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WOOD CARVING

How to carve a
bearded vulture

The larger
than life
carvings of
ALEX JONES

Step-by-step
guide to a classic
cartouche tray

Carve your own
stylised cat

Our Art Nouveau letter
opener is something
to write home about





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Strength in numbers



I have written before about the 'Me, me, me' or the 'Can't be bothered' attitudes of some people and how this can affect us when we are trying to move things on or develop.

Most clubs and organisations comment that they struggle to get people to step up to the plate to fill committee spots, help organise, get involved at shows and events and suchlike, so why not collaborate?

Greater collaboration in sharing information and resources has a number of benefits. It saves time and best working practices can be established quickly by learning from each other. In addition, sharing manpower at events or organising them makes things far less taxing than for one group alone. This may result in things happening more frequently, being better and more exciting and that has to be good for everyone.

We do not and cannot operate effectively when we are isolated from one another. Most people develop skills as a result of learning

things from others. OK, some people might make progress on their own but it is rare to find anyone who hasn't read a book, looked at something online or who has seen something somewhere that sparked off an idea. So we are definitely influenced by others even if we are not conscious of that at the time.

Collaboration has to be the way we move forward. Groups and organisations cannot operate as though they are personal fiefdoms or the only holders of certain knowledge. They have to try and act as a collective to bring about benefits for all members. Since organisations and groups are made up of individuals it is up to everyone to play their part in bringing things about.

Yes, there will be disagreements as to how to proceed with certain issues and some people are sure to have needs others do not, but ultimately there is always a route forward. By sharing and coming together to work with others we all benefit in the long run.

Collaboration makes us stronger not weaker. We know more between us as a group than we do as individuals. We can progress

faster, further and have so much more fun when we pool our resources than we do when we strike out on our own.

Many know that without collaboration and interaction with others – on various levels – everyone ends up losing out on so much potential and opportunity and ultimately there is the risk of a slow, gradual decline into obsolescence.

That may sound like a bleak scenario but the truth is we all need each other. By collaborating with other craftspeople and organisations we can see things from a wider perspective. Knowing what a ceramicist, jeweller, quilter, knitter or model aeroplane flyer thinks of us might seem outlandish, but it can spur change.

Rest assured, we all face similar challenges and that commonality of interests and needs means we are stronger and better placed to bring about change together.

Have fun and let me know what you have been making.

Mark

To get in touch, please email me:
markb@thegmcgroup.com





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News & events...

We talk to the BDWCA and bring you the latest news and events from the woodcarving community

It's show time with the BDWCA

In the last issue of *Woodcarving*, Editor Mark Baker talked about exhibiting at shows and sharing enthusiasm with others. As an association the British Decoy and Wildfowl Carvers Association (BDWCA) has two opportunities each year to do this: the Rutland Birdfair (18-20 August) and the BDWCA Annual Show and Competition (9-10 September). These are held as usual in Bakewell, Derbyshire. Regional BDWCA groups also attend some local shows.

Attendance at any show requires a lot of planning, often financial outlay, and most important of all, members being prepared to give up their time to 'man the stand' and talk to visitors. Shows provide a vital opportunity to showcase our skills, and to encourage others to join in, so it's definitely worth the effort.

While membership of the BDWCA is required to compete in most of the categories at the Annual Show, one category is open to all, that of Bird's Head on a Stick, which is split into two sub-categories – the bird's head can be carved in either wood or horn. Both categories were won in 2016 by Northern Ireland member George Robinson, with the pheasant's head carved in wood winning the trophy for Best in Show.



Two participants attend one of the BDWCA's annual events



Pheasant's head carved in wood



Rook walking stick head

For further information on the BDWCA, as well as membership details, visit www.bdwca.org.uk.

Membership includes three issues of our 28-page, full-colour magazine, *Wingspan*.

Contact Membership Secretary: Mrs Janet Nash, 26 Shendish Edge, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, Tel: 01442 247610.

Alternatively, please email:- pam.wilson@bdwca.org.uk.

