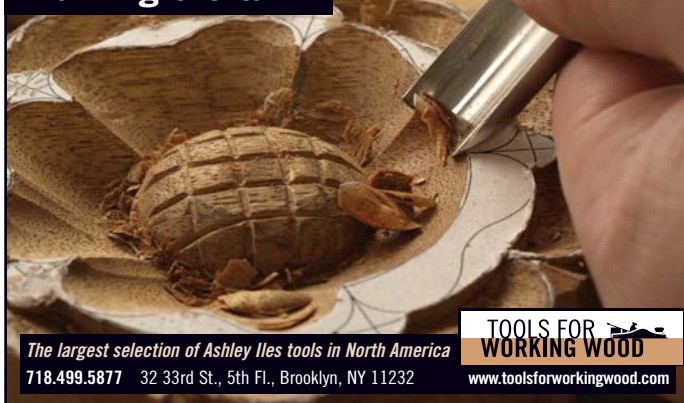
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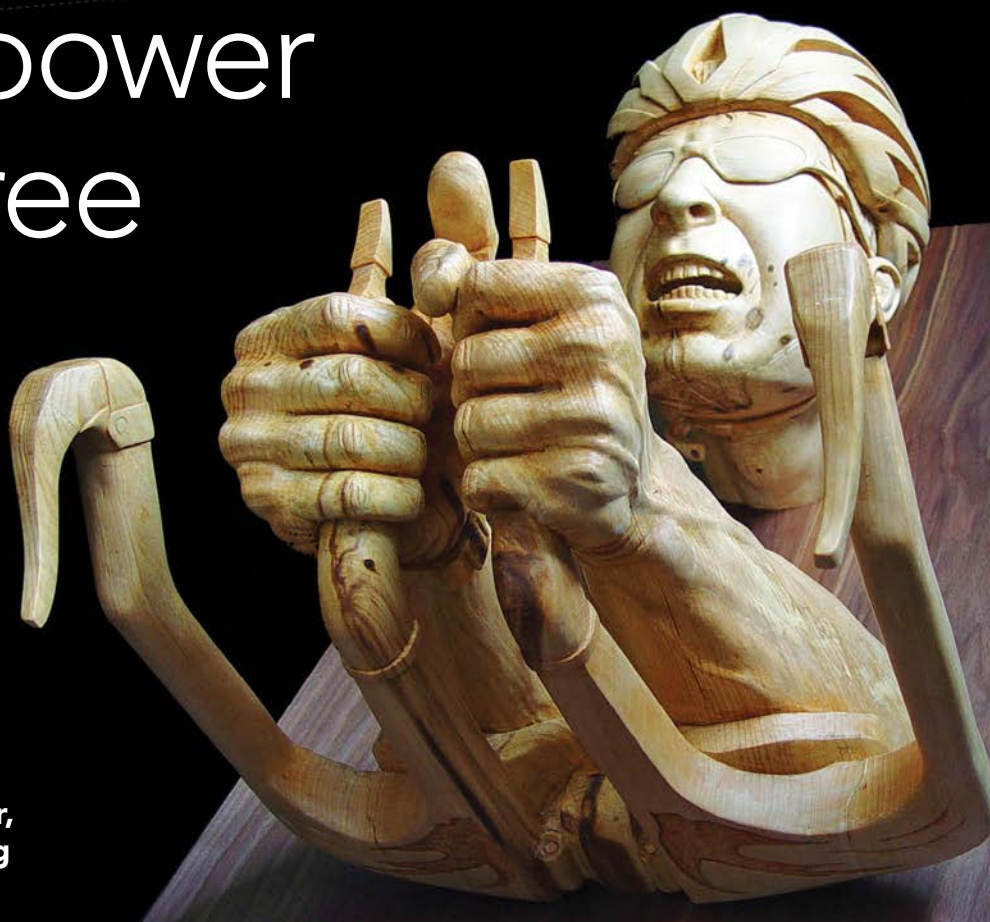
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The power of three

We get into top gear with Stefanie Rocknak's *The Biker*, part of her stunning Triathlete series

PHOTOS BY STEFANIE ROCKNAK. WORDS: CATHERINE KIELTHY



Part of a 2004 commission, *The Biker* is the second element in Stefanie Rocknak's acclaimed artwork *The Triathlete* and sits alongside her *Swimmer* and *Runner*. Recalling the birth of the sculptures, the US-born carver says: "I was given complete freedom by the client when I made these pieces, which was terrific." The *Runner* was the first piece to be completed in 2004, with *The Biker* following a year later and *The Swimmer* finishing the set in 2007.

"Each piece is mounted on laminated

boards of black walnut (*Endiandra palmerstonii*) and all three pieces are slightly larger than lifesize and hang on a wall," explains Rocknak. "Each piece is also designed to capture the movement and the intensity of a particular sport. It was especially difficult to carve the water [for *The Swimmer*]; the power sander helped. They were finished with 2,000 grit sandpaper, and a low-gloss tung oil."

Focusing on *The Biker*, Rocknak explains how the head was made from a green piece of basswood (*Tilia americana*) from Wightman's Specialty Woods in Portlandville, New York. The biker's helmet was initially inspired by Bell's 'Sweep' design, but she made it "more angular and extended the tail back and up", adding, "I kept thinking of a barn-swallow's tail as I did it."

The *Biker*'s expression also changed as Rocknak carved the piece but her intention was always to show "a man working hard to bring his body under control". Rocknak also used basswood for the arms, but this time it was left outside to dry for about two months.

Says Rocknak: "As I drew on the general plan after chainsawing away some of the immediately obvious excess on the right-hand side, I was still thinking I might include some of the upper arm. But after checking the measurements of the overall piece I realised that just the lower arm would suffice."

Referring to the bars, Rocknak describes them as "triathlete, not your average 10-speed bars", adding, "There are four separate bars, where the two shifting levers run almost directly underneath the arms, and the brake bars run outside of the arms."

Woodcarving was so taken with Rocknak's *Triathlete* that we had to find out more about the carver behind the commission. Find out what we learned in our next issue when we profile the artist.

For more details about *The Triathlete*, visit www.steffrocknak.net. ▶



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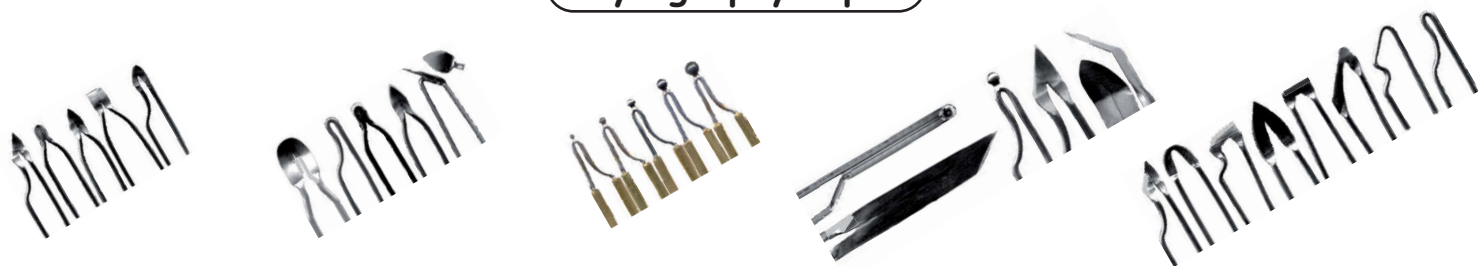
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