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wood

CARVING

Johan Roudy
explains how to carve
a decorative pierced
panel in cherry

ZOE GERTNER
creates a relief
carving of a trio
of chasing hares

STEVE BISCO
carves a festoon
in the style of
18th-century master
carver Luke Lightfoot

**DUANE
CARTWRIGHT**
carves a leaf
dragon in relief

**ANDREW
THOMAS**
looks at using
commonly available
wood finishes



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CARVING TOOLS

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 Hoag

Email: repro@thegmcgroup.com

MARKETING Anne Guillot

SUBSCRIPTIONS HOTLINE

Tel: 01273 488 005

Fax: 01273 402 866

Email: pubs@thegmcgroup.com

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PHOTOGRAPH BY GMCANTHONY BAILEY

Different woods



One subject being discussed a lot is that of other timbers and materials carvers are using in their work. The staples of oak, lime, walnut, jelutong, sweet chestnut and butternut and pines

of various sorts still dominate the most commonly used timbers, with fruitwoods, holly, maples and similar close-grained hardwoods and a few other softwoods also being mentioned. However, as some timbers become harder to obtain or as people are experimenting ever more with what they do and what they want to create, plastics, polymers and more are being explored. This raises more questions for me. What materials are you using and why?

I have been experimenting with various timbers turning and carving wise and I am always fascinated to find out what they can and cannot do and what can and cannot be done with them. Mind you, I have used lots of timber that have not done what I need them to do, and also were not necessarily pleasant to work with, but the journey has been very interesting.

I think that by not exploring new timbers and materials we run the risk of not realising what is out there, what can be used and what that material is good for. Also we miss out on the journey of trying new things. I know that there is enough of a learning

curve in mastering how to carve and get to where we want get to, but sampling new timbers does not take long and I do love the surprises, both good and bad.

I know that people – in addition to using solid woods of various kinds – are using laminated blocks of ply and other man-made board, cast resin, alternative ivory, horn and tortoiseshell – typically for netsuke and small scale carvings. Some are using highly compressed resin or glue impregnated paper and also cotton blocks – each built of many layers of material, aerated building blocks, rubber and lino sheets for printing, pumpkin skin/rind and a few more vegetable skins are also being used. I know this magazine is called *Woodcarving* magazine and wood still remains the dominant aspect as far as materials used and featured, but it is fun to broaden one's horizons at times and have some play time and see what is available and what can be done with it.

Let me know what you have been carving lately and what materials you have been using.

Have fun,

Mark Baker
Editor of *Woodcarving*

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wood CARVING Contents

Issue 151
July/August 2016



Pierced Panel – see page 9
Front cover image courtesy
of Johan Roudy

Projects

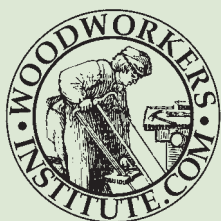
- 9 Pierced panel**
Johan Roudy explains how to carve a decorative pierced panel in cherry
- 15 Oak leaf dragon**
Duane Cartwright carves a mythical oak leaf dragon
- 21 Rococo Festoon**
Steve Bisco carves a festoon in the style of 18th-century master Luke Lightfoot
- 45 Three hares of Dartmoor**
Woodcarver Zoe Gertner carves a trio of hares

Techniques

- 27 Carving a tortoise**
Bob Jubb shells out some top tips for carving this charming creature
- 34 Carving knives**
Peter Benson looks at selecting the perfect carving knife
- 51 Wood finishes**
Andrew Thomas looks at using wood finishes



9



The Woodworkers Institute web forum

Why not join in the discussions on all matters woodworking on the Woodworkers Institute web forum? Covering all four GMC woodworking titles, including *Woodcarving*, you can view the work from fellow craftsmen, exchange useful hints and tips, or join in on the hot topic of the day on the live forums. To register, simply log on to www.woodworkersinstitute.com, click the register button, and follow the instructions.



45

Features

39 Gerald Adams in profile

As he celebrates his 30th anniversary as a professional carver, Gerald remains as passionate as ever about his craft, but it hasn't all been plain sailing, as he tells Catherine Kielthy

57 Set in stone

Nazar Dmiuterko tells Catherine Kielthy how a former boss steered him towards a creative new path in carving

80 Art of Carving

When Sweden's 17th-century warship sank and capsized in 1628, she took a treasure trove of wooden sculptures with her



21

Community

1 From the Editor

Mark Baker talks about 'different woods'!

4 Round & about

With news from the BDWCA and BWA, dates for your diary and letters, we bring you the latest from the woodcarving community

30 Next issue

Can't wait to see what's in store for the next issue of *Woodcarving*? We reveal a sneak peek at what to expect

Tests & Equipment

74 Carvers' Toolbag

Bringing you all the latest tools, machinery and products to meet your carving needs. All prices, unless otherwise stated, are inclusive of 20% VAT, and are correct at the time of going to press



15

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: 46th Annual World Championship Competition and Art Festival

In April, five members of the BDWCA again took the journey across the Atlantic Ocean to attend the 46th Annual World Championship Competition and Art Festival in Ocean City, Maryland, USA – the pinnacle of bird carving competition.

Over 1,300 carvings were entered by over 700 carvers of all levels, from Youth to World Class, in 39 different divisions which included life-size and miniature decorative bird carvings, interpretive carvings and several categories of working decoys.

The show was a tremendous experience. Three of us had taken birds to enter in the competition and we all won awards, a terrific result! Congratulations to Pam Wilson, who won the Intermediate Interpretive Wood Sculpture Division, Richard Rossiter who came second in the Game Birds category of Advanced Decorative Lifesize, and Lennart Petterson who gained three ribbons in the Fish competition.

Last year Claire Williams, who lives in Wales, and Sally Sanford from Scotland, won at the competition and they were promised their flags would be added to the display for this year, and they were.

During the course of the three day show there were seminars and workshops by some of the top bird carvers who were happy to share their 'tricks of the trade' with us lesser mortals. Everyone was very friendly and it was great to be able to talk to other carvers from the USA, Canada and other countries including Sweden, Russia and Japan.

We are now all totally inspired by what we saw and learnt at 'the Worlds', and are now looking forward to this year's BDWCA show, which will be held, as usual, in Bakewell, Derbyshire, on the second weekend of September. This year, the show will take place on 10–11 September, 2016.



The Scottish and Welsh flags have been added to the display



Livingstone's Turaco by Tom Horn, World Champion Decorative Life-size

Diary items

The BDWCA Annual Show and Competition, the Festival of Bird Art, in Bakewell, Derbyshire on the weekend of 10–11 September, 2016. Full details on our website – www.bdwca.org.uk – or email shows@bdwca.org.uk

Contact the BDWCA

For further information on the BDWCA, as well as membership details, visit www.bdwca.org.uk. Membership includes three issues of our 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

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAM WILSON

BWA: BBC Countryfile Live



BBC Countryfile Live

This year, the BWA will have a presence at the BBC Countryfile Live show at Blenheim Palace, Woodstock, Oxfordshire.

This will be for the four days of 4–7 August, 2016. Although the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Region will be supplying the marquees and putting in a huge amount of work on behalf of the BWA, this is not primarily a regional event. Although other regions will be represented, it will be by individual members who wish to attend and make it a jamboree displaying and demonstrating the craft of woodcarving.

This is also building on the back of the recent successes of multi-regional involvement at some of the bigger shows. The show is the first year of what is hoped to become an annual event.

This first year is expected to see 80,000 visitors over the four days, and between 6–8 million viewers who watch *Countryfile*.

Peter Downham

When serving as a photographer at RAF Khormaksar, Aden in 1959, Peter was offered the opportunity to go on detachment with 37 Squadron to RAF Masirah, an island off the East coast of Oman, some 1000 miles away. To get there he was to be flown up in one of 37 Squadron's Avro Shackleton Mk2 aircraft and, while waiting for the aircrew to arrive, Peter took a few photographs of the ground crew standing behind the aircraft. One of these was used as the basis for his carving, which is in sycamore, lightly stained and wax polished. Peter won Woodcarver of the Year award in 2010.

Cleveland region

Preston Park Museum in Stockton is currently exhibiting 20 carvings by the Cleveland Carving Club, they will have been on display for three months leading up until 17 June. The carvings on display have been produced by experienced carvers, and those new to the craft. It is quite astonishing how much has been achieved in the short time since the club was formed. The carvings have been changed at regular intervals because many of the novice carvers produce carvings worthy of display to a wider audience.

This exhibition follows close on the heels of a similar display in the library where the feedback was very positive. Alongside the club carvings is the WW1 display, still enjoying lots of attention after two years.

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

Whiddon Woodcarvers

Who would think that tucked away in a back corner of a remote village hall, lives a thriving and busy group of amateur woodcarvers, all working away on their latest projects?

Some months ago, during a 'Bridge' supper, I chatted to a club member who told me of one of her 'other' interests. "Woodcarving?!" I said, "where can you do that around here?" She replied: "At Whiddon Down. If you're interested, come along to our next meeting. We've got plenty of tools and books you can borrow."

So, on a windy, wet, winter Whiddon Wednesday, I went along and was warmly welcomed (as my friend had promised) by the club Chairman and the other

'Wednesday nighters'. Truth to tell, I'm now well and truly hooked on this, my latest hobby! I say 'latest' because I'm an amateur woodturner and this did give me a good start on the learning curve of how to cut stationary timber with an 'edge' tool and mallet. Even sharpening the tools is a craft on its own!

Introductions over, the tutor established that I was almost a complete novice and asked me what I was thinking of carving first of all. "Oh, perhaps a trout or an otter," I said airily! He thought about this a while and then said, with a twinkle: "Well, should we just do a letter 'B' for a start!"

And so, after seven months, my woodcarving hobby has



Carving course with Zoe March

blossomed from a letter 'B' to a lovely Brook trout that I am well on the way to finishing, scales and all – at last!

This picture of the group was taken during a training course, sponsored by the club, with Devon carving professional Zoe Gertner (third from left). If anyone is interested in finding out more about woodcarving at Whiddon, give me a call on 01647 433 776.

Paul Brodey – Hon Sec.
Whiddon Woodcarvers

Conversion chart

2mm	(⁵ / ₆₄ in)
3mm	(¹ / ₈ 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 / ₈ in)
25mm	(1in)
30mm	(¹ / ₈ in)
32mm	(¹ / ₄ in)
35mm	(¹³ / ₈ in)
38mm	(¹ / ₂ in)
40mm	(¹ / ₂ in)
45mm	(¹ / ₂ in)
50mm	(2in)
55mm	(2 ¹ / ₈ –2 ¹ / ₄ in)
60mm	(2 ³ / ₈ in)
63mm	(2 ⁷ / ₈ in)
65mm	(2 ⁵ / ₈ in)
70mm	(2 ⁷ / ₈ in)
75mm	(3in)
80mm	(3 ¹ / ₈ in)
85mm	(3 ¹ / ₄ in)
90mm	(3 ¹ / ₂ in)
93mm	(3 ³ / ₈ 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)

A woodcarver's song

Mr. Baker,
I don't know which I'm better (worse?) at – poetry or carving. But I'd like to share with you my lyrics to a song we all seem to sing from time-to-time. I leave it to somebody else to supply the tune.

*Yours sincerely,
Alec MacLean, California*

Grain, the Woodcarver's Bane

Chorus:

Grain, grain, the woodcarver's bane
No matter whichever way I carve,
It's always against the grain.

Starting from one end – a piece pops out.
That's against the grain, no doubt.
So I switch and push from the other side,
And out pops another, big and wide.

Chorus

It's smooth as glass, and the figure shows.
And then I see the crack that grows.
It looks like I've carved it with a trowel.
I stand at the bench and weep and howl.

Chorus

I think I'll learn to carve in stone,
Or soap, or ivory, antler or bone,
Or something to keep from going insane:
Something, Lord, please, without any grain.

Chorus

But when I've finally carved the wood
Twice as deep as I thought I should
To compensate for the damage done,
And the battle with grain is finally won.
I step back from the bench and cock my head
And say what every woodcarver's said:
"The carving's lovely, and done by hand,
But it's really the grain that makes it grand!"



Wendy's brilliant first attempt at woodcarving

A first attempt

Hello Briony,
Having tried my hand at a stone carving last summer I thought I'd like to keep carving, and wood was a more practical option. I then discovered your super magazine a few months ago. Now I'm addicted! My house is covered in sawdust and wood shavings, and this is before I buy any power tools!

I have attached a photo of my first attempt, carved from jelutong. Obviously, I have a journey ahead, but I'm reasonably happy with it and will be presenting it as a trophy for my mother's memorial race at Thirsk next week. Thank you for the valuable information your magazine provides.

*Kind regards,
Wendy Gibson-Brown*



Wendy Gibson-Brown

In response to Woodcarving

Hello again Mark,
I enjoyed your piece in the *Woodcarving* 150 as always. I heartily agree with you about that awful word! When I was still working, I banned the word 'problem' from my vocabulary and that of my training staff – there is always a positive alternative to it, that sounds more attractive and it's surprising how much fun one can have by doing so! Think of 'succulent steak' instead of 'dead cow'! Even on your page, where you have an inserted box headed 'Problem finding Woodcarving Magazine? – forgive me Mark, but it could have been headed "How to get your copy"' couldn't it?!

Regards – Paul Brodey via email.

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Pierced panel

Johan Roudy explains how to carve a decorative pierced panel in cherry

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Johan is a French carver who started woodcarving in 2005 as a hobby, but turned professional in 2012. Self-taught, Johan is inspired in his work by nature and has a great interest in ornamental carving.

Web:
johan-roudy-woodcarving.blogspot.fr



I used wooden pegs on a clamp workbench to secure the carving down. Another good option would be to glue the cutout on a larger plywood board with a sheet of newspaper in between. The carving would be carefully removed from the board before the undercutting stage by sliding a chisel between the wood and the board.

Cherry is a nice looking wood, ranging from a light blonde to red in its colour. It is fine grained and can hold details well, but can be quite tricky to work with. It doesn't really like to be carved against the grain. Even when using a deep gouge, you might have to carve both sides of the groove in opposite directions to get a clean surface.

The triangle is about 600mm wide and 350mm high, but a 600 x 250mm, 18–22mm thick board should be large enough to realise the project with very little scrap. Draw the general shape on the board, the grain running horizontally, and the offcut on the bottom left-hand corner should be big enough to be glued and to complete the lower point of the triangle on the right side.

The design is composed of three main features: the main or concave leaves, the secondary or convex leaves, and the fruits or seedpods. Once you get these shapes in mind, you should be able to complete this project.

Things you will need...

Tools:

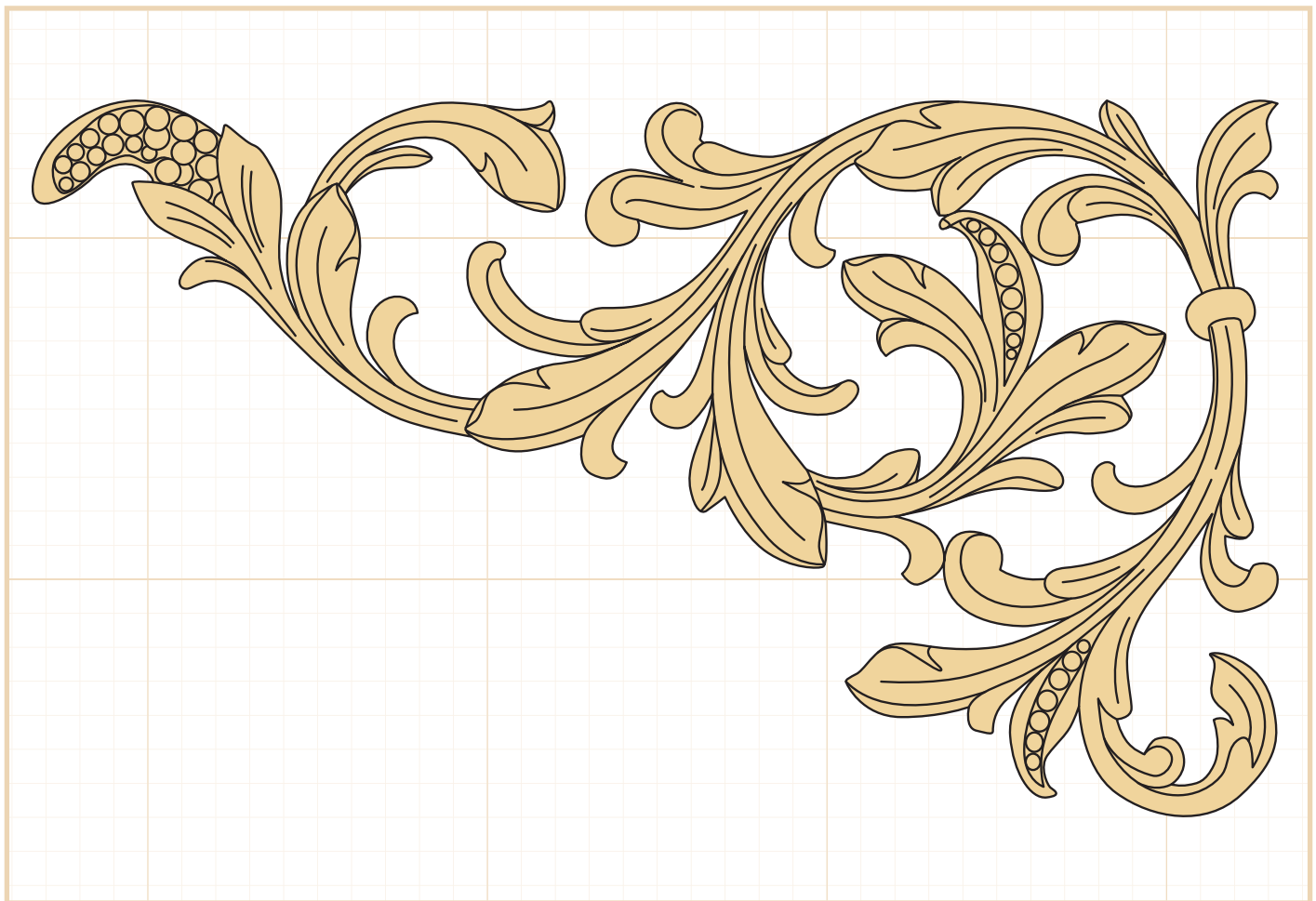
- Scrollsaw
- 12mm 'V'-tool
- Flat gouge
- No.5, 8mm gouge
- No.5, 16mm gouge
- No.6, 12mm gouge
- No.6, 16mm gouge
- No.6, 25mm gouge
- No.8, 10mm gouge
- No.8, 12mm gouge
- No.8, 25mm gouge
- No.9, 8mm gouge

Wood:

Cherry (*Prunus avium*)
 – 600 x 250 x 22mm

This pierced panel was designed for a small organ. The purpose was to hide the upper part of the pipes. The style of the leaves and the type of wood, cherry, were chosen to match with the old music stand that was going to be used with the organ.

Used like an appliqué or hung to decorate a frame, pierced relief can be a very effective ornament. First, it offers the opportunity to undercut from the back, at the end of the carving process, which really makes it stand out. Second, the design is cut directly on a board, saving the time and effort usually spent routing and cleaning the background on a typical relief carving.