International Congress celebrates 51st year

One of the biggest events in the woodcarving calendar is rapidly approaching. The **International Woodcarvers Congress** in Maquoketa, Iowa, which runs from 10-18 June, is a celebration of woodcarving which is now in its 51st year. It attracts members and visitors from all over the world and is said to be the longest-running competitively judged woodcarving art show in America.

There are 85 separate categories of competition, including birds of various species, fish, animals and people, plus abstract and ornamental.

The congress also provides a large range of workshops and seminars with leading carvers covering carving, clay sculpting and painting. They vary in length, such as a six-day course in carving and painting a rainbow trout with Jim Thalacker, where students will be able to take home a finished project carved, painted and mounted and a five-day course in realistic animal carving with Leah Goddard. There are also classes for non-carving participants.

Maquoketa is an area of outstanding natural beauty and the nearby Maquoketa

Caves State Park draws enthusiastic campers, cavers and hikers all year round.

Annual membership of Affiliated Wood Carvers, which organises the congress,

includes reduced admission to the show and seminars. The event is also open to the public. For all details of the congress and AWC membership go to www.awcltd.org.



ABOVE: Competition entries RIGHT: Award-winning entries



Events

• European Design Prize for Woodcarvers Exhibition

When: 12 May - 26 June, 2017

Where: Regierungsprasidium Karlsruhe

Web: www.stihl.com

• Wild Wood Festival

When: 27-29 May, 2017

Where: Wakehurst Place, Ardingly, West Sussex

Web: www.kew.org/wakehurst/whats-on/wild-wood-weekend

• Wood Show

When: 17-18 June, 2017

Where: Weald and Downland Open Air Museum, Chichester, West Sussex

Web: www.wealddown.co.uk

• Yandles Handmade Craft Market

When: 22 July, 2017

Where: Martock, Somerset

Web: www.yandles.co.uk/upcoming-events/

• Bentley Woodfair

When: 15-17 September, 2017

Where: Harveys Lane, Halland, East Sussex

Web: www.bentley.org.uk

• European Woodworking Show

When: 16-17 September, 2017

Where: Cressing Temple Barns, Essex

Web: www.europeanwoodworkingshow.eu

• The Surrey Hills Wood Fair

When: 30 September - 1 October, 2017

Where: Birtley House Estate, Guildford, Surrey

Web: www.surreyhills.org/events/the-surrey-hills-wood-fair/

• Annual Woodcarving Show

When: 23-24 September, 2017

Where: Stevens Point, Wisconsin, US

Web: www.travelwisconsin/events/fairs-festivals/annual-woodcarving-show

• The Tool Show

When: 6-8 October, 2017

Where: Kempton Park Racecourse, Surrey

Web: www.dm-tools.co.uk/kempton.php

• Orange County Woodcarvers Annual Show

When: 14-15 October, 2017

Where: Santa Ana Elks Lodge, Santa Ana, CA

Web: ocwoodcarvers.net/annual_show

• Woodfest

When: 3-5 November, 2017

Where: RHS Garden Hyde, Chelmsford, Essex

Web: www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/hyde-hall/

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

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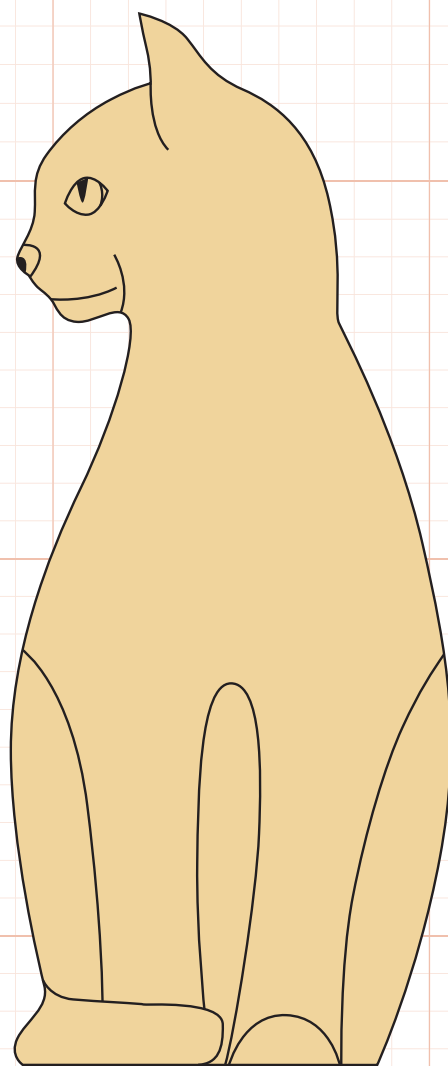
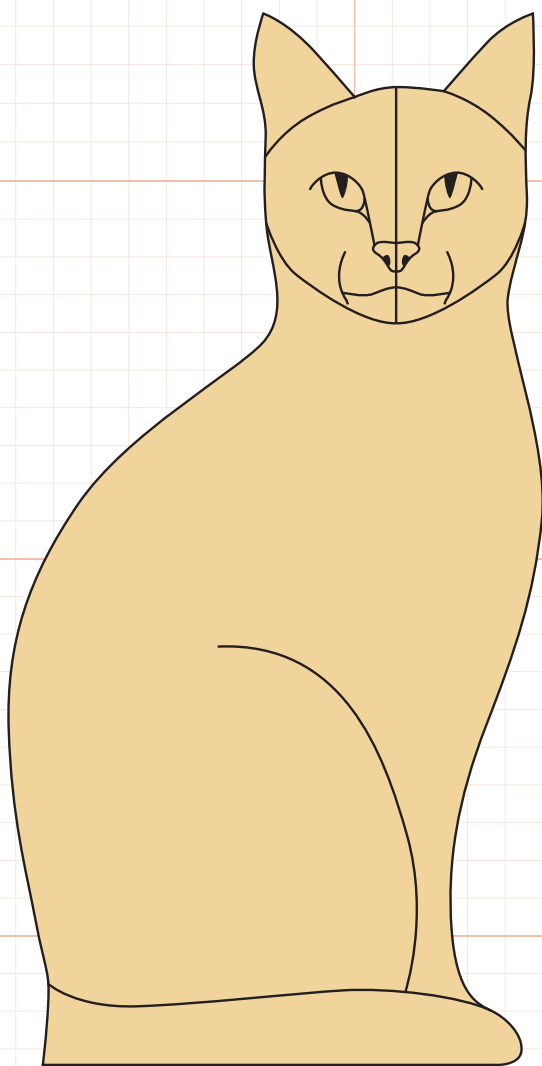
Carving a cat

Andrew Thomas shows how to fashion an inscrutable feline

In this issue I am going to look at how to carve a cat. The outline of both profile views on the plan are of a real cat, so if you wish to, you can use this design or, along with your own research and drawings to produce a fully realistic cat. Please ensure that you gather a good body of reference material of cats – heads, ears, eyes, nose and body – from any sources you may have access to and use this information to help you to visually understand the shape of the details that you will be carving as you work through this project.

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





Things you will need

Tools:

Suggested tools – swiss gouges:

- No.2, 2mm
- No.2, 20mm
- No.5, 3mm
- No.7, 6mm
- No.7, 20mm
- No.9, 7mm

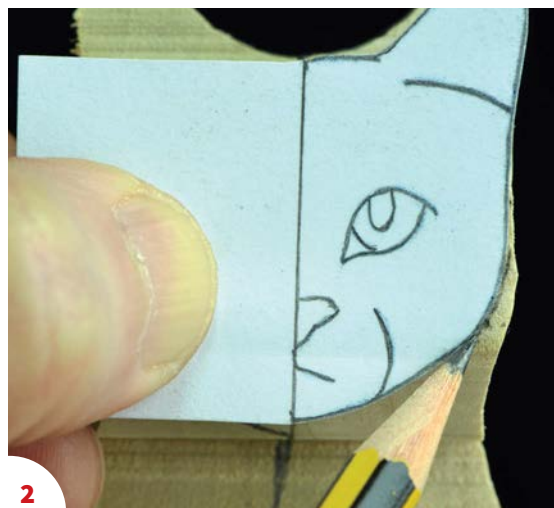
- No.9, 10mm
- No.12, 1mm
- No.12, 6mm
- Knife
- 1mm diamond sphere rotary burr or 1mm drill bit