1 Trace the pattern on the wooden board using tracing paper or by using carbon paper. Then, with a scrollsaw, carefully cut the shape out from the board. You can simplify the leaves' shapes, but be sure to cut close to the line in tight areas within the pattern. The red circles in the photograph show the areas on the carving where I left some wood uncut. This is to avoid breakage in the most fragile parts of the carving



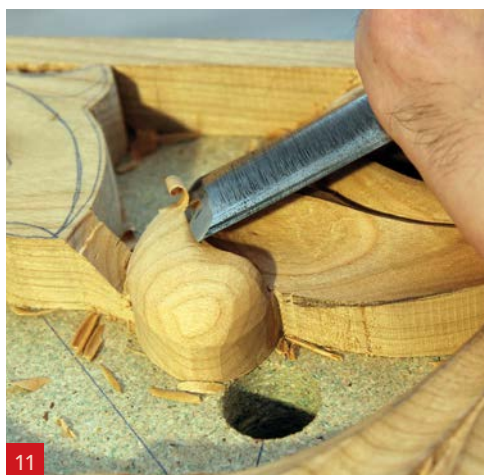
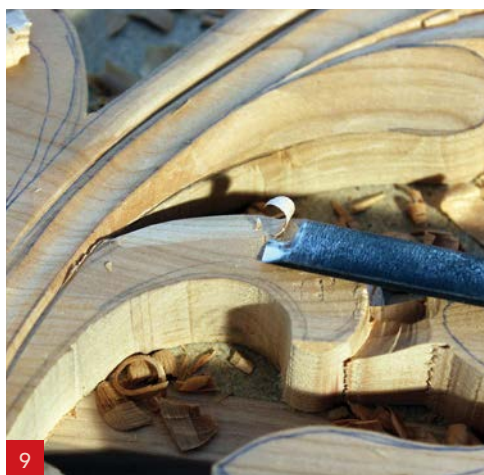
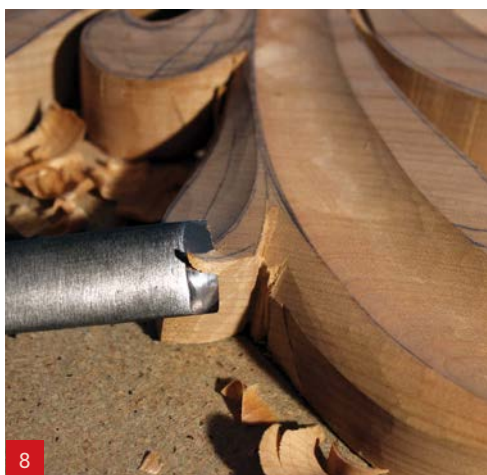
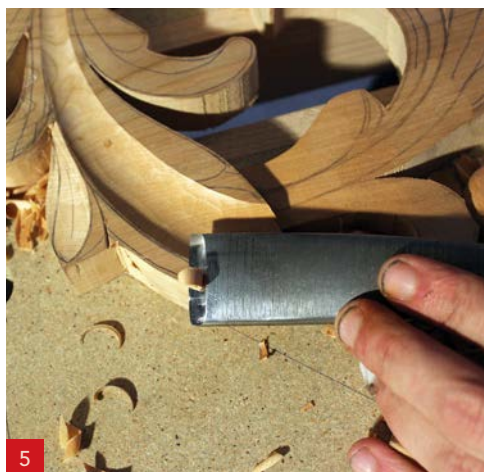
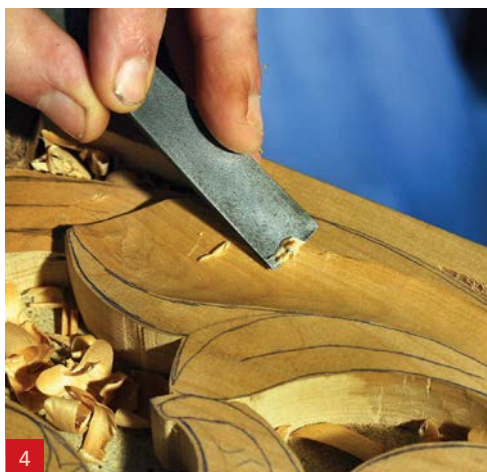
"Be sure to cut close to the line in tight areas within the pattern"

2 Next, separate the panel's layers by removing some wood where the stem is covered by a leaf and either side of the 'tie'. Start carving the wood far enough away to let the stem come down progressively and to avoid any bumpy effect on the wood



3 Now let's shape the main leaves. Using the No.8, 25mm gouge, carve a groove running along the leaf in the pattern. Complete the groove on its narrow part with the No.8, 10mm gouge





4 Next, soften the angle left by the groove on the side of the leaf with a flat gouge. You can even round the outside edge a little bit on some of the leaves

5 Use a flat gouge to mark the separation with the secondary lobe by an angled cut and shape the back of the leaf by reducing the wood in a steep angle

6 Now, redraw the tip of the leaf and set it in with the No.8, 25mm gouge. Then, using the No.5, 16mm gouge, stab the small lobe halfway to the main leaf and complete the leaf with the No.6, 16mm gouge, removing the waste along the drawing towards the stab cut

7 The secondary leaves – or lobes – in the pattern may be turned upward or downward. Give an angle to the upward leaves with the No.6, 25mm gouge

8 Redraw the leaf outline back onto the wood, then reshape it and carve the back of it with a flat gouge towards the main leaf

9 Separate the downward leaves from the stem using the 'V'-tool. Cut deeper at the junction with the stem using a gouge matching the curve, and round the back towards the side with a flat gouge

10 Lower the tip of the leaf and round it as well, with the No.6, 16mm or the No.5, 16mm gouge. The definitive shape of the leaf will be achieved with the undercutting of the pattern

11 Some of the secondary leaves are divided in two lobes: upward and downward. Separate them from the stem with the 'V'-tool and shape the upward lobe before moving on to the downward lobe. The other one is twisting, halfway between an upward and a downward leaf. Carve it deep enough to give the leaves the effect of some movement

Handy hint

1. When designing or carving this type of foliage ornaments, I always try to avoid breaking the curves with an unsightly angle. Like the classical acanthus design, all leaves within this carving should separate from the stem with a flowing sweep

➔ **12** If most leaves have their back slightly curved, the last leaf on the lower right corner is more rounded. Mark the edge of the adjacent leaf with the 'V'-tool, and stab the separation between the seed pod and the lower leaf with a flat gouge

13 Begin to shape the seed pod with a flat gouge: round the edges and lower the tip. Now, round the back of the leaf with the No.6, 16mm or the No.5, 16mm gouge

14 This last type of twisting leaf requires to be lowered quite deeply at the tip. Carve the hollow first with the No.6, 16mm gouge, redraw the circle and then carve the back with the No.5, 16mm gouge following the line

15 Shape the secondary lobes like the previous ones. Carve the end of the leaf deeper than the main leaves and use the No.9, 8mm gouge to carve a groove below the lobe, melting with the side

16 Complete the shape of the leaf and the lower lobe, giving it a bigger angle

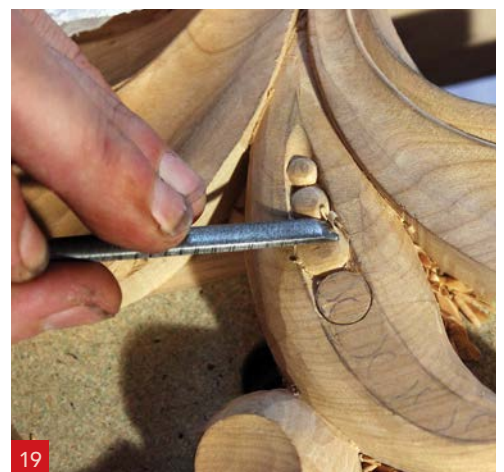
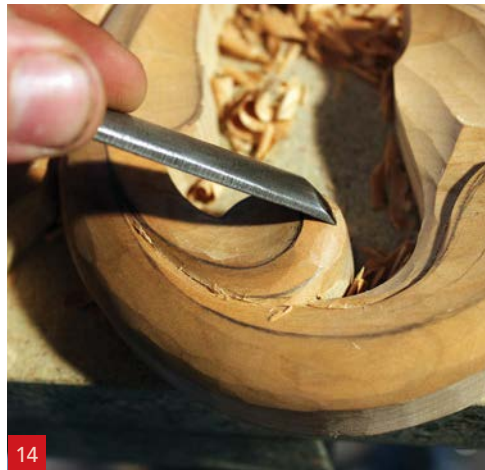
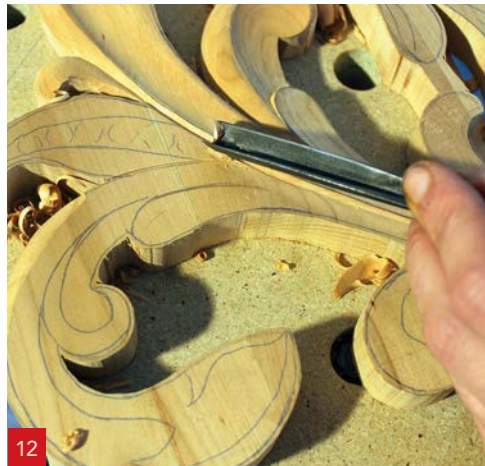
17 Shape the other closed seed pod like the first one, rounding the edges, but keep more wood at the tip to let it show above the leaf nearby. Draw the slot that will show the seeds

18 Use the No.5, 8mm gouge to set in the first seed. Then, use the No.9, 8mm gouge to carve a hollow from the base of the slot to the first seed. Switch back to the No.5, 8mm to start to set in the next seed and remove the waste around and between the seeds

19 Keep on clearing around the seeds one after the other, and use the same gouge to round them, along and across the grain

Handy hints

- 2.** You can draw the veins of the leaves with a pencil first to find the right place for them to sit. You don't need to carve them systematically on every leaf
- 3.** Try to place the veins to achieve a good balance in the whole carving
- 4.** They can be carved with a 'V'-tool or a small veiner as well (No.11, 2mm or 3mm)





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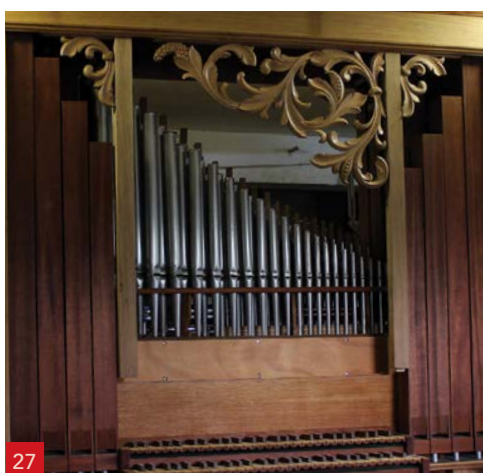
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20 Carve a hollow with the No.8, 12mm gouge at the tip to twist it. Clean the slot edges and carve a hollow along the slot with the No.5, 16mm gouge. Repeat on the other pod

21 Move to the open seed pod. Separate the seeds area from the leaves with the V-tool and shape the leaves using the No.6, 25mm gouge. Just like the other pods, shape it roughly by rounding the edges and lowering the tip

22 Progressively set in and clear the seeds, starting from the top and middle of the grape. Use No.5, 8mm, No. 6, 12mm and No.8, 12mm gouges to vary the sizes of the seeds

23 Mark the place where the stem should meet the tie with the V-tool and round its edges using the No.5, 16mm gouge

24 Use the No.9, 8mm gouge to dig the lower part from both sides and clean this area by extending the stem. The tie should meet the sides of the stem a few millimetres below the carved grooves on the work. Complete the tie by rounding the sides with the No.6, 16mm gouge, slightly deeper on the top

25 Draw the veins on the main and secondary leaves with the 'V'-tool. Undercut all around the carving at an angle about 20°. Choose the appropriate sweep for each part – a little flatter on the convex parts and a little deeper on the concave parts

26 Reverse the carving on a piece of cloth to avoid damaging it and complete the undercutting from the underside. Use the 'V'-tool or a small U-shaped gouge to remove some wood where two leaves meet and remove the waste with a flat gouge until you meet the cuts you made from the top. You can clamp lightly on a high point to secure the carving

27 The finished panel in place on the organ

Handy hints

5. Don't be afraid to remove some wood! Keeping the wood at 22mm thick is quite enough to correct any mistake. Too light cuts would end up in a flat looking carving. Varying depth from one point to another can bring some life into the design

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Oak leaf dragon

Duane Cartwright carves a mythical oak leaf dragon

The leaf dragon is a mythical creature which can be found in many art forms. It's a great subject for woodcarving as it can be shaped and designed to fit many different styles of carving. Dragons and foliage in their many forms have been popular carving subjects throughout history and the two have been blended together with varying success. This is my interpretation of a leaf dragon.

Design

I have used oak leaves and acorns in this project, but any leaf shape or species could be used. If designing or altering the provided design it's worth keeping in mind the overall shape of the design. I used the 'S' shape for the dragon, but a 'C' shape can also work very well.

Using the pattern provided there are a couple of options open to how you could carve this design. I have carved it as a shallow bas relief, but this design could easily be carved as a deep relief, or even as a pierced relief by cutting the outline and the inner waste areas with a bandsaw or jigsaw.

As a shallow relief, you could also print and carve the design in reverse and place them in such a way to have two leaf dragons facing each other. This type of design is perfect for placing on a fireplace, cupboard doors or something similar.

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



PHOTOGRAPHS BY DUANE CARTWRIGHT

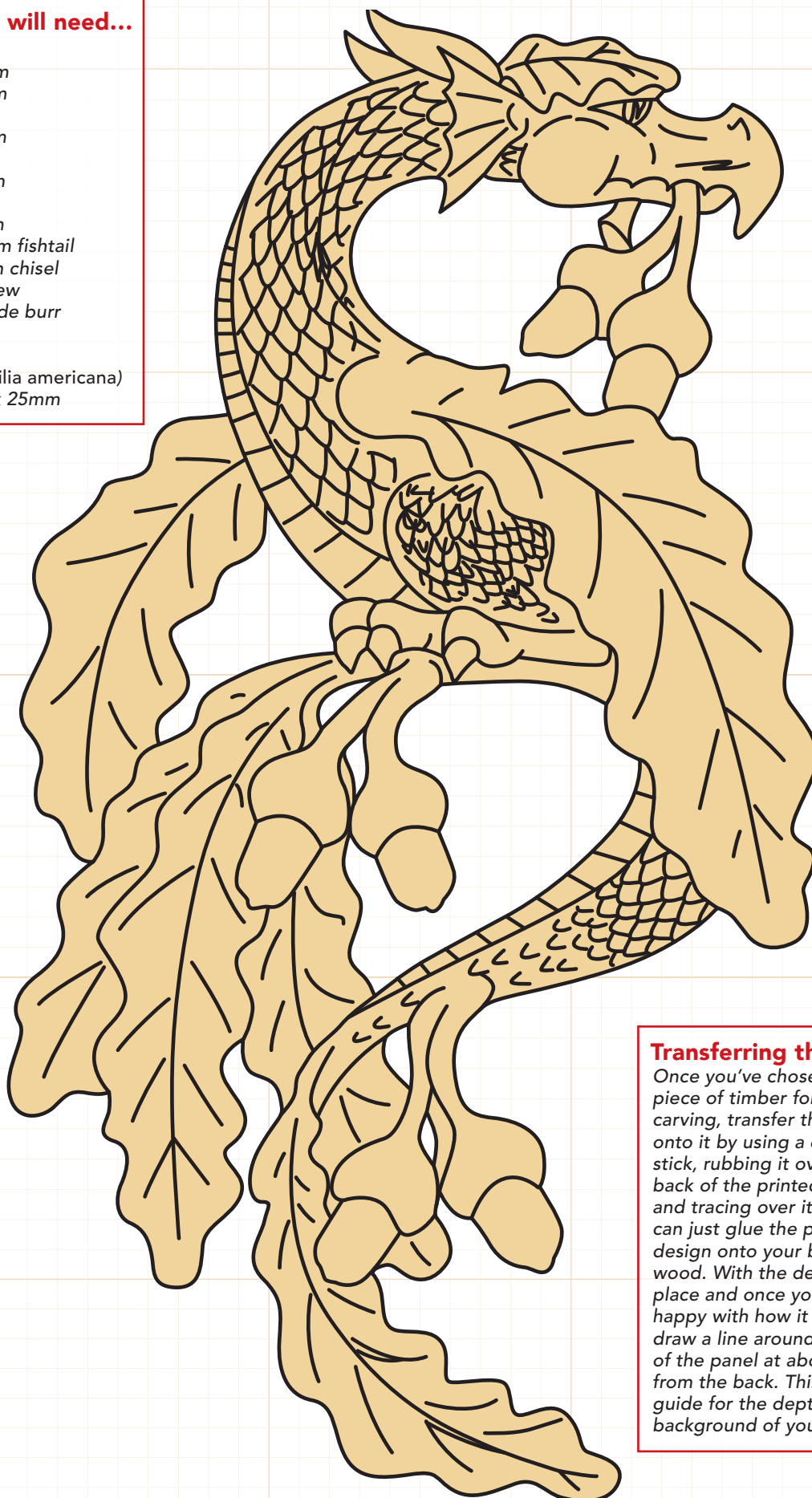
Things you will need...

Tools:

- No.3, 20mm
- No.3, 12mm
- No.5, 3mm
- No.7, 20mm
- No.7, 6mm
- No.9, 15mm
- No.9, 5mm
- No.11, 3mm
- No.2½, 8mm fishtail
- 2mm spoon chisel
- Hooked skew
- Small carbide burr

Wood:

Basswood (*Tilia americana*)
– 280 x 150 x 25mm

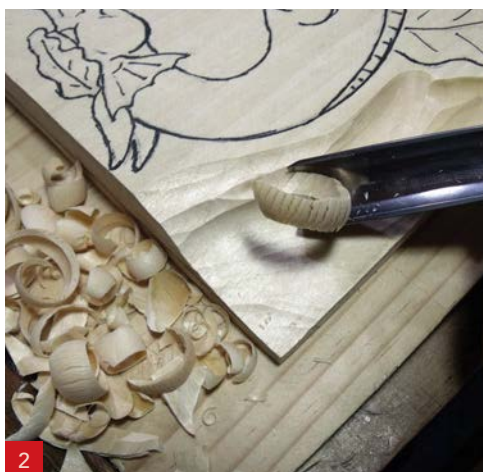


Transferring the design

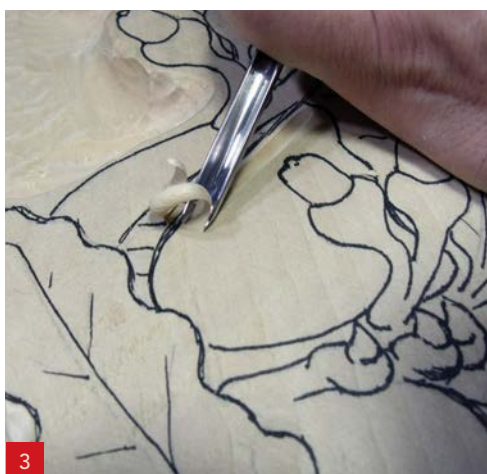
Once you've chosen your piece of timber for the carving, transfer the design onto it by using a 6B carbon stick, rubbing it over the back of the printed design and tracing over it. Or you can just glue the printed design onto your block of wood. With the design in place and once you are happy with how it looks, draw a line around the edge of the panel at about 5mm from the back. This is a guide for the depth of the background of your carving.



1



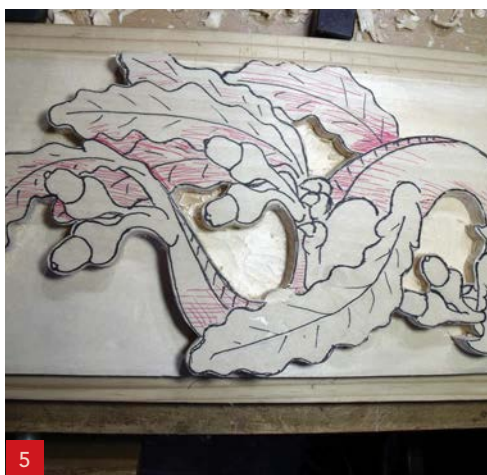
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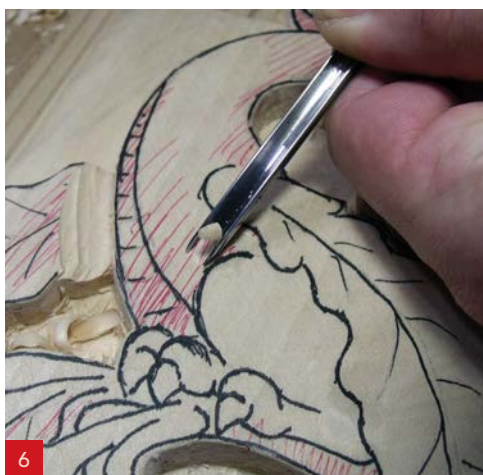
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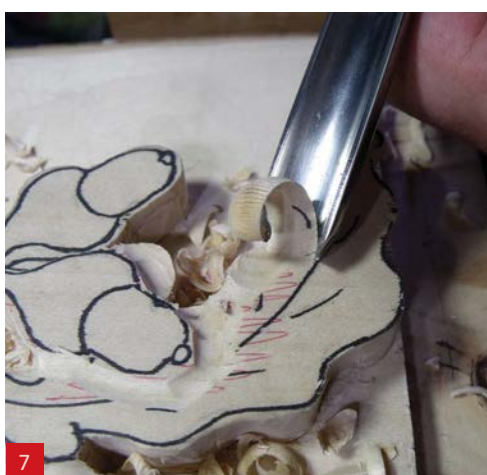
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7



8

1 Use glue and paper to attach a scrap piece of wood to the back of the panel – using a larger piece of wood than the panel will allow somewhere to clamp onto with quick G clamps or attach to a carving vice

2 With the panel secure you can now start carving. Use a deep gouge to start to remove the waste wood around the outside edge of the design, taking the background down to just above the depth line

3 Now, use various deep gouges to clear out the inner waste areas down to the required depth and use a depth gauge or straight edge to keep check on the depth and do this check regularly

4 With the bulk of the waste wood removed, start to cut in to the pattern. Use the best fitting gouges to the shape being cut. When cutting in keep check of the grain direction, especially around the leaf lobes, etc. Cutting down with a twist and slicing cuts will help to prevent breakages

5 Now use a shallow gouge to level the background. Once the bulk of the background is carved down and level, mark out where all parts of the design over and under lap each other

6 Next, use a deep No.11 sweep gouge or similar to start sketching out and separating the areas that overlap each other and around the leg, acorns, leaves, etc.