Material requirements

- Tulipwood (*Liriodendron tulipifera*)
185 x 100 x 80mm

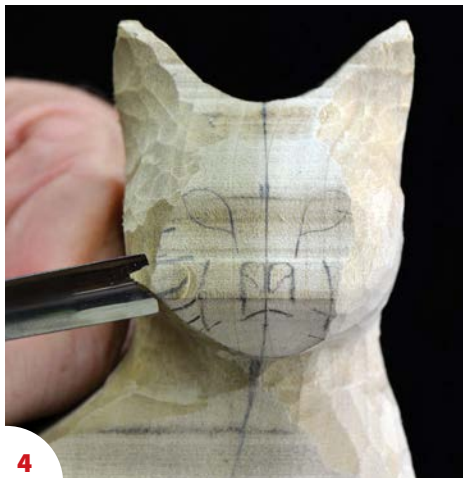
1 Scan or photocopy the scale drawings provided, enlarging them to the correct size for your wood, and print them out onto card to use as templates. Transfer them onto your block of wood, ensuring that they are in perfect alignment with each other, and that the grain direction is running vertically through the block. Leave an area of 30mm depth at the base to attach to your faceplate. Cut this shape out and secure it safely onto your vice. Measure and draw a centre line on all four sides.

2 Using the template supplied, transfer the details of the head and face accurately onto your wood.





3



4



5



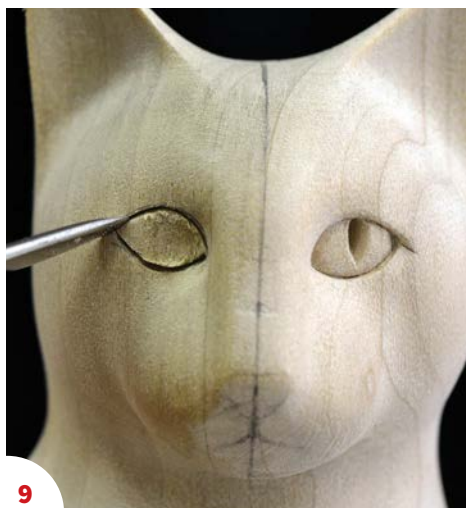
6



7



8



9



10

3 Use a No. 7, 6mm gouge to remove the waste wood around the outline of the jaw and chin areas, back to the position where the head joins the neck. Then use a No. 9, 10mm gouge to curve the straight edges of the bandsawn form, around the neck area, from the centre line on the sides to the centre line on the front.

4 Draw the details of the cat's face accurately in their correct positions. Use the No. 7, 6mm again to round over the square edges of the head, from the centre line on the side of the form, up to the curved line on the side of the mouth area. The area above the eyes up to the ears can also be shaped around naturally.

5 Use the side view template to measure the rearmost position of the mouth and eyes. Mark these onto both sides of the head and check for symmetry. Now pare the wood back between the curved line of the mouth area on the front view, to the rearmost position of the mouth on the side view. Do the same with the eyes; from the inner corner of the eye on the front view, to the rearmost position on the side.

6 The straight edges around the mouth and eyes can now be blended evenly into their surrounding areas.

7 The back of the head is next to be shaped. Use a No. 2, 20mm to create an even curve, from the centre line on the back of the head, to the centre line on the sides. Work up and over the flat bandsawn area on the top of the head, and then shape the ears from their outer to inner edges.

8 The ears can now be slightly hollowed. Use either a No. 9, 7mm, or a spherical/conical rotary burr, to carve between the outer and inner edges of the ears, gradually working into the ear until you have reached a depth of approximately 3 or 4mm, or until they look effective.

TOP TIP: When carving facial details on a small scale such as this, when the basic shape of the head has been carved, it is important to sand through the various grit levels before carving in the eyes, nose and mouth, otherwise their shallow lines may become lost and require re-cutting.

9 Sand over the complete head with grits 100, 150, 240 and 400. Use the template to transfer the eyes, nose and mouth back into their correct positions again. Next, use either a razor-sharp knife or a gouge with the correct sweep to cut squarely along the very outer edge of the upper and lower eye lines.

10 Use a No. 2, 2mm gouge to curve the eyeball, from the surface of the eye into the knife cuts. The inner and outer corners of the eyes should be made deeper than the upper and lower eyelids. Repeat these steps until the eyeballs look realistic, and then sand over with grits 240 and 400.

11 The natural shape of a cat's iris can range from a circle, like a human one, to a very thin slit, like a snake's. The example on this cat is approximately halfway between the two. Either make a small template, or draw these on by hand, and then use a No.5, 3mm gouge, cutting in at a slight angle from both sides to meet in the middle, causing the centre piece to chip out. The deeper you make this recess, the more shadow will fall into it giving a greater effect.



11

12 The nose is formed using a combination of a very small V-tool, to 'sketch' around its shape, and then the knife, to cut a deep slit into the V-tool cut. The areas adjoining the knife cuts are blended evenly into the knife cut, and then all of the details are sanded over with grit 240 and 400 abrasive.



12

13 The cat's nostrils are semi-circular in their appearance, but it will help to study your reference material to fully understand their shape. Draw these in position on the nose, and use either a 1mm diamond rotary burr or a 1mm drill bit to make the small holes. Sand the sharp edges naturally into the holes with grit 240 and 400.



13

14 Next, move directly underneath to the mouth area. There is a very small vertical line directly under the nose, which connects the nose to the two sides of the cat's mouth. Use the knife to make a deep slice into this position and then around the line of the mouth around each side of the head.



14

15 Use the No.2, 2mm gouge to shape the areas above and below the knife slit, into the knife slit. Repeat this procedure two or three times, or until it looks realistic in comparison with your reference material of a real cat. Finally, smooth over the complete area with grits 240 and 400 to bring these details to life. The head is now complete!



15

16 Next we move down to the body, which will be carved in a semi-abstracted, stylised fashion. Starting with the back, use the No.2, 20mm gouge, or larger if you have one, to curve the back naturally around, from the centre line on both sides to the centre line down the back.



16

17 The front of the body is a little more difficult to carve due to the concave section below the chest, where the line flows down towards the feet. Start at the top and shape the areas below the neckline on both sides, from the centre line on the side to the centre line on the front. Then switch to a No.7, 20mm gouge to carve across the grain underneath the chest, and across the legs.



17

18 Use the template to help you draw the line of the tail in position. Then use the No. 9, 10mm gouge to carve a deep groove along the top edge of it.



18

TOP TIP: If you wish to, you could alter the angle of the tail so that it curls slightly in the opposite direction, which would expose the front right paw as well as the left one.



19



20



21

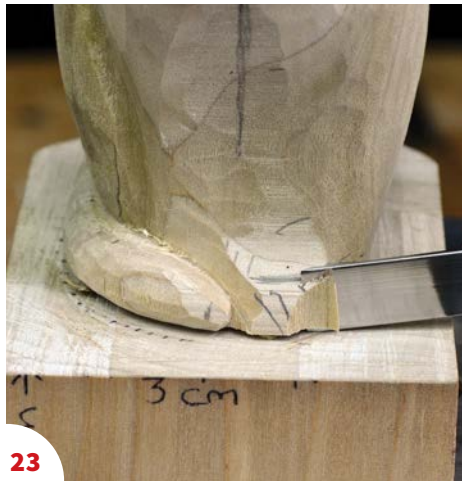
19 Pare the depth of the gouge cut evenly into the adjoining areas to create a flowing contour from the shoulder and hind quarter to the tail. Repeat steps 18 and 19 until the depth of the tail is at least 7mm thick.