7 Use a medium to deep gouge to round over the body, giving it its shape. Take down the leaves to their required depths

8 Now, using the pattern as a guide, redraw the shapes of the leaves back in place. Once you are happy with how the leaves look, use your best fitting gouges and cut in the leaves

Handy hints

1. Removing the bulk of the waste before cutting in the outline will help to prevent breakages

2. Cutting in and then removing the waste can put pressure on weaker areas, so by removing the bulk of the waste first there is less pressure on the thinner areas you want to keep

➔ **9** To give the leaves movement, add folds and bends. Carve down the leaves' centre veins with a deep gouge, then from the centre vein carve out in between the leaves' lobes. Use a medium sweep to blend the folds of the leaves together

10 Now cut in around the beak where the acorns enter, then round over the beak area. Cut in the eye and other facial features, then continue shaping the acorns and stem with a reversed gouge. Next, use a chisel and cut in where the acorn joins the shell creating a stop cut and then round over the acorns. Draw a centreline on the acorn and shell. Use a deep gouge to carve across the end of the acorn, creating the nipple and with a shallow gouge reversed finish rounding the acorns

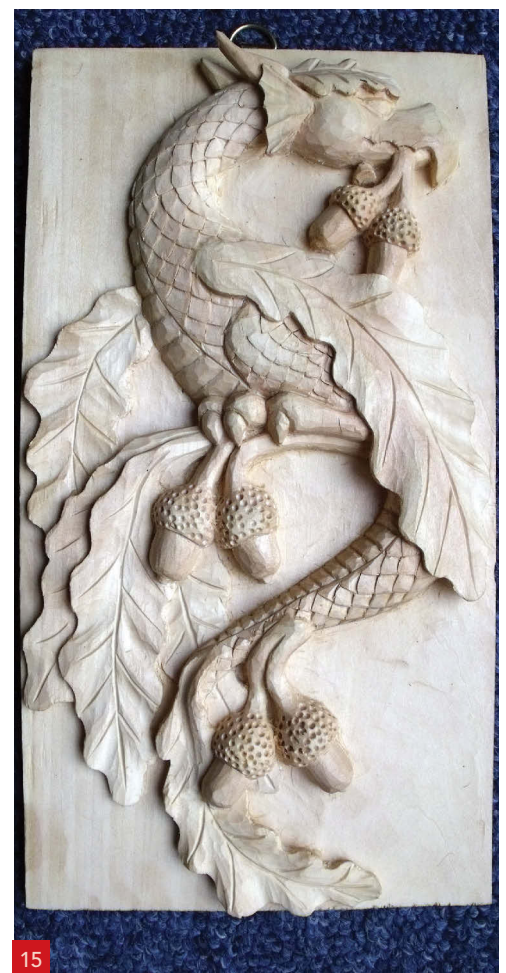
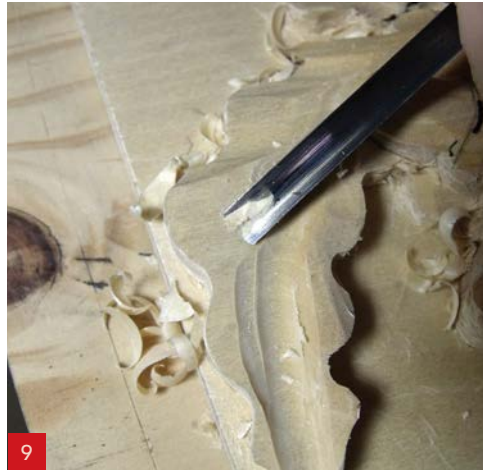
11 Moving onto the paw/foot cut in around the foot and toes, then with a shallow gouge reversed continue shaping the paw. Use a No.7 sweep, 6mm gouge or similar and cut in the claws, then round them over, keeping aware of the grain direction

12 Once the shaping is done, start on the detail. There are different ways and styles of carving scales, so try various styles and use different gouges on some scrap wood first before committing to the carving itself

13 For the leaf veins, start by drawing them in place and use a veiner or 'V'-tool to carve them in

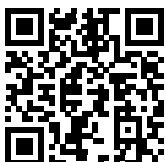
14 Add texture to the acorn shells using a small carbide burr and a rotary grinder to create dimples. If you don't own, or wish to use a rotary grinder, a 'V'-tool will create a cross-hatching effect. With all detail carved in, undercut areas like the leaves' lobes and the acorns' stem. Use a shallow gouge to finish tidying the background up to the undercut areas

15 You have the option to sand or leave the carving tooled, or to add texture and contrast sand only some parts. If sanding, start with 150 grit or similar and go through the grits, brushing down before moving onto the next one. Then give the whole carving a coat of sanding sealer. Once dry, cut back with a fine abrasive and, if needed, apply another coat of sealer, or your chosen finish. Attach a picture hook and you're done ▶



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Rococo Festoon

Steve Bisco carves a festoon in the style of 18th-century master carver Luke Lightfoot

Luke Lightfoot (1722–1789) was one of the outstanding carvers of the 18th century, and the only reason we don't hear his name more often is that he was a bit of a scoundrel. Lightfoot, it seems, was rather 'light-fingered' with his clients' money. He was engaged to produce carvings at Claydon House in Buckinghamshire by its owner Lord Verney, who recognised his outstanding talent and wanted his extravagant Rococo and Chinoiserie works to decorate his new house. Lord Verney entrusted Lightfoot with large sums of money to manage the building of the house, most of which Lightfoot syphoned off to fund his London workshop and line his pockets. He was found out and to avoid prison, or worse, he had to spend the rest of his life trying to pay back the money he had embezzled.

His greatest works still survive at Claydon, now managed by the National Trust (www.nationaltrust.org.uk/claydon) and I am grateful to the Trust for allowing me to photograph the carvings to create this project. Lightfoot's 'Chinese Room' at Claydon is one of Britain's most outstanding examples of the Chinoiserie style, while the North Hall, where this project comes from, is an elaborate and flamboyant Rococo. This swirling Rococo bust with its acanthus scrolls and naturalistic floral festoons is derived from part of the surround of a large niche carved around 1768. Lightfoot's original is carved in pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) – not an easy wood for such intricate work – and is painted white.

The pine was built up in sections because of its depth and complexity, and in my reduced-scale version in limewood (*Tilia vulgaris*) I also have built up the wood by lamination. This ambitious project has a bit of everything – figure carving, acanthus swirls, classical 'C' and 'S' scrolls, foliage carving and a touch of Chinoiserie thrown in. Even if you don't feel ready to tackle it, I would certainly recommend a visit to Claydon House to see Lightfoot's stunning carvings for yourself.

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'.



Using the pattern

For this project scale up or down the drawing to suit the size you require, or the timber you have.

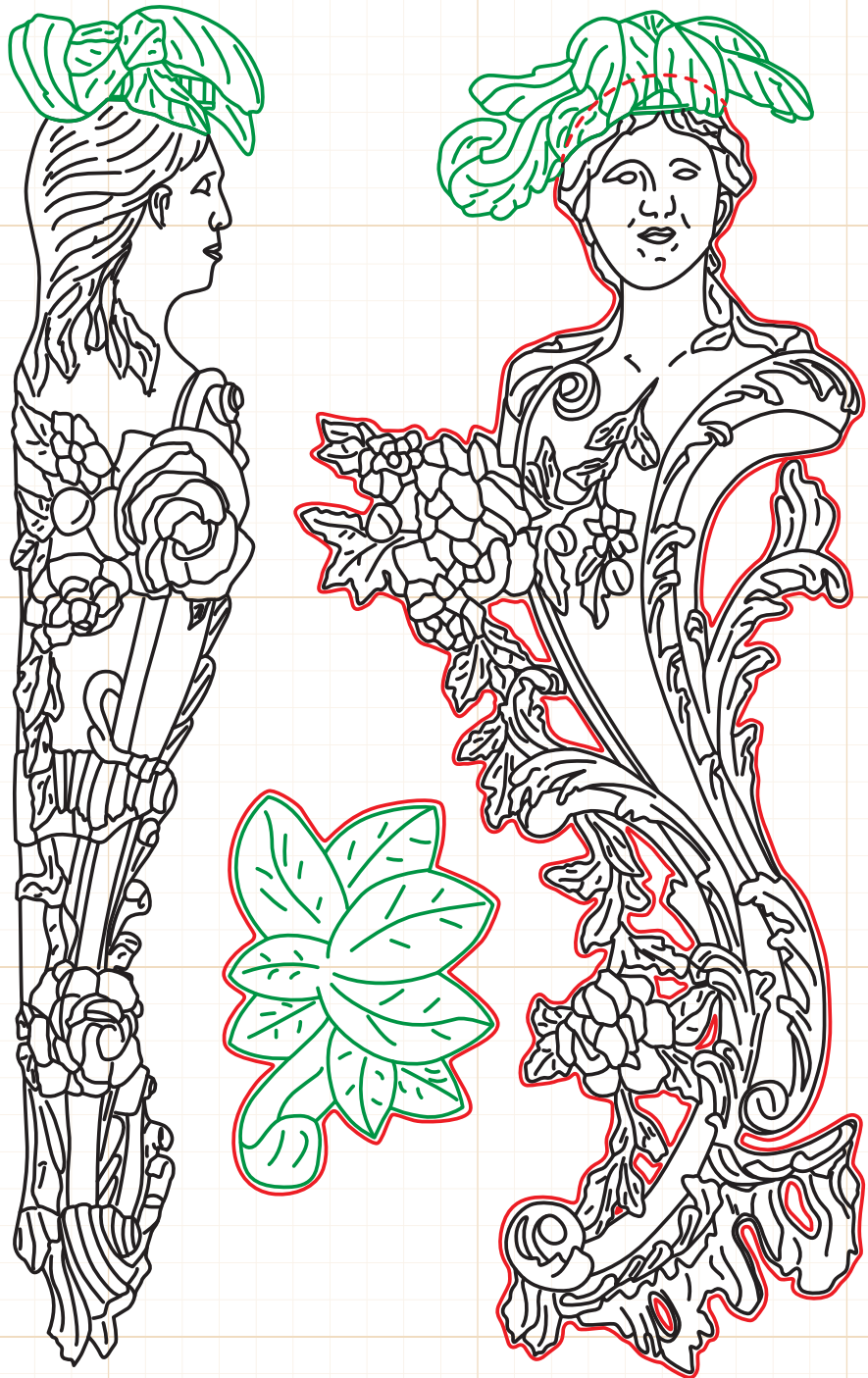
Things you will need...

Tools

- No.3, 20mm fishtail gouge
- No.3, 10mm fishtail gouge
- No.4, 6mm fishtail gouge
- No.3, 10mm straight gouge
- No.8, 8mm straight gouge
- No.5, 7mm straight gouge
- No.5, 5mm straight gouge
- No.9, 3mm straight gouge
- No.9, 16mm curved gouge
- No.5, 13mm curved gouge
- 10mm spoon-bent gouge
- 6mm spoon-bent gouge
- No.8, 8mm curved gouge
- No.3, 5mm bent gouge
- 12mm back-bent gouge
- 6mm back-bent gouge
- 5mm bent chisel
- Straight 'V'-tool
- Curved 'V'-tool
- 25mm flat chisel
- 16mm hooked skew chisel
- 10mm skew chisel
- 10mm skewed spoon gouge
- 6.5mm flat chisel
- 3mm chisel
- 2mm chisel
- 2mm veiner

Material

Lime (*tilia vulgaris*) – block at 550 x 235 x 110mm will accommodate the whole carving; or build up smaller pieces around a core block at 550 x 150 x 75mm

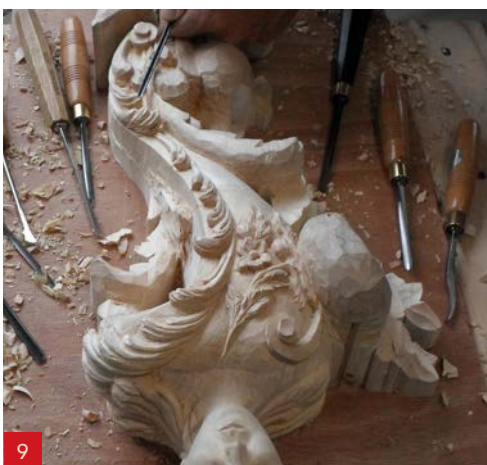
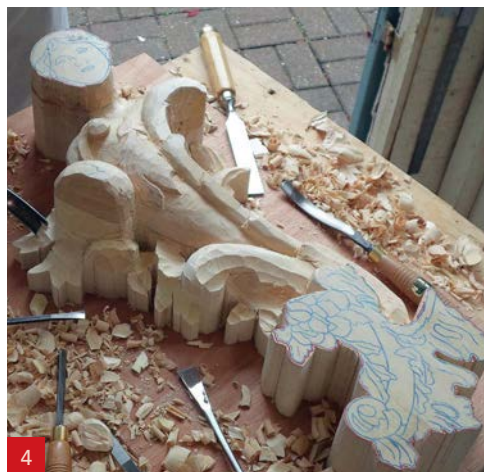


Preparations

1 Make a full-size copy of the drawing and trace the pattern onto the wood using carbon paper. You could use a single block of lime at 550 x 235 x 110mm, but I took the cheaper option – as Lightfoot did – of laminating several smaller pieces together. Build up the thickness to 110mm, add an 'extension' at the side and put aside a piece at 165 x 115 x 65mm for the feathered headdress

2 Here you can see that with all the pieces cut out on the bandsaw and glued together, it looks less of a muddle





Roughing out the shape

3 With a three-dimensional piece, visualising and roughing out the shape is complex. Look to the drawing and finished photos to gauge the levels. Reduce the level of the small acanthus swirl on the right-hand side down to about 40mm. Shape the shoulder and chest area so it curves down towards the lower end of the body

4 Reduce the levels of the leaves on the left side and rough out where the flowers will be. Curve the body much lower on the left. Isolate the area of the chest where the low-relief leaves will be

5 Now continue downwards, still lowering the level of the leaves and blocking out the wood for the flowers and acanthus swirls. The Chinoiserie section at the very bottom stands about 75mm above the backing board

6 Return to the top and rough out the shape of the head, face and neck. The tip of the nose should end up about 100mm above the backing board

Detail carving

7 Continue with the face to start the detail carving. Faces are challenging as the slightest deviation in a feature completely changes the appearance, especially when the mouth is only 18mm wide. Use fine sharp tools to shape the lips, eyes and nose, and try to create the look of a Classical goddess. Carve the hair into curls and waves, and add hair texture with a 2mm veiner

8 Carve the low-relief leaves on the chest area and lower the background. Refine the volute on the shoulder. Carve the edge of the volute down to the lower end

9 The string of acanthus swirls running down the right-hand side is one of the key features. They curl up and outwards to the right, except at the lower end, where they curve to the left. Some of them overhang the 'cliff' at the edge of the chest, but most lay wholly on the solid area. Create vein lines to accentuate the flow of the swirls

10 Carve the acanthus swirls that spring out of the side of the body volute. The side of the body has a long slightly-convex teardrop-shaped ridge in the middle, surrounded by a slightly-concave hollow around the outside

➔ **11** We now move to the left-hand side to work on the flowers and foliage. Start by blocking out the lower leaves and small flowers, then work your way into the big rose to separate the petals

12 Carve the rose petals thinly and naturalistically. It is best to work from the centre outwards so the petals have some support while you scoop out the inside with a spoon-bent gouge

13 With the rose finished, undercut all around it. Then finish the surrounding flowers and foliage and open out the gaps between them

14 Continue down the festoon and carve the string of leaves and the top of the large acanthus 'C' scroll. Use a curved gouge to hollow under the acanthus leaves and create a smooth concave surface running from the 'reel' feature at the top, down to where the next rose will be formed

15 Now carve the delicate rose at the lower end and complete the long acanthus 'C' scroll down to the bottom, where it ends with some acanthus curling around the final volute

16 It now remains to carve the curious 'Chinoiserie' feature at the bottom. The top sticks out a bit like a corbel, with a convoluted pierced 'frieze' below it. Give it plenty of veining with a No.9, 3mm gouge to enhance the Chinese look

17 Finally, remove the carving from the backing board, turn it face down on a soft surface, and undercut all the flowers and foliage to create very thin edges. Also round over the edges of the 'body' section, refine the surface and detailing on the sides and undercut the Chinoiserie section at the bottom

Carving the feathered headdress

18 Trace the feathered headdress pattern – shown in green on the drawing – onto a block measuring 165 x 115 x 65mm. Cut this out on the bandsaw and rough out the shape of the feathers. Take note that the crown block tilts at an angle of 20° to the head. Give the feathers the amount of twist and curl shown in the finished photos, then excavate under the upper leaves





19 Texture the feathers by separating them into segments with a 'V'-tool, add ridges and grooves with a small gouge, and put tiny grooves in the larger grooves with a veiner

20 Cut back by 20mm on the underside to the rim of the crown, adding the 20° tilt, and hollow it to fit the head. Undercut the feathers to fine thin edges and carve coves and dentils on the rim of the crown. Make sure it looks right from all angles, then glue it in place



Finishing

21 Lime generally benefits from a light sanding with fine abrasives. Use the finished photos for reference when carving

22 To create a finish similar to Lightfoot's original, give the carving two thin coats of white chalk paint, then a coat of clear furniture wax to create a soft sheen, similar to Georgian paint

23 Finally, the carving is looking suitably Lightfoot-like with its typical Georgian white finish ▶

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Carving a tortoise

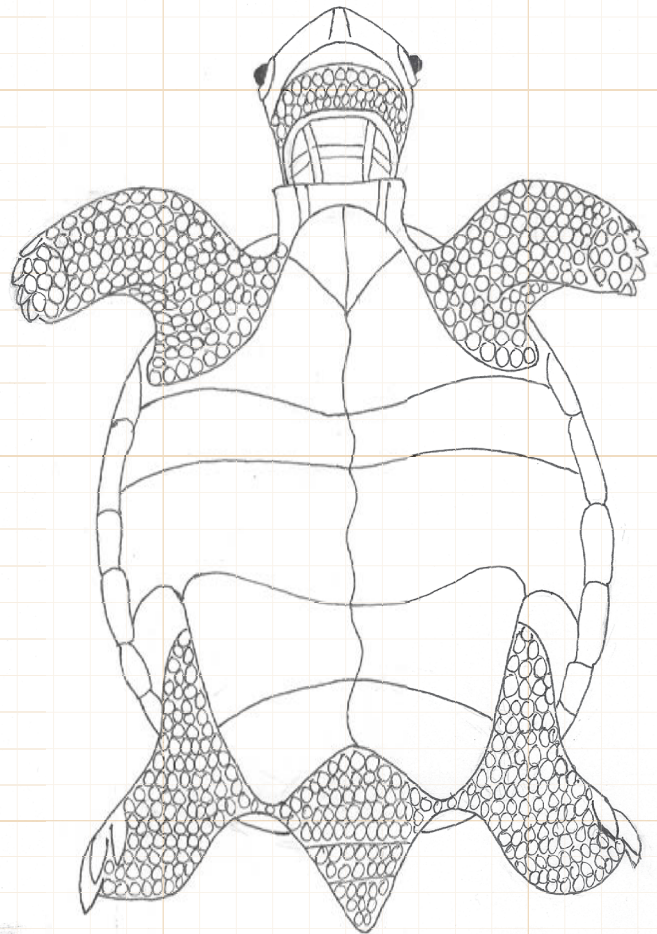
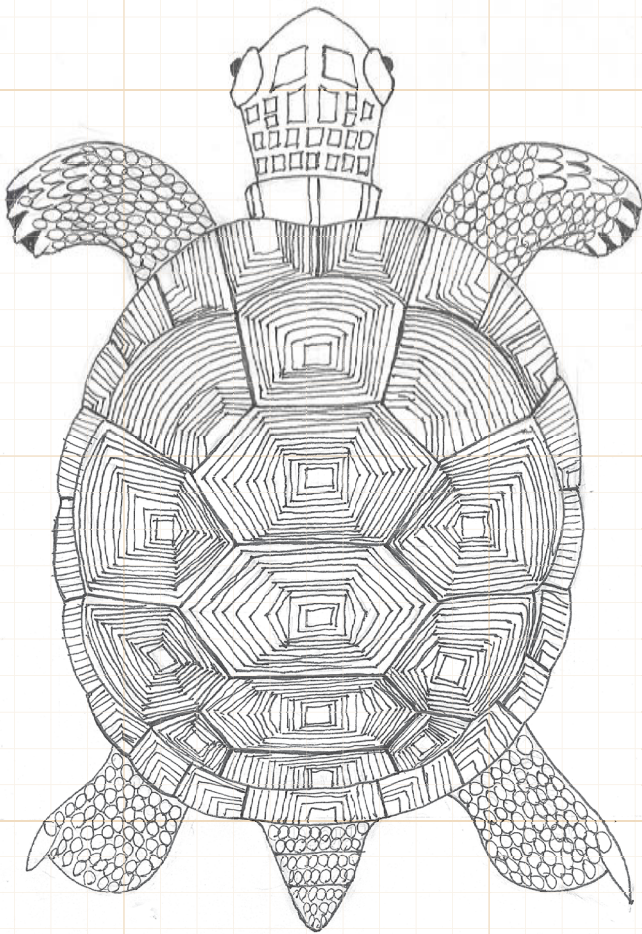
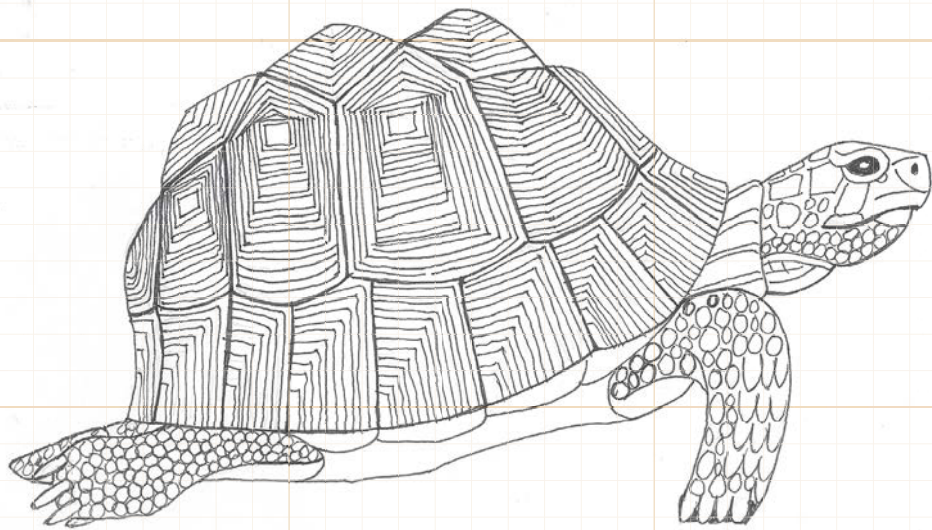
Bob Jubb shells out some top tips for carving this charming creature



There is confusion around the world over what a tortoise is. In the UK we call the land-dwelling shelled creature a tortoise, and his sea-dwelling cousin a turtle, but in the USA they use only the term 'turtle'. Whatever its name, the tortoise comes in nearly 30 varieties and is relatively unchanged since its

appearance more than 150 million years ago. They can also live to a great age. I am always amazed that tortoises have survived for so long as they seem so slow and vulnerable, but somehow they survive in many environments around the world and they vary in size from quite small, to the huge Galapagos tortoise.

Many years ago my sons were asked by our neighbours to look after their tortoise while they were away on holiday. Much to everyone's dismay, it disappeared... only to reappear two years later! So, my first tortoise was carved in honour of this incident. The dimensions of my tortoise carving are 180 x 90 x 115mm.





Carving tips

I have carved quite a few tortoises over the years, at natural size and also as netsukes and mostly in boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens*), but also in lime (*Tilia vulgaris*).

The grain runs along the carving, which means the back legs should not break off. There is short grain across the front legs, so I carved them quite thick to minimise the risk of fracture. The eyes are inlaid with buffalo horn.

After carving, I coated the whole piece with three applications of finishing oil that I allowed to dry and then sanded it down with very fine abrasive between coats. Afterwards, I polished it with a slightly darker wax in the form of Liberon Antique wax, to highlight the shell and scales on the head and legs. ▀

Netsuke tortoise in boxwood



wood **CARVING**

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Issue 152 SEP/OCT
ON SALE 25 AUG

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takes a look at the carving and raising of three totem poles – commissioned by the Victoria Native Friendship Centre – to honour and represent the three First Nations of Vancouver Island

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starts a news series called Diary of a Student Carver

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begins a two-part series on how to carve a horse's head

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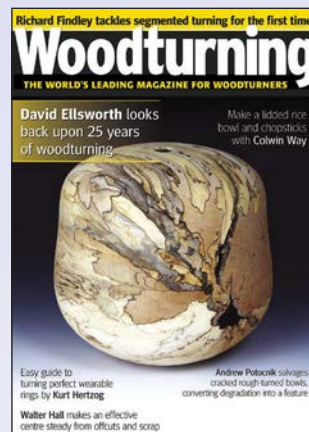
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What you want to know about...



Blades by Nic Westermann, using home-made handles

Carving knives

Peter Benson looks at selecting the perfect carving knife

In the last issue I dealt with the most common question that I was asked at the European Woodworking Show – how to sharpen tools and keep them sharp. Allied to this was the growing interest in carving with a knife – what knives to choose and how to keep them sharp.

Many of those who are of my generation can remember a time when almost every schoolboy would have a knife in his pocket or in a sheath on his belt. Sticks were cut into bows, arrows, swords and daggers for all our games as well as made into aircraft and model guns by those with a little more imagination. I can't remember anyone

ever using a knife in a threatening manner and the most dangerous activity for which they were used was to throw them at any available tree to see if they would stick in.

In these days of protecting young children from almost anything remotely dangerous and the incidence of knife crime it is rare for any child to have experience with anything sharp, yet knife carving is a great activity that can be hugely creative and enjoyable with very little financial outlay.

In the United States almost every town and city will have carving clubs with courses offered in knife carving (or whittling) and these will meet in senior

centres, garages or local halls with nothing but tables and a coffee pot. Not too many years ago it would have been rare for such a group to exist in this country, but gradually enthusiasts have found that you don't have to invest a large amount of well earned cash to be able to start woodcarving. This was backed up by the numbers of people who asked me questions about what sort of knives were suitable, where to get these and how to get and keep them sharp.

The answer to the first question is relatively simple. You can use almost any kind of craft or pocket knife as long as it will cut wood cleanly. I have seen

some amazing carvings done with only a Stanley knife, but I wouldn't recommend it as the most suitable by any means. What I am saying is that, if you have a folding or fixed blade pocket knife you can start with that and see how you get on.

I will mention here that there are now laws about carrying knives that you need to understand. Any folding pocket knife with a blade of less than 75mm long is legal to carry in your pocket. Any fixed or locking blade knife is not, unless, to quote, 'you have a very good reason'.

Knife selection

There is a huge selection of different knives out there that will all do a very good job if kept sharp and which ones you choose are a matter of personal preference, but I would recommend the following points to consider:

Comfort

The most important point is that the knife should be comfortable in your hand with a handle that is not so thin that your fingertips are pressed into the palm of your hand.

For roughing out you might like a bigger or heavier blade, whereas you could do with a narrower pointed

blade for general use. Each of these work better with a shallow or flat bevel as this makes its passage through the wood much easier. For fine detail work you could find that a smaller blade is best with a slightly curved bevel acting as a kind of depth gauge as it will generally be used to cut into the wood rather than through it. More about this later.

The reason for the general knife being slim is that you need to be able to spin the knife in a cut to get a smooth curve. Many knives, particularly those with interchangeable blades or made from thin flexible steel are often not only too wide at the tip but can be very difficult to sharpen if they get blunt. Choosing a slim bladed knife will pay off in the long run.

Many European knives have a very long bevel on the blade, often extending to the whole width. Avoid these for carving in any hard woods as the very thin cutting edge can easily degrade and break away. Ideally you need a blade that has a bevel that extends to about half the width of the blade giving you more strength. Those with a bevel that curves over the whole width of the blade work very well as long as the area immediately behind the cutting edge is flat, but they can be a little more difficult to stop effectively. The choice is yours. The widest range of suitable knives can be found in the United

States and I recommend that you look at adverts in this publication or on the internet before buying.

Price

Some knives can be quite expensive and there is no doubt that, in many cases you get what you pay for, but there is no guarantee that all knives will suit you so don't spend a lot on your first knife – work with it, play around with the design of the handle and blade until you come up with something that is ideal. Then, either buy a knife of the pattern you want or get a blade and make your own handle.

If you intend splashing out on a good knife, I feel that your best route is to buy a really good blade and make your own handle rather than spending more than this on a knife that may not suit. Most of the blades available can easily be fitted into a drilled piece of suitable wood and secured with epoxy glue before shaping the handle to fit your hand.

My final comment on this aspect is to not base your choice on the availability or advertising of knives. The fact that you see them readily available doesn't necessarily mean that they are the most suitable for you. Try a knife out before you part with any money. There will be other carvers with knives or you may see them at shows. You could even try



Peter Benson demonstrating how to use a knife



Pocket knives can make ideal carving knives

shaping an old penknife and see what shape of blade suits you, then look for something similar. I know that it is a waste of time for me to have a knife with a curved blade as I invariably end up cutting myself, so I avoid these. Others, however, love them so the problem is only mine.

Many of my carvers use a cheap, plain knife, available from the USA that they modify to suit their individual needs. The pictures here show what can be done with some of the knives and blades from the UK and USA.

Condition

Once you have your knife you should be able to get carving as only occasionally should you have one that will not cut cleanly. The bevel on the blade should be flat, at least for a distance from the cutting edge. You should only need to

hone, or strop this regularly to keep it in tip top condition.

No knife is any good if it isn't kept sharp and this doesn't have to be difficult. A diamond plate is, in my opinion, the best thing for getting the bevel flat as you can see the edge at all times as no lubricant is needed. You need to use this, keeping the bevel absolutely flat until there is a small burr all the way along the cutting edge. This means that you have gone right up to the cutting edge but this edge is ragged rather than smooth. Repeat for the other side of the blade. Then, stropping or honing on a leather or webbing strop, again keeping the bevel flat, until the burr disappears, will turn this ragged edge into a smooth, sharp edge that is needed to produce a clean cut. All that will then be necessary is to strop it after around each 20 minutes or so of use.

Doing this regularly and carefully will avoid having to go back to the diamond plate for a considerable time as, once the edge is smooth, you don't really want to make it ragged again. The more you strop it, the better it should be.

Safety

Finally, don't forget to get yourself a good safety glove and wear it all the time you are carving – on the hand you use to hold the wood. Most of my carvers now wear a pair of safety gloves as it is easy to cut the thumb of the knife hand. ▶

Contact details:

If you'd like your questions answered by Peter, send them in to Mark Baker at markb@thegmcgroup.com.



Knife blades from R. Murphy in the US. On left is standard knife and the rest are blades modified and/or handled by carvers

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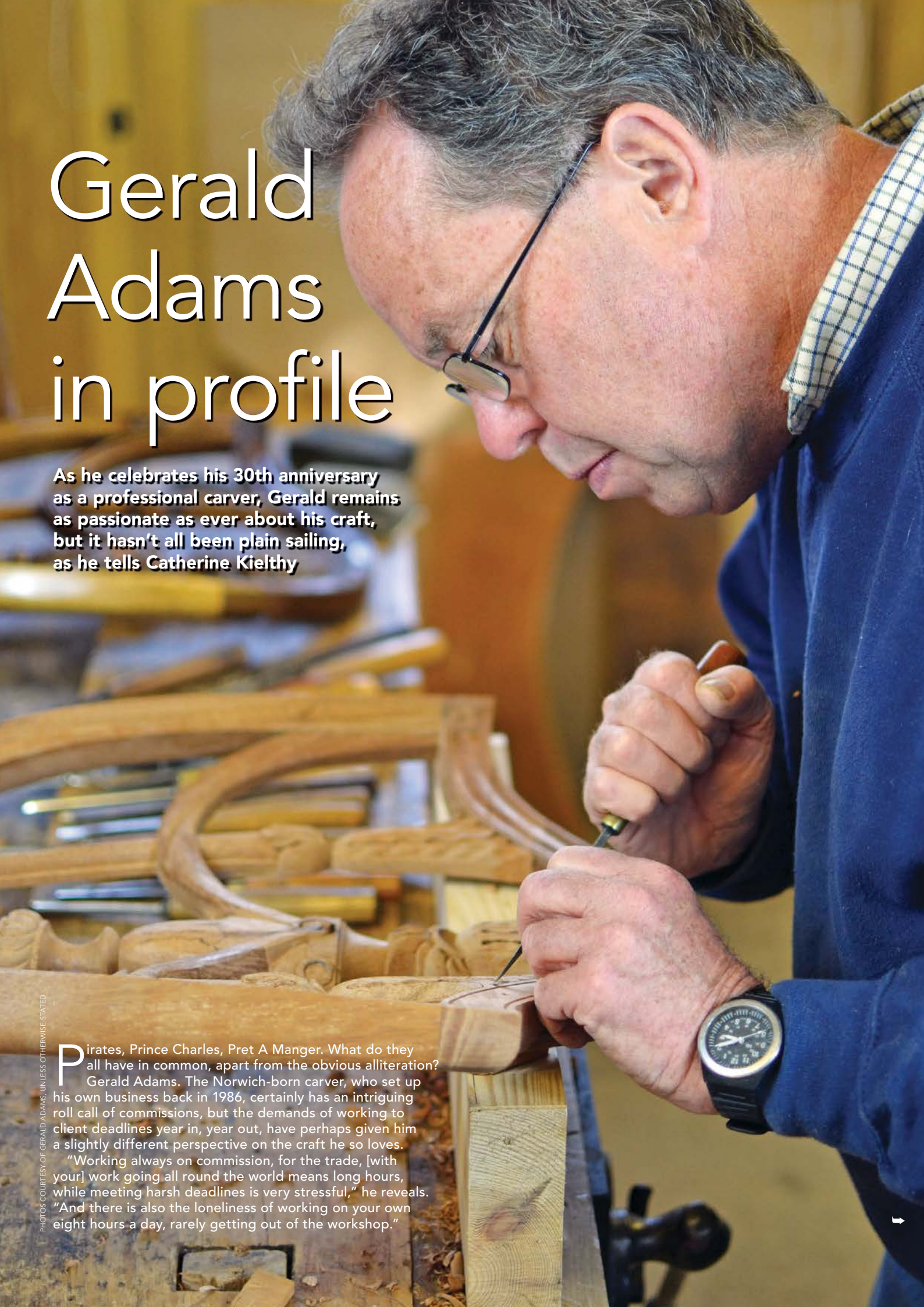


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Gerald Adams in profile

As he celebrates his 30th anniversary as a professional carver, Gerald remains as passionate as ever about his craft, but it hasn't all been plain sailing, as he tells Catherine Kielthy

Pirates, Prince Charles, Pret A Manger. What do they all have in common, apart from the obvious alliteration? Gerald Adams. The Norwich-born carver, who set up his own business back in 1986, certainly has an intriguing roll call of commissions, but the demands of working to client deadlines year in, year out, have perhaps given him a slightly different perspective on the craft he so loves.

"Working always on commission, for the trade, [with your] work going all round the world means long hours, while meeting harsh deadlines is very stressful," he reveals. "And there is also the loneliness of working on your own eight hours a day, rarely getting out of the workshop."

At one point, Gerald trained and employed three people to help him in the workshop, but while this meant that a tremendous amount of work was produced, it presented him with another set of problems to be solved. "I ended up spending most of my day dealing with clients, chasing up money, or doing the designing and quality control.

"After about 15 years of this [set-up], I found I wasn't enjoying my carving any more; it was just a way of turning stuff around as quickly and as cost effectively as possible.

"Then, one of my employees said to me one day: 'I really enjoy working here. I come in, work on all these amazing things and go home and forget all about it.' I thought if only I could do that! So I went back to working on my own, became much tougher about which jobs I took on, and started enjoying carving again." The switch in direction also gave Gerald the time to achieve his ambition of setting up some teaching courses to pass on his skills (see panel, page 43).



Two of Gerald's sycamore chairs, part of a Lord of the Rings-inspired dining suite commission for a client. Inset top: A detail from one of the leg carvings



The Pret A Manger sign was one of two carved for the eatery's branch at the Corn Exchange in Oxford. Being a listed building, the signs had to be in oak, not plastic



An example of Gerald's polished oak panelling (right) with details above and above right



Traditional style

His own route into carving was rather meandering. His creative side first expressed itself at Exeter Art College in the early 1970s, with his ambition to be a painter. He was also a folk musician whose tastes for expensive instruments, such as the hurdy-gurdy, far outstripped his income. Undeterred, he taught himself to make and repair musical instruments, even managing to scrape a living. When a workshop became available in his native Norfolk, however, he returned to his roots and helped to set up a craft gallery.

For a couple of years he also had a 'shop in Norwich and recalls how much he enjoyed the fine woodwork, especially the carving of heads and scrolls. As so often happens, however, financial implications loomed large. "And impending marriage and children!" he adds. The need to have a more reliable source of income became imperative, so Gerald secured a job at a local firm, making high-end reproduction furniture. "I started carving components, chair legs, backs, etc. and was encouraged to go to the London School of Furniture to study carving and gilding," he recalls. "I gained a distinction in the final exam." He has gone on to win numerous other accolades including awards from the Norfolk Furniture Makers Association for best craftsmanship, being accepted in 2002 for membership of the prestigious Master Carvers, and has carved presentation awards for Prince Charles and items for the Queen's collection.

He is 'by nature and training a traditionalist'. So, while he uses mechanical means to save time roughing out, he is generally a hand tool carver. His influences are varied, though he spends much time visiting country houses, churches and cathedrals and



"The stool was fun," says Gerald. "It was carved in lime and made to look like cloth prior to gilding"

reveals his fascination with the history and styles of carving from medieval misericords to Chippendale furniture. "I was very lucky recently to be able to go up scaffolding at a nearby church [to his home in Long Stratton, south Norwich] to see the medieval roof angels close up," he adds, "it was made circa 1405 and beautifully carved." It becomes

obvious, however, that Gerald draws his influence from far and wide. "I try to soak up everything I can. We travel quite a bit, to the Far East and Africa, and I will have a go in the local carvers' workshops. I'm always amazed at the quality of work produced with limited tools. I could never get the hang of working on the floor, holding the wood between my feet!"



Gerald's church screen at St Andrew's



A detail from the beautiful screen (left) with its playful depictions of nursery rhymes

Claim to fame

Given his 30 years in the business of creating stunning pieces of artwork, it seems a tad mean to ask Gerald to select a favourite item, but he rises to the challenge. "The pirate bed was a highlight. It was carved from oak [*Quercus robur*] and took about three months to complete," he recalls. "I also made the headboard for the lime [*Tilia vulgaris*] bed used in 2012 film *Anna Karenina*. My claim to fame is that for about five seconds Keira Knightley was

in my bed!" The Tolstoy epic isn't the only cultural reference that clients have brought to Gerald either.

"There was also a dining suite with characters from *The Lord of the Rings* on the chair legs and a huge dragon table that went with it, with great scaly legs, and a single huge eye looking at you as you had your dinner!" To our great disappointment, Gerald thinks he's lost the photos of that one (we so wanted to see that eye), but if any

readers have ever seen, or dined, at said suite, do share. Another highlight was a complete screen for St Andrew's church in Felmingham. "It was painted and gilt with water gilding, all the small spandrels gleaming like jewels. It was to house the Sunday school, so I carved nursery rhymes in the spandrels at child level, and little mice and snails in the tracery, apparently the kids love it."

Clearly, however, a lot of Gerald's work has been in combination with commercial furniture makers and architects, which brings its own demands and considerations: the items have to look good from many different aspects; there's scale and safety; whether it will work; if it will look good from distance/height; and, crucially, if it can be produced on time and in budget. The challenge always used to be to get the work done to very tight deadlines! But I would never give up. There is always a way, and that is part of the fun, the challenge to work something out. One of the things I always tell people is, if there is a problem, don't get hung up on the problem, look either side of it, and before you know it the problem has disappeared.



Luckily, Gerald didn't have to walk the plank for his 'pirate bed' commission, seen here in progress as well as in situ with the finished item taking centre stage



The oak ringing gallery carved for East Raynham church in Norfolk, with a hunting scene frieze along the bottom

Sharing skills

Now largely removed from budgetary constraints, his recent work has become more sculptural, reflecting a return to his art background with more individual pieces. In both can be seen his distinctive approach to carving, something he modestly waves away. "I don't know whether my approach is distinctive," he insists. "But I love the act of carving, the swish of a sharp tool through the wood, the way the light catches the edge of a shadow, I suppose that makes it distinctive."

It also makes the students who attend his short courses very lucky. "Most of my time now is spent teaching woodcarving," he explains. "I feel that my work is all about sharing the skills I have picked up over the past 30 years." Even his new, smaller workshop, into which he was in the process of moving when we spoke to him in March, has been tailored to teaching. And although the move was a little stressful and required Gerald to offload some of his bigger machines he seemed remarkably calm. But then he is a far more easygoing man than his younger self. "I'm in the lucky position now that I can pick and choose which commissions



A detail from a set of pre-gilded 4.6m lime (Tilia vulgaris) pelmets for a Russian client in London

to work on," he says, "I recently finished a nice eagle lectern for a church in Essex. It took me three months and there was quite a bit of research, but no pressure or stress. It was quite unlike when I was mass-producing chair legs to tight deadlines. I'm more relaxed and enjoy the balance I have between working on some

prestigious commissions and my teaching.

"One day I'd like to write a book on some of the things I have learned; I just need to find the time!" We suspect that he'll make time and, hopefully, that picture of the one-eyed dragon table will be unearthed and keep watch over the whole proceedings. ▀

Practise what you teach

Gerald, who gained a Cert Ed, teaching qualification in 1998 and has taught at adult education and technical college level for many years, has a never-ending supply of enthusiasm when it comes to passing on his skills. He runs a variety of short courses from his workshop, some are aimed at beginners while others, such as the chair-making sessions, require some experience of cabinetmaking/carving.

"I have about 30 students who come in, eight in a class, for weekly two-and-a-half-hour sessions, and we have a really nice time. We have a laugh, lots of tea and biscuits and actually get some work done, too! I also do weekend carving courses and a five-day classic chair-making course. We cover the basic techniques of tool handling and sharpening, which a lot of people struggle with."

"Most of my weekly students have come from the [weekend and short] courses, and it is great to see people want to carry on with a new hobby and, in some cases, even make a new career.

There is something very satisfying about seeing someone a few weeks after their first course using the techniques I have taught them and with very sharp tools, too."



Gerald (far right) with a group of students at his carving workshop

Gerald welcomes students of all ages and keeps an open mind about all types of work and new technology, although he points out that some jobs just cannot be done with laser or CNC cutting, however sophisticated the

machines and software. "Basically, I am a traditionalist, so I see my job as to teach students the fundamental techniques of woodcarving to enable them to take the craft in whichever direction they like."

For more details of Gerald's carving and chair-making courses, visit www.adamswoodcarving.co.uk or phone 01508 532 111

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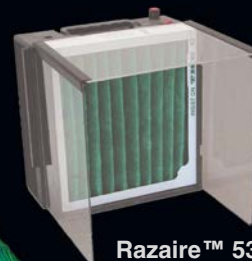


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**Woodcarver
Zoe Gertner
carves a
trio of hares**

Three hares of Dartmoor

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zoe Gertner specialises in teaching woodcarving and sculpture, and is a fully qualified teacher and Adult Education tutor who studied anatomy and physiology as part of her university degree. Zoe is experienced in teaching and practising all aspects of woodcarving and wood sculpture and has been working professionally since 1980. At her workshop in Devon, she gives a variety of woodcarving courses and creates unique carvings by order. See her website here: www.zoegertner.co.uk



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ZOE GERTNER

I dly gazing across to the big field opposite my workshop, I spotted the three large brown hares we often see romping around, which brought to mind a well-known puzzle. How can three hares or rabbits, each having two ears, chasing each other round in a circle, share just three ears between them?

The ancient symbol of three hares or rabbits running in a circle, joined by their ears which form a triangle in the centre is an extraordinary design, which has been found over the centuries

from here to China and other far flung parts of the world.

Devon, and Dartmoor in particular, is richly endowed with this symbol carved on wooden roof bosses. The motif occurs in one form or another 29 times, in 17 churches alone – from its association with Dartmoor tin mining, the pattern is known locally as the 'Tinner's Hares' or 'Tinner's Rabbits'. To this day the ancient symbol excites, interests and intrigues, and this project shows you how to design and carve your own 'chasing hares'.

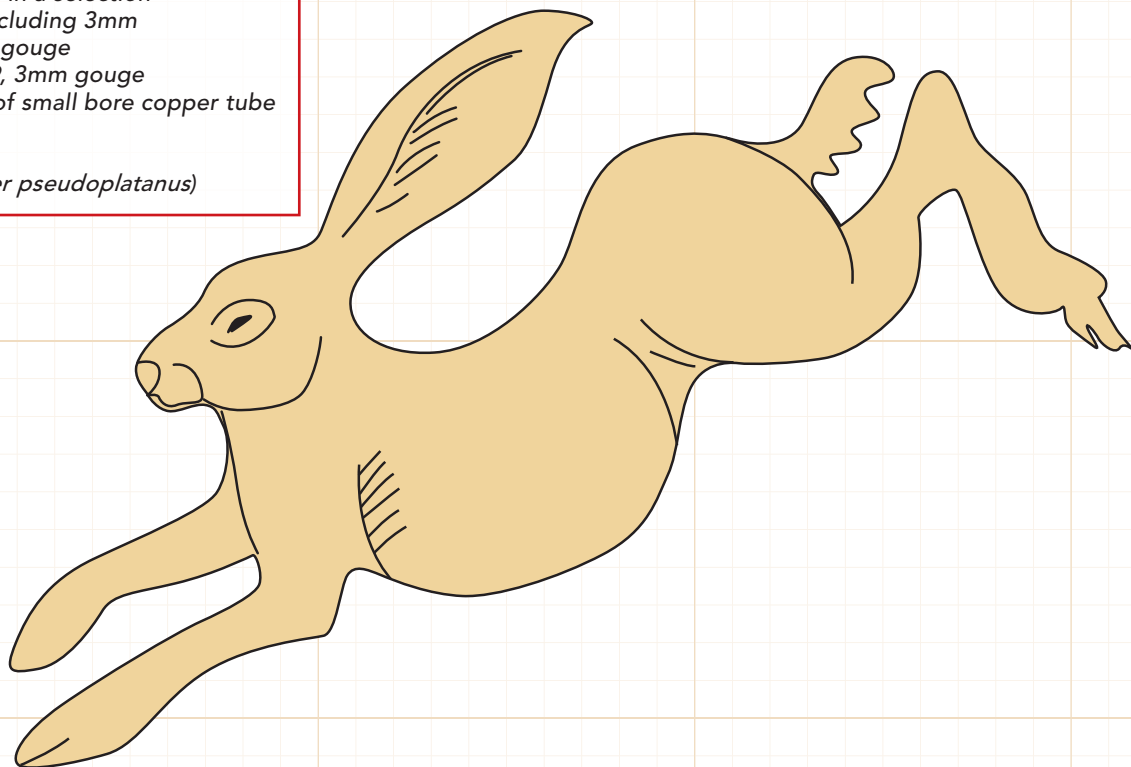
Things you will need...

Tools:

- 6 or 3mm, 60° 'V'-tool
- No.3 gouges in a selection of widths, including 3mm
- No.5, 10mm gouge
- No.8 or No.9, 3mm gouge
- Short piece of small bore copper tube

Wood:

Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*)



Preparation

For this carving I used a sycamore turning blank, at approximately 200mm in diameter and 20mm thick. Most timbers such as beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), light coloured oak (*Quercus robur*) and lime (*Tilia vulgaris*) can be used for a project like this. A lighter coloured wood will show detail more clearly than a darker one.

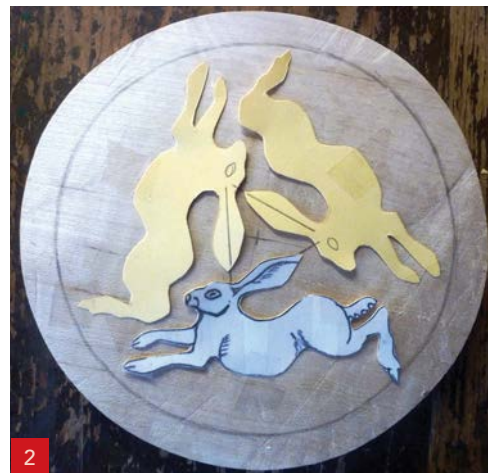
Starting the carving

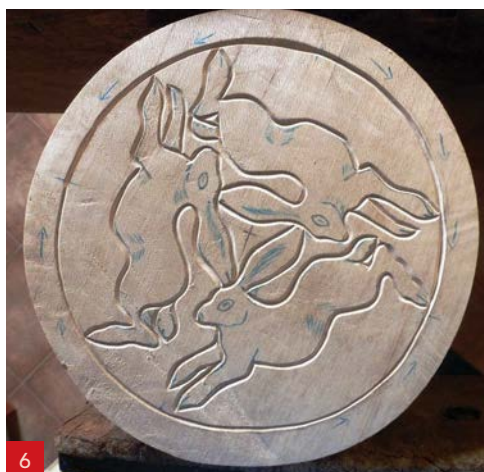
1 First, draw the outline of the leaping hare and tape it down to a piece of card folded in three. Cut around the outline with scissors. This should result in three identical outlines to use as templates

2 Next, mark the centre of the disc and arrange the hares around it

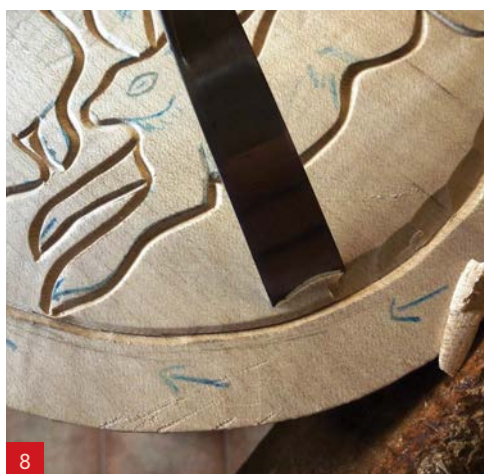
3 With the ears forming a triangle around the centre mark, fasten the cutouts in place and draw around each of them

4 Extend the length of the ears if necessary, to touch the top of the following hare's head and draw a border around the edge of the timber





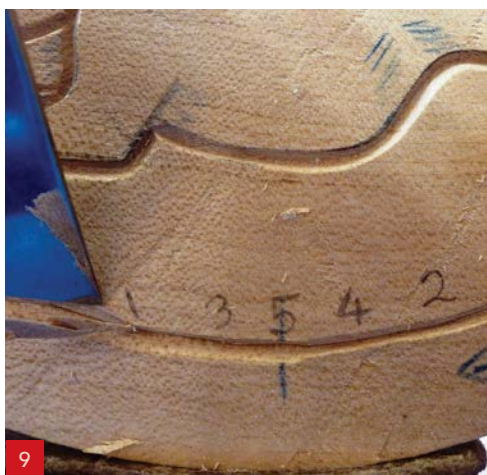
5 Using a mallet and the 'V'-tool, cut around the circular border. To avoid splitting the wood around the border, align your disc with the grain lying horizontally and start taking your 'V' cuts from the middle of the border circle at a 3 o'clock position. Cut towards the top (12 o'clock) and the bottom (6 o'clock); then repeat from the opposite side at a 9 o'clock position, finishing the cuts at the top and bottom, 12 and 6 o'clock positions



6 Now, carefully cut around each of the three hare outlines with the 'V'-tool

7 Next, cut downwards around the inside of the border with a wide No.3 gouge that corresponds with its curve. Angle the gouge along the edge of the 'V' channel and mark it

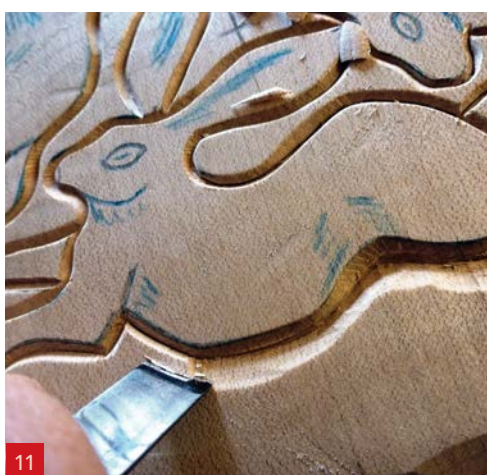
8 With a No.3 gouge and holding it with its bevel down, cut towards the border. This will form a deeper and wider 'V' channel. Starting from the 3 o'clock and 9 o'clock positions, work towards the top and bottom of the border



9 On reaching the top and bottom of the carving, make alternate cuts from each side to obtain a cleanly cut channel the entire way around the border

10 Now cut around each of the hares using the No.3 gouges. Rest the cutting edge so it is angled against the edge inside the 'V' channel cut before, and cut downwards around the outlines. Be sure to turn the gouge as necessary to match the curves outlining the three hares

11 Again, with its bevel down, use the No.3 gouge and cut towards the outlines. Angle the gouge to meet the previous cuts made. This will deepen and widen the 'V' channels around the hares, seemingly bringing them forwards in the carving



Removing the background

12 Using a No.3 or No.5 gouge, start removing the background by cutting towards the edge of the widened 'V' channel and work successive, overlapping cuts. Do this until you reach the middle of the area to be removed. Now turn your carving around and repeat the process from the opposite channel

➔ **13** Now, carefully remove the small peak remaining in the middle of the area. Smooth the surface between the border and each of the hares with the No.3 gouges

Working out the levels

14 The easiest way to work out the different levels is to denote the background areas as 'No.1' – these are the deepest areas of the carving – which you should have removed already. The next deepest is then denoted as 'No.2', i.e. the forelegs and the tips of the furthestmost ears adjoining the head of the following hare. 'No.3' are the tails and the tips of the noses, and so on

“Work over the whole animal so that none of the original surface remains...”

15 Now, with the No.3 gouge, cut along the edge of the top of the head, then with shallow cuts, reduce the tips of the adjoining ears. Reduce the foreleg and tail in the same way

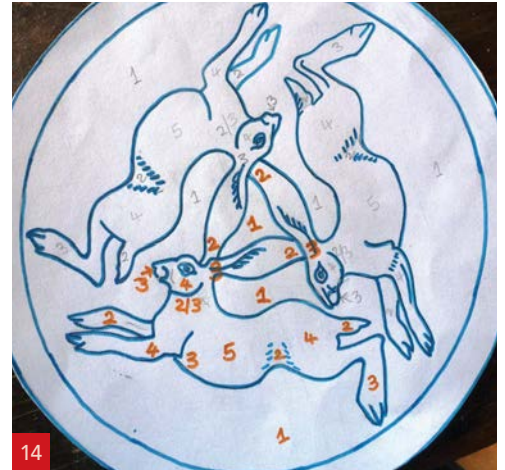
16 Round over the edges of the ears and hollow them using the No.8 or No.9, 3mm gouge

17 Cutting with the No.3 gouge from each side, carefully reduce the waist areas to a hollow between the haunch and the ribcage. Then reduce the neck areas below the jawline

18 Round over all edges and reduce the No.3 areas, i.e. the hindleg, tip of the nose, base of the nearer ear and the area of the ribcage behind the nearer foreleg. With the No.3, 3mm gouge, reshape the lower edge of the tail so it is crimped. Work over the whole animal so that none of the original surface remains, reducing the No.4 areas at the same time



13



14



15



16



17



18



19



20

The eyes

19 Draw the oval-shaped eyes on the head. Its outline can be cut either using a 3mm 'V'-tool, or as shown, by means of a home-made punch. Having cut a short piece of microbore copper pipe, squeeze it to an oval shape in a metalworking vice, then file the edge sharp so it will indent the wood when tapped with a light hammer. Complete the eye by lightly tapping a nail punch within the ovals to bring them to life



21

"For finishing, I left my hares tooled to contrast with the smooth background of the carving"

The toes

20 For detail on the hares, mark a line on each hares' foot using the 3mm 'V'-tool

Finishing

21 Remove any deep gouge cuts in the background surface and cut clean all meeting edges. The background can be scraped using the edge of a surplus No.3 gouge that has a burr honed along its cutting edge. For finishing, I left my hares tooled to contrast with the smooth background of the carving. However you leave the hares, apply a coat of wax polish, and then buff the carving with a lint-free duster

22 Your final carving should look something like this ▶



22

Handy hints

- 1.** Cereal packet cardboard is ideal for making the hare template, as the outlines of the pattern can be cut out easily using scissors
- 2.** To make a clean channel inside the top and bottom of the concave edge of the border, use alternate cuts from each side of the border and finish your cuts at the middle of the curve

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Wood finishes

Andrew Thomas looks at using wood finishes

Wood finishing is an important and extremely enjoyable skill to learn which, if accomplished correctly, greatly enhances and enriches the natural beauty of wood and consequently the overall attraction of the finished form. This is, of course, a very personal matter for which we all have our own individual preferences and favourites.

In this article I will outline and demonstrate some of the finishes that are available to purchase, and evaluate their effectiveness for the purpose of application to woodcarvings and sculptures.

There are literally dozens of prepared wood finishes available to purchase that are appropriate for woodcarvings and sculptures. These basically fall into the categories of; oil, wax polish and bleach. These can be traditional or modern formulations, with either a hard durable surface, or a softer less durable one. Each of these products creates a slightly different variation of colour tone and effect on the wood grain, which takes practice and experience to understand and predict.

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.
Web: www.3dsculptor.com



Health and safety

Each of the individual products used in this article can be found on their manufacturer's website, who supply downloadable product data and safety sheets. These sheets describe ingredient compositions, handling, storage, hazards and safety issues, etc.

It is vital the user should be aware of the substance that they are handling and take all necessary safety precautions to protect their own health and environment!

A selection of finishes



This is the selection of excellent wood finishes that have been chosen for this article. They are very effective, give fabulous results and have stood the test of time



Left, top to bottom: English cherry, American black walnut
Centre, top to bottom: Spalted beech, steamed pear, tulipwood
Right, top to bottom: English walnut, English lime

Most species of wood, whether hard or softwoods, can be carved to a greater or lesser degree, but hardwood is generally accepted as the first choice. I have selected some of the more commonly used hardwoods for carving, to demonstrate the colour and effects that are achievable with the various wood finishes featured. These have been sanded to 400 grit and are their natural colour before any finishes have been applied.

Oil finishes

The traditional oiled wood finishes are arguably the most effective product for enriching the natural beauty of wood grain, in particular the darker species, such as walnut. It is an absolute joy to use and gives immediate results by penetrating deeply into the wood grain and enhancing the various colour tones.

Application:

Use a clean, small lint-free soft cloth, approximately 50 x 50mm, to apply the oil, working in the direction of the grain. Apply the oil fairly liberally but do not let it pool into any corners as it can clog the detail (especially boiled linseed oil, which will dry to a rubbery residue, requiring it to be scraped out). Wipe off any surplus oil with a clean dry cloth after a few minutes. Awkward areas can



Boiled linseed oil

be reached by using a small brush.

Please note that oily cloths are prone to spontaneous combustion and must be disposed of carefully outdoors.

Please read the warnings on the product data sheets or labels, and follow these guidelines to the letter each and every time you use it!



Boiled linseed oil

Boiled linseed oil

Interior: One coat

Exterior: Two to three coats

Drying time: 16–24 hours

Boiled linseed oil is extremely good value for money and offers a most beautifully rich enhancement to the natural colour of timber. For lighter species of wood, such as lime, it produces a deep golden tone, which is sometimes of value for a specific project, but not often appropriate.

For darker timbers such as walnut, tulipwood, pear and cherry, it really adds a superior depth to the natural colour tones of the wood which can be exceptionally exquisite on highly figured timber.

Boiled linseed oil is a standalone finish in its own right, but dark wax can be used to great effect on top. This should initially be applied after two weeks, and then again one month later, which produces a wonderful medium to high lustre finish, and dramatically enhances the grain and figure.

Danish oil

Interior only: Three coats

Drying time: Four to six hours

Danish oil is quite different from the boiled linseed oil, as it is a blend of oils (including tung oil), resins and dryers, which produce a harder and more durable low lustre satin finish for interior wood. It is slightly thinner in its viscosity and produces a lighter depth of enrichment to the grain colour, but is still very attractive. This finish suits the spectrum of browns from light to dark, and therefore works nicely for all species of timber. It is also appropriate for carvings that have very delicate, fine and fragile detail, as it has the advantage of producing a durable long lasting finish that only requires re-oiling periodically.

This oil is also a standalone finish in its own right, but can be waxed on top for a higher lustre finish. Simply flat back the third coat when dry with a very high grit cloth (1500–2000) or abrasive paper, and then apply the wax polish for a super medium to high sheen.



Danish oil

Tung oil

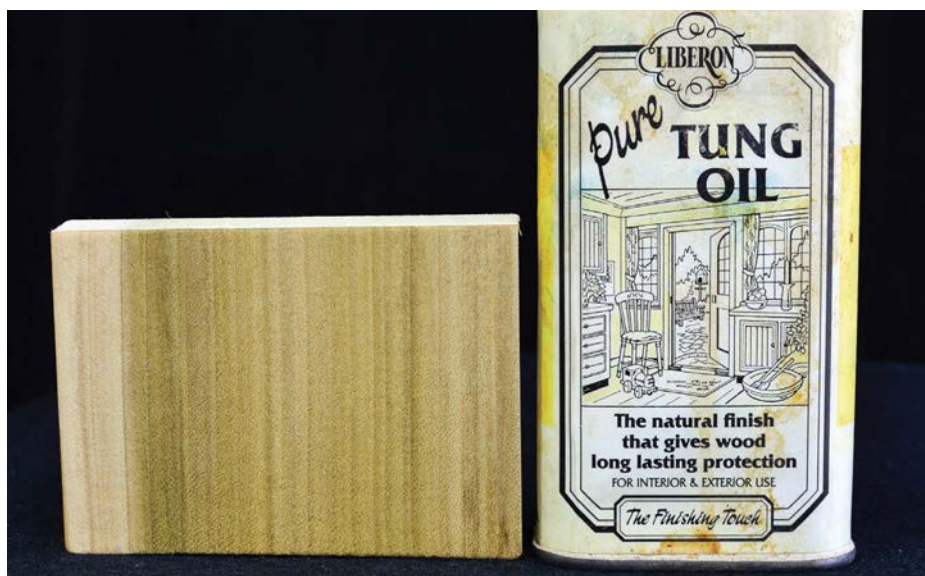
Interior: Three coats

Exterior: Three to four coats

Drying time: Minimum of 24 hours

Tung oil has a much thicker viscosity than the other oils and can be used for both interior and exterior work, due to the special properties that make it highly resistant to water, alcohol and food stuffs. It is therefore very appropriate to use for finishing any projects that will come in contact with food, for example, carved bowls or cheeseboards. The colour that it produces is in between the linseed and Danish oil, which lends itself more to the darker wood species.

The first two or three coats can be diluted with 50% white spirit, which will assist the penetration into the timber. The final coat can be applied undiluted.



Tung oil

Wax finishes

There is a plethora of wax polishes available to purchase and everyone, through trial and error, will eventually find their personal favourites. These waxes can either be purchased coloured with a special pigment, which enhances the natural colour tones of the timber being used, or 'clear' for lighter coloured timbers, both of which add a degree of lustre to the surface of the wood and protection against ingraining dust and UV rays. These are also available as either quick or slow drying formulations.

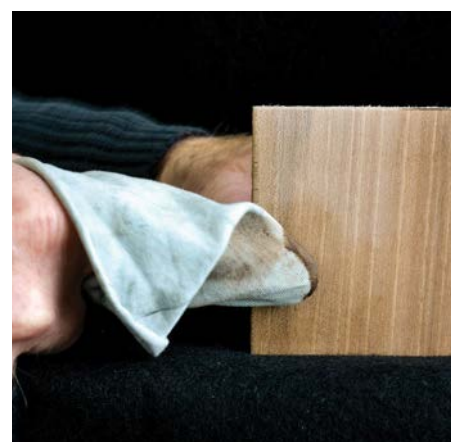
Application:

Use a clean, soft lint-free cloth to apply a very small amount of wax polish at a

time, working it deeply in the direction of the grain. Keep moving the cloth to a fresh clean section each time you load it. When the wax has dried sufficiently, use a different clean soft lint free cloth to buff the surface.

Two coats are usually necessary on bare wood. Awkward areas of detail can be polished with two soft clean brushes; one to apply the wax, and the other to buff it off.

Quick drying waxes must be applied over small areas of between 100–150mm at a time, and then buffed straight off. Slower drying waxes can be applied over the complete carving then buffed off at leisure.



Application by clean, soft, lint free cloth

Briwax original – walnut pigment

Drying time: Quick drying
Interior only: Two coats

Briwax original walnut lends itself perfectly for use on any of the darker species of timber. On application it penetrates deeply into the wood, beautifully enriching the natural colour of the grain and figure, and produces a wonderful medium to high lustre finish. The wax is, however, prone to water marks which can 'bloom' if not wiped off quickly. It also dulls slightly when handled due to the moisture from the skin.



Liquefy the wax for effective application

Briwax was also formulated to be worked when liquefied, which is a very effective way to apply the polish deeply into the surface of the wood. During the colder months of the year, you can melt the wax easily by placing it on either a warm radiator or a hot water bottle, but do not place it near any naked flames as it is highly flammable.

Briwax original – clear

Drying time: Quick drying
Interior only: Two coats

Briwax original clear is the same formulation as the walnut but without any pigment added for colour, and is equally effective. It is therefore appropriate for lighter coloured species of timber such as lime and beech. The tonal variation from the natural colour of the timber is minimal, and the enhancement of the natural rays are deep and beautiful.

Antiquax original – natural

Drying time: Slow drying
Interior: Two coats
Exterior: Three coats

Antiquax original is a traditional wax polish which can be purchased in either a tin or silicone free spray. The polish has been specially formulated to resist fingerprints, which is definitely of high value to the user. The 'natural' colour of the wax finishes with a deeper tone to the Briwax, but less so than the oils, which works very well on both ends of the brown spectrum. It produces a fabulous finish which really enhances the depth of the grain.



Briwax original – walnut pigment



Briwax original – clear



Antiquax original – natural

Renaissance wax

Drying time: Slow drying

Interior: Two coats

Exterior: Three coats

Renaissance wax polish is marketed as the 'perfect polish', specified by museums, art galleries and conservators around the world as the finest cleaner/polish wax available, which is also reflected in its price. It is quite different to the other waxes as the formulation is a chemically neutral, semi-synthetic microcrystalline wax, entirely free of any damaging acids. This polish has a dual purpose of restoring/revitalising, and polishing/protecting many different materials including wood. For the purpose of wood finishing, it's a very durable wax that strongly resists the effects of humidity and moisture, which is a real plus. The depth of tone that the finish produces is very light indeed, almost identical to that of the Briwax clear, and therefore perfect for the light coloured timbers. The Briwax does, however, produce a slightly better enhancement of the natural rays.



Renaissance wax

Wood bleach



Part A has been applied to the lime wood, which has deepened the tone Part B has been applied to the lime wood, which has lightened the tone

There are occasions when the subject being carved would greatly benefit from being lighter in colour than any natural timber's colour tones could offer, for example; a swan, polar bear, or a subject that would be enhanced by shadow.

Rustin's wood bleach offers quite a good solution to this problem, as the lighter tone can be greatly increased, but also controlled to some extent by the number of applications made to the timber. It creates an almost porcelain effect which still allows the grain to persist through to the surface, which can be remarkably effective.

Application:

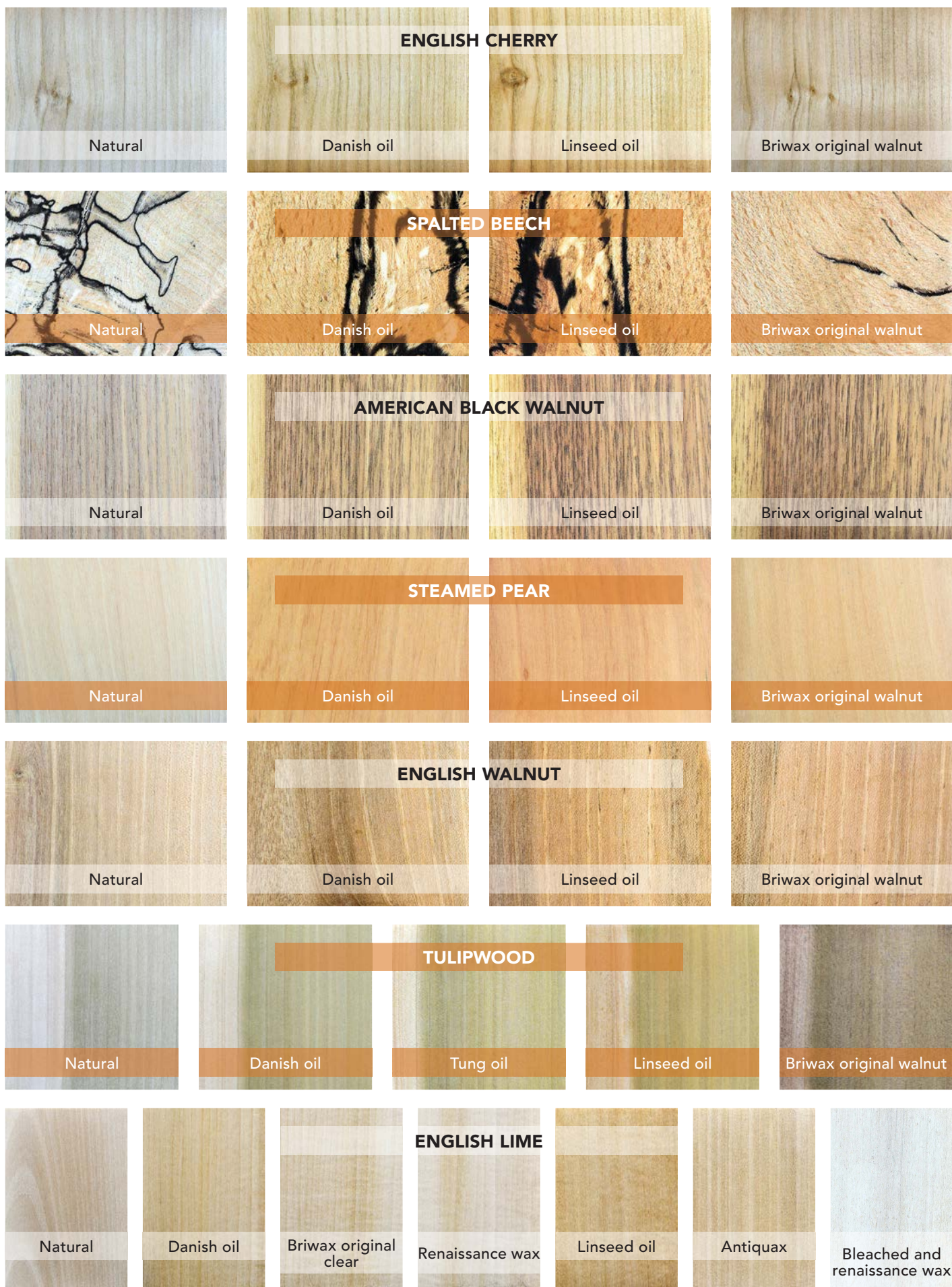
One to four coats, depending on the brightness of the tone required, two coats of clear wax on top

The instructions for the handling and use of the bleach are both important and extensive, so please download the excellent data sheets from www.rustins.co.uk for an in-depth breakdown of them. Briefly however, ensure that protective gloves are worn and a synthetic light coloured brush is used. Part A, the alkaline solution, is applied to the bare wood first and left for up to

20 minutes to react, which surprisingly deepens the tone of the grain.

Part B, the Hydrogen Peroxide, is then brushed over the surface and left for three to four hours. If a lighter tone is required, then the process of parts A and B can be repeated after just two hours. When the wood tone has reached the correct level for the subject, wash the surface with clean water and allow to dry. The surface then requires neutralising, which is simply a capful of white vinegar diluted in a cup of water, applied liberally over the surface and left to dry.

WOOD FINISH COLOUR TONE COMPARISONS





Set in stone

Nazar Dmiuterko tells Catherine Kielthy how a former boss steered him towards a creative new path in carving

It's best known for its recent history as host of the London 2012 Olympics, but hidden among the glass, steel and bling of the regenerated Stratford in East London lies an unassuming red-brick building in which a group of students are learning a craft that pre-dates the sporting spectacular by, well, just a few centuries – and their work would sit happily on the gold medal-winning podium. Welcome to the stonemasonry and carving workshop at the Building Crafts College.

We couldn't resist poking our noses into their 'shop while on a visit to the college's prestigious fine furniture course, led by former Bucks University tutor Neil Austin, for our sister title *Woodworking Crafts*, issue 15 (on sale now). We were so blown away by the

quality of their work – the office and store shop have been carved by BCC students down the years – that we asked to interview one of the current batch of carvers. Nigel Gilkison, the department's area manager, pointed us in the direction of up-and-coming talent Nazar Dmiuterko, 23.

Naz, tell us a little about yourself...

I'm from a city called Ternopil in Ukraine. It's in the west of the country and lies on the River Seret. I came to London with my family when I was seven and have lived in East London since then.

Is there a history of stonemasonry in your family?

No, I'm the first one to take up stonemasonry.

Did you always feel you had a creative personality?

No, I didn't. In fact, to be honest, I thought the opposite – that I didn't have any creativity. However, once I'd got into stonemasonry, and the longer I studied it, the more I felt that I could become increasingly creative.

So, does that mean stone wasn't your first passion?

When I finished secondary school, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. I went to Westminster College and passed a BTEC National in IT. However, I didn't want to work in an office and I hated the idea of staring at a computer. Instead, I started labouring and tried different things. It was during this time that my boss, a mason, showed me the



A shot of the stone office carved by BCC students



A section of Naz's egg-and-dart work in marble after rinsing

things that could be done with stone. I discovered that he had studied at the Building Crafts College at the time when it was based at Great Titchfield Street in central London. He took me along to see the college for myself.

So, that's why you're at the BCC...

Yes, but also I learned that the tutors were some of the best in England and as far as I'm aware the course is the best in the country. Also, the work produced on the course is amazing. The office building in the college has all been built and carved by previous and current students [see picture top left]. I found that really appealing.

And which course did you choose?

I'm studying for an Advanced City & Guilds Diploma in Banker Stonemasonry, which I started in September 2014. The course is for one year, but I was in the college three days a week and doing

paid work on the other two. I'm now doing advanced stonemasonry having finished Levels 2 and 3.

Has the course nurtured your passion for carving?

I love carving stone and also having the ability with my hands to carve something beautiful with passion and accuracy. Also, I know that what I create out of stone will be fixed onto a building and survive for centuries.

How would you describe your tutors (bearing in mind they'll be marking your work, Naz)?

The tutors are great here. They are very supportive, helpful and, most importantly, they are very inspirational. We have Nancy, who is a great letter carver; Jon, a brilliant free carver; and there's the senior tutor of the Stonemasonry department Nigel. [We can back Naz up on this, too. Our visit to the college saw us introduced



A project to carve a ball finial with French gadroons in limestone helped to develop Naz's attention to the tiniest details

to a string of inspiring, talented and charismatic tutors all keen to pass on their knowledge and nurture the talent of their students.]

What's had the most impact on you so far from the course and is there anything in particular that you have learned that's changed your view or style?

In the beginning of the academic year, I made a ball finial with some French gadroons. The setting out for them was complicated, but it was a very interesting piece to do. Also, while I was carving it, it helped me to see the details and made it easier to see other aspects in my earlier works. This has trained my mason's eye to see that even the tiniest points matter.

Are there any particular historical influences/artists that you admire?

The classical architecture is the most



The stonemason's tools have changed little down the ages



Naz hard at work

influential for me, as the ancient world created architecture from elements of the animals, their gods and nature itself. Also David, by Michelangelo, has inspired me to work with marble and to be more confident.

In which areas do you hope to work after your course?

I wish to work in heritage and commission work, but mostly heritage, restoration and conservation. I have applied and been accepted for the Prince's Foundation Building Craft Apprenticeship scheme. It's an eight-month course with a £1000 monthly bursary and it will result in a heritage NVQ. This will lead me closer to the work that I love to do. Also I am very interested in doing a course at The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings under the remit of The William Morris Craft Fellowship. ▶

Naz's latest work with inscription on slate



Carved in stone

Naz's course is run by the Building Crafts College, an educational charity governed and financially supported by the Worshipful Company of Carpenters. A multi-craft facility, it offers more than 40 qualifications in a range of subjects including bench joinery, heritage crafts, wood machining and construction site management. There are nine courses in the stonemasonry category. Entry requirements, age bands and fees vary depending on the course.

Contact: Building Crafts College, Kennard Road, Stratford, London E15 1AH

Web: www.thebcc.ac.uk

Email: info@thebcc.ac.uk

Tel: 020 8522 1705

Facebook: The Building Crafts College Stratford

Contact Nazar Dmiuterko **Email:** nazdmiuterko@gmail.com

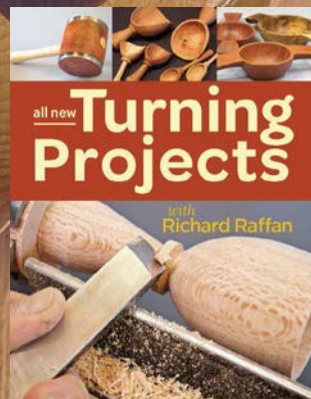
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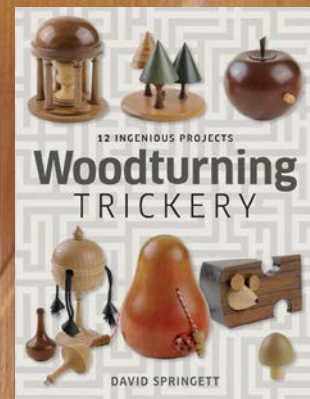
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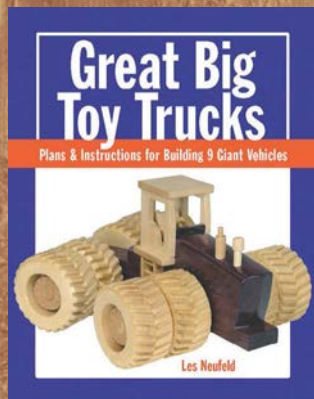
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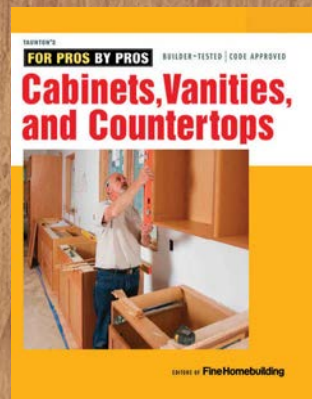
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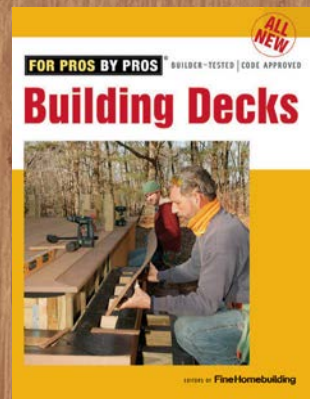
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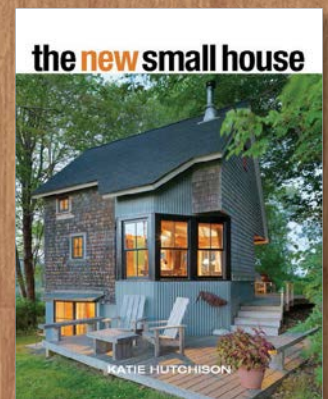
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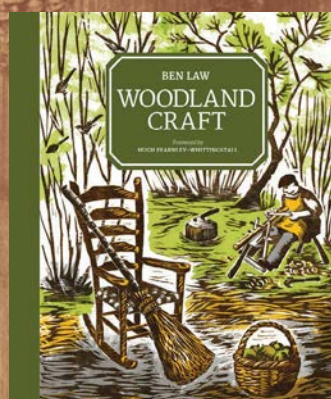
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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



I'm frequently sent emails or letters from fellow carvers detailing their experiences carving their first lovespoons. For me, it is a great pleasure to be allowed to see their work; a pleasure made even greater when they occasionally ask my advice on how they can improve their carvings. Along with the ego boost, however, comes a great deal of responsibility as I try to deal with my responses as carefully and positively as possible. When I am asked to tell someone what I think of his or her piece and to offer suggestions, I often find myself not knowing whether the person at the other end wants me to offer constructive criticism or would simply prefer to hear some nice things said about their efforts. This can make replying a bit of a minefield! To help those who have questions about their lovespoons, I hope that the following advice will help both beginners and those stuck on plateaus to improve and progress.

I have noticed, over my many years, that certain issues crop up with some frequency and it is my plan to address as many as I can in a sequential manner.

The bowl

Inevitably, the bowl is the first thing I notice when viewing a lovespoon and I tend to be a bit of a broken record when it comes to emphasising the importance of it being elegant, proportional and well-carved. By its nature, lovespoon carving is an exuberant endeavour and lots of busy action occurs throughout most handle areas. With graceful simplicity, the bowl acts as a counter-balance to that chaos, while also offering a visual reminder that the object is a spoon. Think of it as the anchor of the piece, as critical to a successful design as the most elaborately carved handle!

Sadly, it is often treated as something of an afterthought, with little attention lavished upon it. It doesn't help that the Internet is awash with photos of crudely manufactured souvenir spoons which are minimally machined to keep costs down. Most of these commercial spoons feature chunky, graceless bowls more suited to quelling football violence than to symbolising the elegance of love! Things to be aware of when carving a bowl are:

- **Proportion:** Does the bowl seem the right size for the handle? Too small and the handle will appear unwieldy; too big and the bowl may overpower the design.
- **Depth:** This is a tricky thing to get just right, as a bowl that is too shallow may appear underworked, while an excessively deep one may become slightly inelegant. Generally, depths that would be comfortable for an eating spoon will look best on a lovespoon design.
- **Edges:** The thinner, fairer and more



A poorly carved bowl makes a lovespoon look unfinished and a bit graceless



This bowl by Laura Jenkins Gorun has beautiful proportions, depth and shape



Laura's bowl also has a beautifully even edge



Always stay aware of the bowl's thickness



Bowls can be asymmetric, but balanced

even you can keep the lip of the bowl, the more balanced and elegant the bowl becomes. Keeping a thick edge is a good idea for absolute beginners as it keeps material 'on hand' for repairs and adjustments, but I think the ultimate goal is to work the lip to a very fine edge.

- **Shape:** The shape of your bowl is often dictated by the design of the handle. The bowl needn't always be symmetrical to be effective. Asymmetric bowls can lend design flair or a touch of tension to a design.
- **Finish:** I'm a firm believer in really finishing a bowl. I like the curves to

be as fair and even as possible, both along the lip and in toward the centre of the bowl. This is the area that will be felt first and longest when the spoon is handled, so a pleasing, uniform finish is a must! If the bowl is finished 'from the knife', make every effort to ensure the cuts are precise and clean!

- **Be careful to keep track of where you are when shaping a bowl.** It is easy to forget yourself and cut away too much material. Constantly hand check thicknesses with your fingers and even by holding the spoon up to bright light, where thin spots will appear lighter in tone than thicker areas.



Although unadorned, the bowl can be a powerful presence in the spoon's design



Wood grain and figure lend dramatic effect to the bowl



Light visible through your bowl indicates the wood is getting too thin

The stem

Another area of lovespoon design that is often not given the attention it deserves is the area between the bowl and the handle. Most frequently, beginners will carve their first lovespoon from a thin board and will carry the bowl straight to the handle with an un-curved stem. With so much else to be thinking about, it is the simplest and most straightforward way to deal with the transition. As soon as is possible though, carvers should look to put a bit of curve into their stems, creating a so-called 'swan-neck' effect.

Without a doubt, it is more difficult and time-consuming to create a swan-neck stem, but adding one will elevate the finished lovespoon considerably. Requiring a thicker timber, a swan-neck stem also affords the opportunity to angle the spoon bowl and to shape the handle. The swan-neck stem is found on virtually all antique spoons where it would have been a mark of the carver's tenacity, skill and passion. The straight stem is quite static, but as the swan-neck curve becomes more pronounced, the design begins to appear more energetic.

The front face of the swan neck can be finished in a multitude of ways, from fairly plain to heavily ornamented, from narrow to wide, square to rounded. Try to ensure



Note the difference the stem makes in the dynamics of these three spoons



Even with a thin board, it is often possible to put a bit of bend into the neck



Thicker material is more difficult to work, but the neck can become very dramatic

it complements the overall design and rises as elegantly as possible from the bowl. A heavy, square stem can look a bit

overwhelming attached to a delicate bowl, just as a thin, tapered stem can appear too weak to support a larger bowl.



Be conscious of the point where the stem actually joins the bowl and try to make the flow as seamless as possible

The handle

It is on the handle that the exciting work generally occurs, so this is usually the area most carvers tend to expend all their energy. If you've carved a good quality bowl and stem, you should be set up nicely for the ensuing handle work. If you haven't, you may find that a poor quality bowl completely undermines the hard work you put into your handle.

For the handle to really work, two things must be carried out with care and thought; the design has to function and the craftsmanship has to be the best you can manage. I've covered the design aspect in depth in my article, 'Lovespoon by Design' in *Woodcarving*, issue 122, but for those contemplating creating their own designs, I will quickly touch on some of the major issues.

- **Balance:** Does the 'flow' of the design feel comfortable from bowl to crown and from side to side?
- **Weight:** Does the spoon have sections that feel too heavy or too light, both physically and visually?
- **Content:** Does the spoon send a relevant message that makes sense to the recipient?
- **Composition:** Do the elements of the design work together harmoniously?
- **Symmetry:** Is the design symmetrical or asymmetrical, do both sides balance against each other?
- **Proportion, size and line:** Are the various elements of the design believable for size and is the overall size of the spoon comfortable?

If you are carving patterns designed by others, design is likely less of an issue and you are probably more interested in improving the technical aspects of your craftsmanship instead. Overwhelmingly, the major problem with lovespoons carved by beginners and by some intermediate carvers is a lack of finish. By this, I refer to an impatience to 'complete' the carving, which leads to substandard workmanship, rather than to the type of oil or varnish applied to the concluded work. Many times, carvers will proudly tell me how they completed



Unfinished edges give an otherwise nice knot a slightly unfinished look

their lovespoon 'in just a couple of hours' and I will have to bite my tongue not to reply: "Yes, and it looks it!"

If I could condense everything I have ever said or written about lovespoon carving into one sentence, this would be it, 'Lovespoon carving is not a race'. No one sees how fast you can tear through the job, but everyone notices the mistakes, the unfinished bits and the clumsy workmanship of hurry.

Take, for example, the following photos. In the first (see above), I have made a fairly complicated knot and have taken care to smooth the front face of each strand. However, I have left the edges 'off the saw' and this gives the knot a ragged and unfinished appearance. Contrast those knots with the second photo in which I have spent time gently easing the edges and smoothing the faces of each strand. With just that little bit of extra work, the knots are both visually and physically

improved. The second set become more touchable and are easier on the eye.

By shaping the front face of the lovespoon, significant changes to its appearance can be easily achieved. Compare this very simple lovespoon design to see how gently curving the front face from side to side (and stem to crown if you are a bit more ambitious) makes the spoon more visually dynamic and appealing.

To further improve your work, consider carving both sides of the piece. Although some designs are fine to be left unfinished on the back face, many are greatly improved by having both sides equally worked. It is a LOT of extra work and it may not seem worth the effort if the spoon is going to hang on a wall, but whenever the spoon is handled, that extra craftsmanship is immediately noticeable! With some designs (such as Celtic knotwork) carving the back can increase the play of light and



Easing the edges refines the look



While the design is attractive, the flat face of this lovespoon gives it a bit of a static feeling



Notice how just a small bit of curving on the spoon's face increases the dynamics and makes it feel more vibrant



Even when viewed face-on the presence of the curve makes itself felt. The spoon picks up light from more directions, which enhances its 'body' and makes the spoon feel more 'touchable' and soft



When possible, consider carving both sides for maximum visual effect



This picture of a spoon in progress clearly illustrates how the curving creates a much more dynamic feel than that of a straight flat handle



When working a variety of surfaces, small scrapers and needle files will keep the details crisp and will help avoid excessive rounding-over

shadow which occurs when the spoon is on the wall, giving your lovespoon greater visual appeal. It also gives you the opportunity to sneak in a surprise for the recipient or if you wish to work something extra into the design.

Another problem I often encounter with beginner (and many not-so-beginners) is a keenness to get the sandpaper out too soon. Often it is used as a crutch to clean up shoddy knife work or because of a lack of confidence with the edge tools. I try to minimise the amount of sanding I do on a piece for several reasons. The first is it scratches rather than cuts. This leaves even the most keenly finished surface abraded rather than cut and light reflection is never as good from an abraded surface. Second, there can be a tendency to over-round the work, leaving it a bit dull and listless. Lastly, the grit that gets into the wood from the paper

can dull my blades should I decide to re-carve an area.

Instead of abrasives, consider using small files and scrapers. Both of these types of tools leave your wood surfaces clean and cut rather than sheared. They are easier to control and don't leave grit in their wake.

Don't be afraid to put a good deal of effort into the surface finishing of your lovespoon, even though it is tedious work. I know from experience that it can be very hard to stay on task when the excitement of applying some oil and seeing the job completed is so close at hand. Avoid the urge to consider the task complete before it truly is. Although it is difficult to be really self-critical, going over every surface with an eagle eye to hunt out all the scratches, bumps and dips pays big dividends when you actually do put the oil to the wood. Finishes are merciless, so it is good to remember that anything

you leave unattended will be cruelly magnified for all to see!

Finally, I recommend avoiding glossy surface finishes such as lacquers and polyurethanes. Opt instead for penetrating oils or satin type finishes like beeswax polish. Too often the glossy finishes merely clog up the fine details of the carving and leave a shiny, syrupy mess behind. For lovespoons, a couple of coats of a Danish Oil type finish followed by a light coat applied with super fine (1000 grit) wet and dry type abrasive gives a silky smooth, arresting finish to your spoon. Cap it off with a coat or two of well-buffed beeswax for the perfect look and feel.

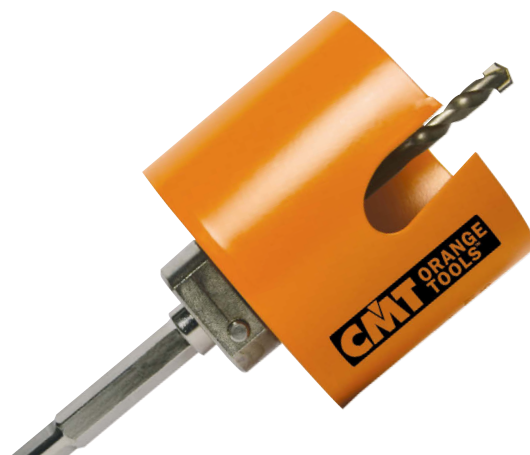
I've saved the most important bit of advice until last. Take your time with your lovespoon carving, enjoy the process (even the hair-pulling bad stuff) and always keep in your mind that you are creating an object of beauty that will bring great pleasure to someone! ▶



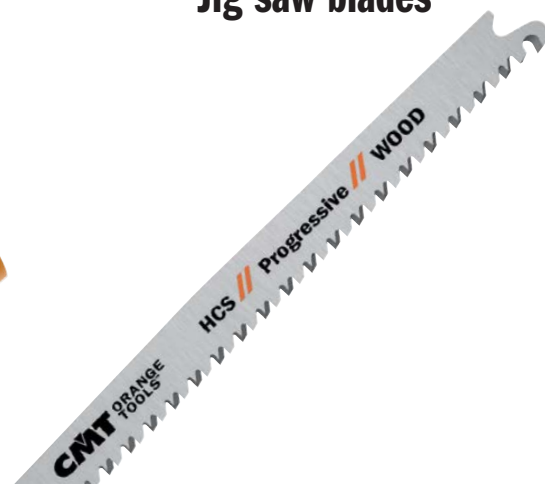
Saw blades



Hole saws



Jig saw blades



Sabre saw blades



Tools with bore & knives



Router bits & sets



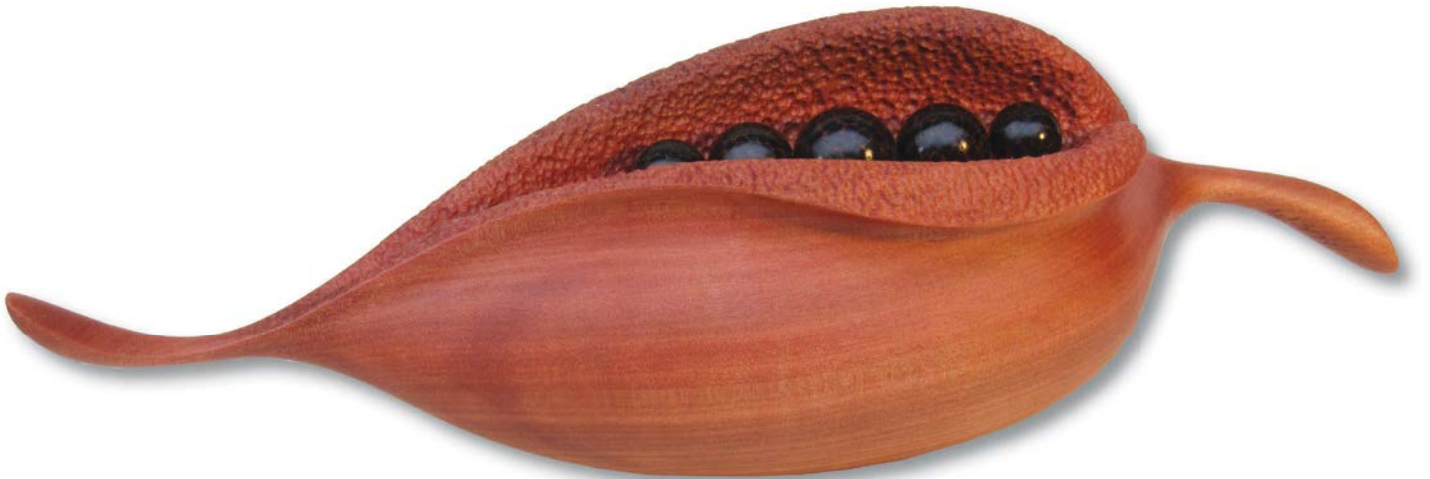
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Offset seed pod

Neil Scobie takes inspiration from nature and turns and carves an offset seed pod



This is another of my projects inspired by nature, very loosely based on the seed pod of a blackbean (*Castanospermum australe*) tree. Most timbers would be suitable for the project, though I would choose a species that is reasonably dense but good to carve.

For the seeds, a contrasting

coloured wood looks best. I have chosen Tasmanian myrtle (*Nothofagus cunninghamii*) for the pod and black palm (*Borassus flabellifer*) for the seeds. Myrtle is very dense and close-grained but works well with hand- and power-carving tools. Black palm, which grows in north Queensland, Australia, is very dense and takes a fine polish. The

contrast between both of these timbers suited my tastes.

I have also made some of these pods using silver ash (*Flindersia schottiana*) for the pods and darker gidgee (*Acacia cambagei*) or black palm for the seeds. However, if you don't have access to these timbers then don't worry – just use whichever timbers you have available.

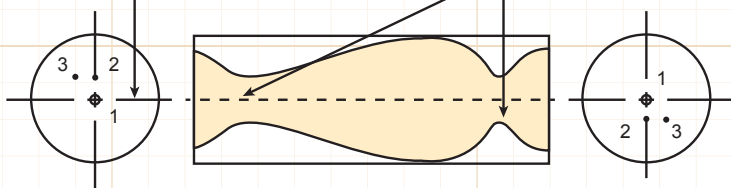


Things you will need...

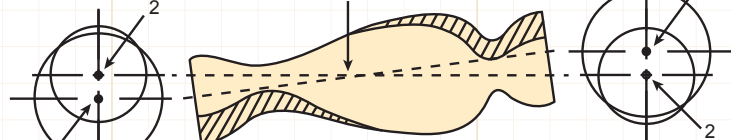
- Spindle roughing gouge
- 10 or 12mm spindle gouge
- Small spindle gouge
- Parting tool
- Mini Arbortech or Proxxon long-neck angle grinder
- Ball-shaped burr
- Die grinder or rotary tool
- Rotary cutting disc
- Dentist-type ball burr
- Electric drill
- Bradpoint drill
- Sanding pads
- 15mm round burr
- 'V'-tool
- Shallow curve gouge
- Soft drum sander
- Centre punch or awl
- A range of abrasives
- 0000 steel wool
- Home-made soft sander
- Five-minute epoxy glue
- Oil finish – or any oil sealer
- PPE: facemask, respirator/ dust mask and extraction

First Turning on centres number one.
Centres are about 120mm (4³/₄in) apart.

Narrow areas about 25mm (1in) diameter

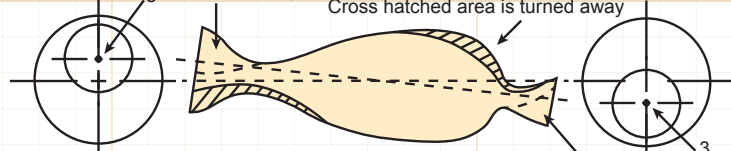


Second turning on centres number 2



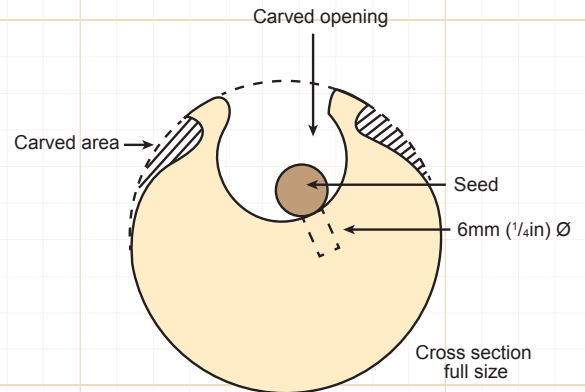
Carve away

Cross hatched area is turned away

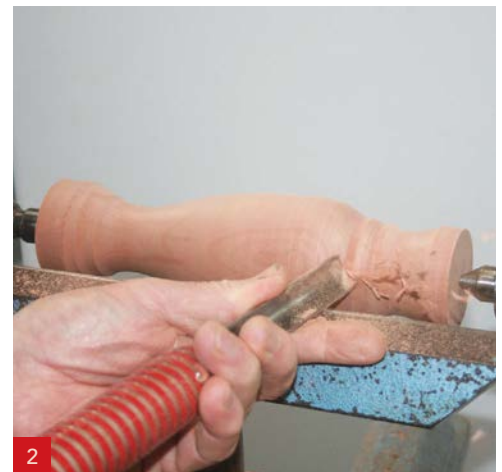
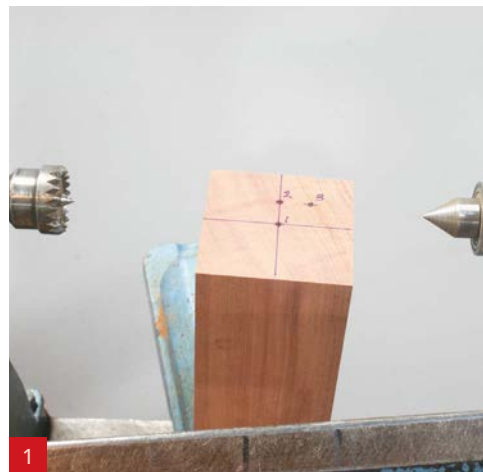


Third offset on centres number 3 This view is looking from the top

Carve away



1 Take a piece of timber measuring 75 x 75 x 220mm. Mark out the three centres as shown on the drawing – 12mm offset is enough to give you the offset stems on each end. Use a centre punch or awl point tool to punch in the centres so they are easily distinguished. Mark these as '1, 2 and 3' on each end, making sure they are horizontally opposed on each end. Place the blank between centres with a spur drive or steb centre in the headstock and a revolving cup on the tailstock end. Rough the blank down to a cylinder, then the drawn shape, using a spindle roughing gouge



2 Turn the shallow sections down to the given size, which is about 25mm. You may prefer to use a smaller spindle gouge on the tailstock end when reducing the bottom of the hollow. There is no need to sand the surface as most of it will be shaped with the offsetting and carving



3 Place the blank on centre 2 on both ends ready for re-shaping. Double check it will not hit the toolrest when rotating by hand. You can still keep the speed up on the lathe because you have offset the same diagonally on both ends. The blank will be horizontally opposed on each end, making it balanced



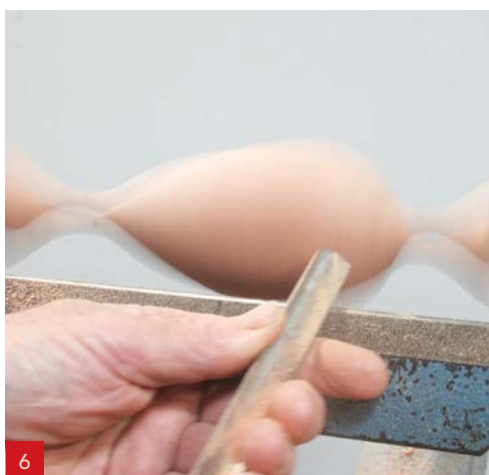
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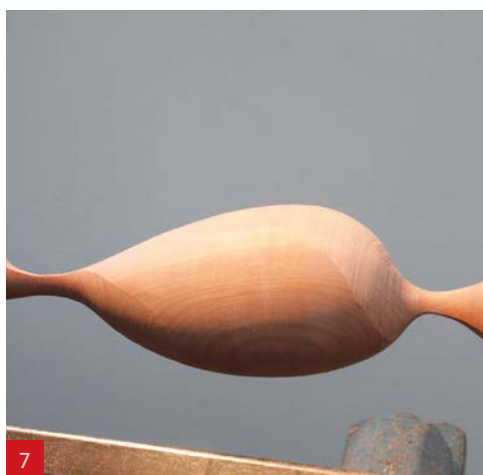
5

4 Turn away about half of the shadow line, which you will see while the piece is spinning. Use a 12 or 15mm spindle gouge as you can cut down into the shallow sections. Only turn the outside $\frac{1}{3}$ on each end, just touching the middle part to blend the curve to the offset. Turn some of the ends away, but check you have not turned too close to centre 3

5 Now place the centres on number 3 at both ends of the pod. Centre 3 is sideways from centre 2. This step is just to turn the end sections offset so they are sideways to the last offset



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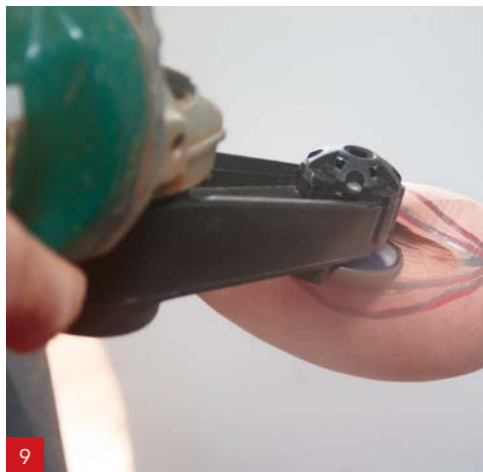
6 Now, turn away about half the shadow line, checking you don't get the end stems less than 12mm. Blend the curve of the centre section into your new offset shape

7 Here you can see the shape after the offset turning is finished. The stems on each end of the pod will be reduced in the carving process, which is coming up

8 Draw on the part that you want to cut out for the hollow section in a curved shape rather than just a straight 'V' shape. Start by drawing a curved centreline followed by the outside open section, shown in blue marker pen. Now draw on the folded sections, shown in red marker pen. The red-marked section will look like the seed pod has dried and opened

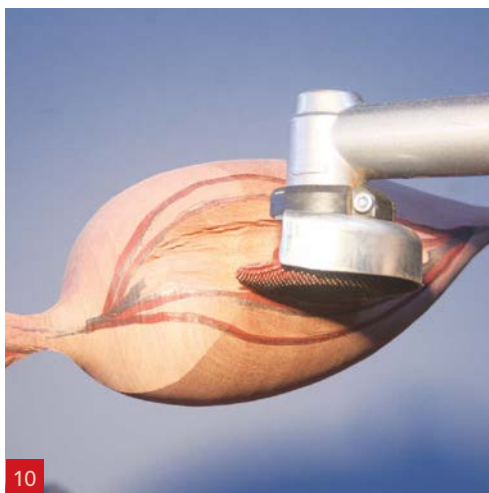


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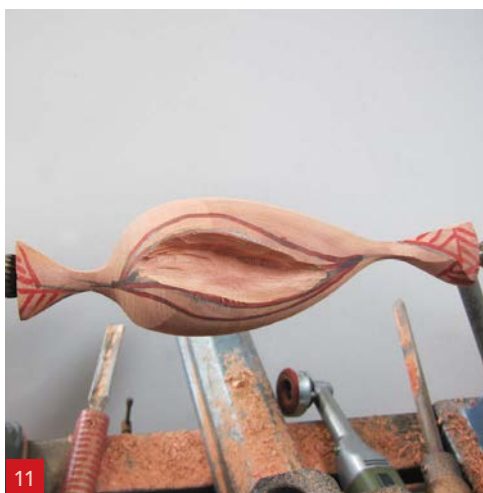


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9 Leave the turned piece between centres and engage the spindle lock on the lathe. I started the hollowing out with an Arbortech mini carver. However, any of the Arbortech cutters would be suitable to use in this process. You will find that the mini carver will not let you cut in as deep as you want. Just rip out the bulk waste with the stronger carver



10



11

10 Using a long-neck angle grinder with medium rotary rasp attached allows you to cut in the hole with more control. You could use this machine to do the whole process if you prefer. Roll the cutting disc in from both sides to remove most of the waste

11 Here you can see the hollowed out section. If you are a person who likes to use hand-carving gouges, this hollowing process can all be achieved with gouges – it may just take a bit longer. It depends what tools you have available to you

12 To cut in deeper and smooth out the inner hole, use a ball-shaped burr in a die grinder or rotary tool. This ball was about 15mm diameter. Use a smaller diameter burr near the ends

13 Use a rotary cutting disc to make the grooves under the folded out sections; this allows for easy waste removal. The disc I have used is a flatter curve with a rounded outer edge. Cut in as close to the line as you can and blend the shape to the outer diameter of the pod, as in drawing 2

14 Use a smaller burr with a rounded end to shape under the folds. This burr was about 6mm in diameter

15 You can now use the same tool with a less aggressive burr to complete the other side of the pod

16 Use a smaller sanding disc to clean up the area under the fold. This tool is a small-angle handpiece that fits onto a rotary tool and is ideal because of its lightness and option to slow down the speed so that the abrasive does not burn easily. Start with 120 and work up to 400 grit. Sand what you can of the opening with the small sander

17 Using a 'V' gouge, cut the lead-in parts to the opening with a 'V' shape. Now hand sand the fold-outs and the 'V' shapes by folding abrasive around an old credit card. You only need to sand to 120 grit if you intend to stipple the inside opening

Handy hints

1. Make sure you choose contrasting timber for the pod and seeds
2. If you use a softer timber, make the stems a little thicker; this will avoid breaking them
3. Practise the stippling on a wasteblock of the same timber before attacking your pod, just to see if you are happy with the look
4. Take your time: step back and look at your design while turning the offset ends
5. Be careful not to get oil in the stem holes. To stop this from happening, roll up some rag and use this to seal off the holes before oiling. This will ensure that the glue will stick
6. Try displaying the seed pod on an 'O' ring measuring 25mm diameter; this will prevent it from rolling



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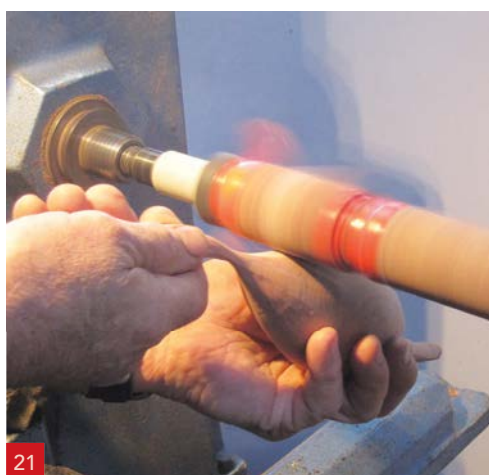
18 For the seeds I place short pieces of the black palm between centres and turn them to about 17 or 18mm diameter. Hold these pieces in a scroll chuck with small jaws so you turn one seed then part it off and then turn another one from the same piece. Use a small spindle gouge to turn the ball shape, working downhill from the top of the sphere, then turn a stem with a parting tool about 12mm long and 6mm in diameter. Fully sand each ball before parting off. Sand up to 600 grit, followed by '0000' steel wool. The diameters of my seeds were 15mm in the centre, then 12mm on each side and 10mm on each end. You can make these to suit your hollowed-out section



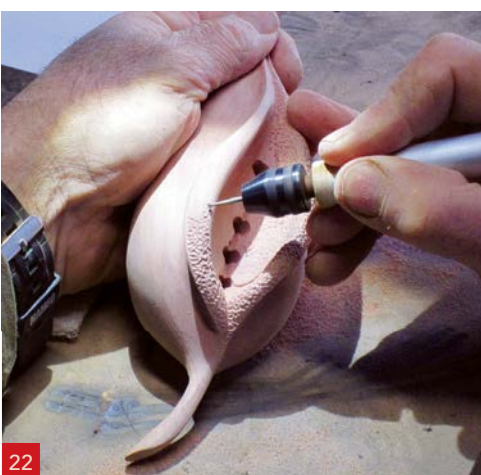
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19 Here you can see the seeds placed in a waste block of timber for the oiling process. Give each seed three coats of oil

20 Now drill the holes for the seeds with the same diameter drill that you used for the seed stems. It is best to use a bradpoint drill here. Start in the middle and work towards each end so that the seeds just touch. Bandsaw off the marked out waste sections on the stems and shape them on a disc sander



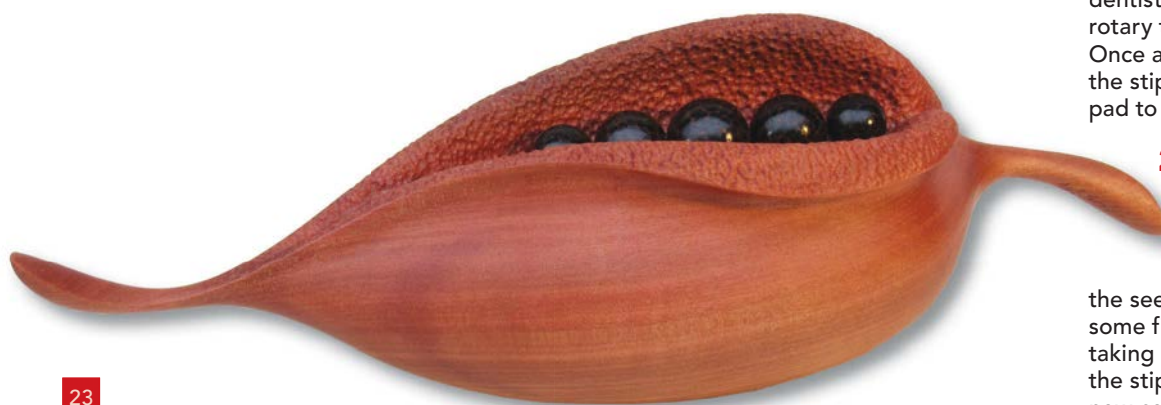
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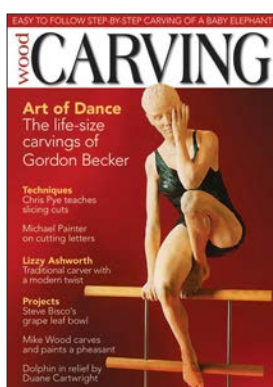
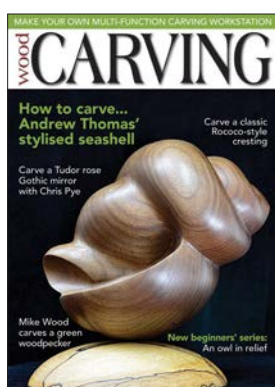
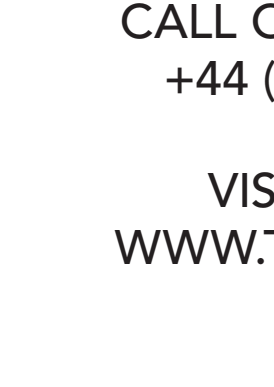
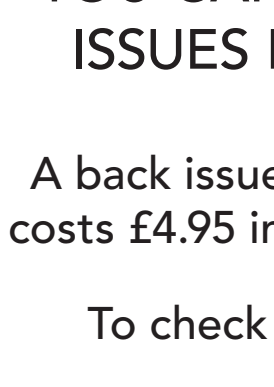
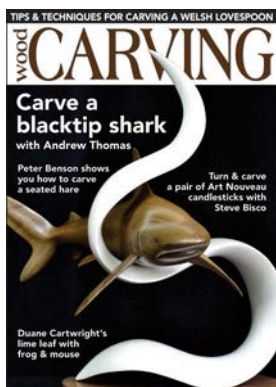
21 Sand the smaller diameter parts of the pod and the stems. I made these drum sanders out of a piece of 20mm plastic pipe covered with soft rubber sleeve that is usually used to protect hot water pipes. When you wrap abrasive around the rubber and tape in place at each end you have made yourself a cheap, light and very effective drum sander for jobs like this. Using a slightly larger sanding disc with a soft interface pad between the disc and the abrasive, sand as much of the pod as you can, right up to 600 grit, with the soft pad powered by a variable-speed angle drill

22 To stipple the inside use a dentist-type ball burr held in a rotary tool, running at high speed. Once all stippling is complete, rub the stippled surface with a scouring pad to remove any torn grain



23

23 Hand sand the surface to 600 grit then apply four coats of oil to keep the surface looking bright. After the finish is dry, glue the seed stems into the holes with some five-minute epoxy glue, taking care not to spill any out onto the stippled area. The offset pod is now complete ▶



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Contact: BriMarc **Tel:** 03332 406 967 **Web:** www.brimarc.com

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Available from Classic Hand Tools, Auriou's small rotary rasp has a diameter of 50mm and is designed to cut (not burn) your wood precisely. Designed to fit the Arbortech and Proxxon long angled grinder, as well as the Foredom angle grinder attachment.

Contact: Classic Hand Tools
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This froe was made with younger users in mind and has a narrower blade than many others. This creates less strain on the wrist and Woodland Crafts claims it is ideal for wood up to 125mm wide. With more and more people teaching woodland skills to young people it is useful to have quality equipment designed with them in mind.

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Contact: Woodlands Survival Crafts
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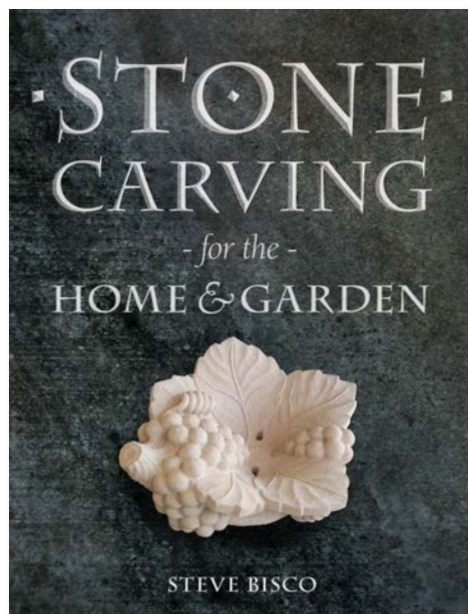
This Flexcut five piece printmaking set contains an ABS SK100 handle along with four carving blades, an 11-pocket chisel roll and a Flexcut Slip Strop with a bar of honing compound. This is just about everything you need to begin producing your own print blocks in wood or lino.

The skill is in using these tools to remove the areas you don't want to print. The four blades are SK306 No.6, 8mm, SK309 No.11, 3.2mm, SK803 45° x 1mm, SK307 70° x 6.3mm.

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BOOK REVIEW & OFFER

Stone Carving for the Home & Garden



You may not have considered the ancient art of stone carving to be something that can be practised as a hobby but assume it is the territory of stone masons and sculptors undertaking intricate work on a grand scale. This inspiring book introduces the medium of stone to the hobby carver as an accessible and rewarding pastime without having to undertake a stone mason's apprenticeship or tackle heavy and unwieldy materials and equipment. Based mainly on the period styles of carving found in historic buildings and ancient ruins, the projects are a mix of decorative and sculptural objects on a practical and manageable scale that can be easily displayed in the home or garden. Each project is presented in a clear step-by-step format and includes some historical context for the style of the piece along with a handy pattern to trace and scale to size. An introductory section includes comprehensive information on stone-carving tools, different types of stone, how to handle stone, the basics of stone carving and information on periods and styles of carving.

DETAILS:

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Advertisers Index

Alec Tiranti	26
Calvo Studio	38
City & Guilds of London Art School	8
Chestnut Finishing Products	76
Classic Hand Tools	37
Creative Welsh Woodturning	26
Dictum Tools	BC
DJ Evans	26
Flexcut Tool Company	IFC
G & S Specialist Timber	31
Gerald Adams	38
Henry Taylor Tools	50
J & CR Wood	44
Kutzall	20
Osmo	44
Pfeil	31
Razertip Industries	44
Reid Timber	20
Saburrtooth	19
The Rocking Horse Shop	8
The Toolpost	14
Tomaco	IBC
Tomaco - CMT	66
Toolnut	73
Wood Carving Game	76
Woodworks Craft Supplies	7
Yandle & Sons	38

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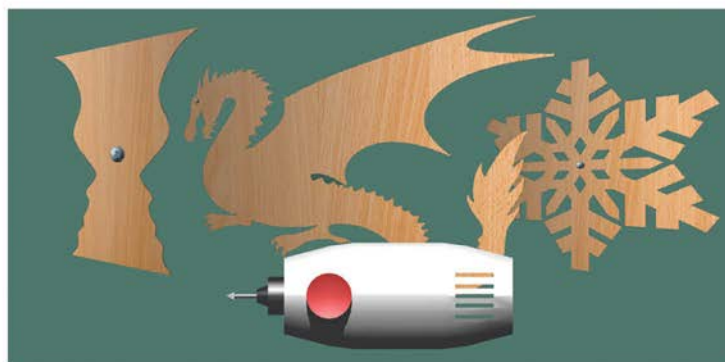


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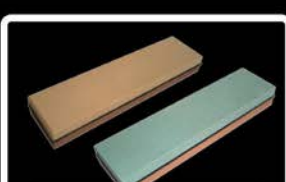


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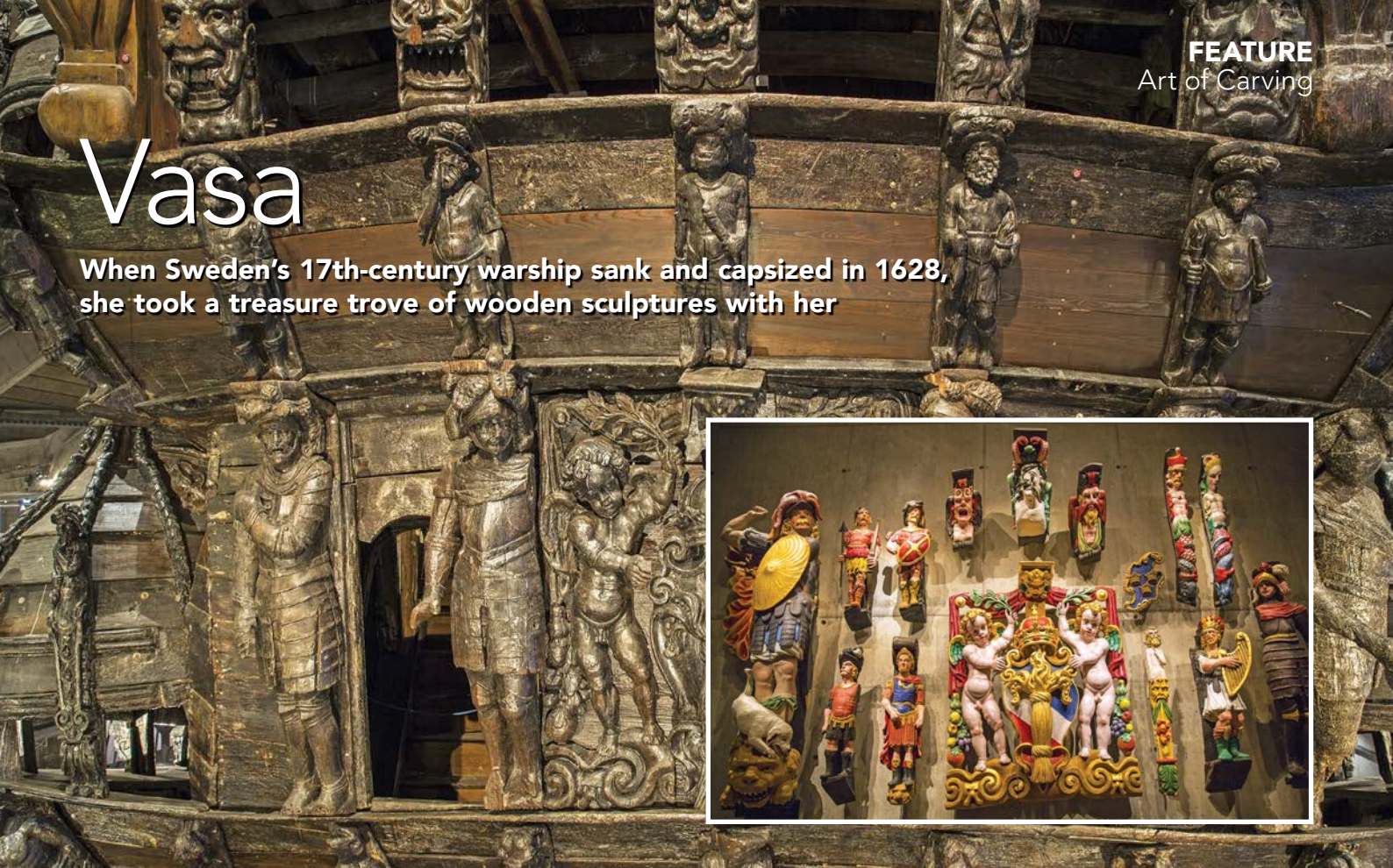
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Vasa

When Sweden's 17th-century warship sank and capsized in 1628, she took a treasure trove of wooden sculptures with her



The loss of a landmark ship almost inevitably results with myriad treasures being forever claimed by the sea. Such seemed to be the fate of the 17th-century Swedish vessel *Vasa*, which capsized and sank in Stockholm in 1628. In *Vasa's* case, the world also appeared to have been denied a priceless collection of wooden carvings, at least until she was finally raised from the seabed on 24 April, 1961.

The story begins in 1625 when King Gustav II Adolf signed a contract with shipwright Henrik Hybertsson and his business partner, Arendt de Groote, to build four new vessels, with one of them, *Vasa*, designed to be a formidable warship. The king's aim was to establish

Sweden as a power to be feared, instead he left it open to ridicule on all sides.

Vasa measured 69m long and 50m tall and weighed more than 1200 tonnes when kitted out with 10 sails, 64 cannons and 120 tonnes of ballast. She was decorated with 700 sculptures. The meaning and symbolism of the latter are examined at the Vasa Museet in Stockholm where the refurbished ship is now on permanent display. The sculptures include a roaring lion, which was the first sculpture to be retrieved from the *Vasa* during salvaging. He sits atop the vessel together with 500 other lions, emperors and gods, mermaids and heroes, angels and devils. The king's intention was that the sculptures would send out an image

to the world of Sweden as a strong, powerful nation. To achieve this, the sculptors drew on classical mythology and history, the Bible and a fantasised Swedish antiquity. They had the full repertoire of the Renaissance symbolism at their disposal. They painted their work in bright colours and positioned them fore and aft. *Vasa* became a colossal work of art representing, as the museum states, a big-budget advertising campaign from 17th-century Sweden. She was not just a warship; she was also a grand display window for Sweden and the king's ambitions of empire.

Tragically, however, the ship capsized on her maiden voyage. Barely 1300m out to sea and within sight of the port where she was built, *Vasa* sank in view of thousands of Stockholm's inhabitants and several foreign ambassadors. Blame for the disaster soon fell on the design by shipwright Hybertsson, who, conveniently for everyone else involved, had died less than a year after the project was commissioned. Whatever the cause, many lives and sculptures now lay 32m below on the seabed.

Today, many of those sculptures, like *Vasa's* hull, remain a stained dark brown colour from their 333 years at the bottom of the sea. But the museum has restored some 50 key pieces to show how they were originally painted and has also placed them within their historical context from the Bronze Age onwards.

The carvings remain a stunning reminder of the talent of their sculptors and, perhaps, send out a powerful warning message to those seeking power and glory.



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