20 The inner edge of the tail that rests against the body needs to give the visual impression that it is a separate volume from the body. This is achieved by using a No.12, 6mm V-tool, carving at an angle down and in towards the body to create the parting.

21 This top of the tail can then be curved into the V-tool cut and also rounded over the outer edge, to create the desired cylindrical shape. Repeat steps 20 and 21 until the tail looks like it is naturally wrapped around the body.



22



23

22 The lines of the hind legs can now be drawn in their correct positions to be carved. Starting on the right side, use the No.9, 10mm gouge to carve a deep groove along the outside of the line. Then blend the depths of the outside of the gouge cut evenly into the shoulders and front leg.

23 Next, move around to the front of the form and mark the cat's left front paw in its correct position, approximately 5mm back from the front line. Carve this small piece of waste wood back to the line and naturally curve it like a paw, around from the outer edge and in towards the tail.



24



25



26

24 The left hind leg can now be carved into its correct position using the same technique as outlined in step 22. The depth of the legs should taper from 3mm at the top down to approximately 10mm at the base.

25 The cat's paw can now be carved to a very basic shape. Use the No.9, 7mm gouge, working from the base, up and over the top of the paw, and then down again towards the tail. The height should finish at approximately 7mm, as should the depth in towards the leg.

26 You now need to carve a slight hollow in between the legs, to create the visual impression of their separation. Do this with the No.9, 10mm gouge, working from just below the chest, down to the paws. Then simply round the left and right legs into this hollow.



27



28

27 Your carving is ready to be sanded.

28 Start with grit 100, and work over the complete form, apart from the head. follow the line of the grain wherever possible, to remove every tool mark and smooth the details naturally together. When perfectly smooth; clean the sawdust off all the surfaces, and brush or pour hot water over the complete carving and leave it to dry, thus raising the grain and allowing the following grit to be worked more effectively. Work through subsequent grits down to 400 repeating the hot water process in between. A finish of boiled linseed oil was applied and left for a week to cure before a couple of coats of dark wax was applied and buffed when dry. ▶

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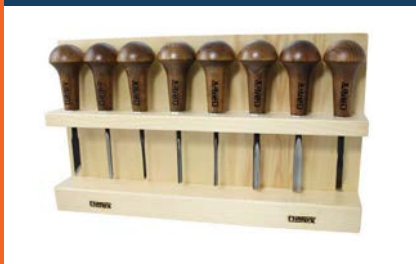
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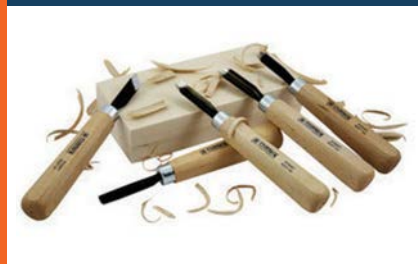
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From the community

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

Dragon bones

Dear Mark

A while back you asked me to send you photos of my work. For the past year I have not done any carving or virtually any other woodwork. At one stage I even considered giving all my carving equipment away.

I had mislaid WC 153 and so didn't know about the forthcoming dragon article until issue 154 arrived. In the meantime I decided to take up my tools again and, as a retired dentist, my hands went immediately to my rotary tools. Here is a photograph showing the finished article.

This relief is carved on bone and was done using only dental burs. The colouring is Daler Rowney pearlescent ink.

The dragon measures 74 x 36 mm; the depth is around 6mm; the bone thickness varies from 6-12mm at the head end and has been cut from a bovine femur. The design is taken from *Dragon Patterns* by Lora Irish and has been modified to fit the material and simplify the carving.

James Burger

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF JAMES BURGER

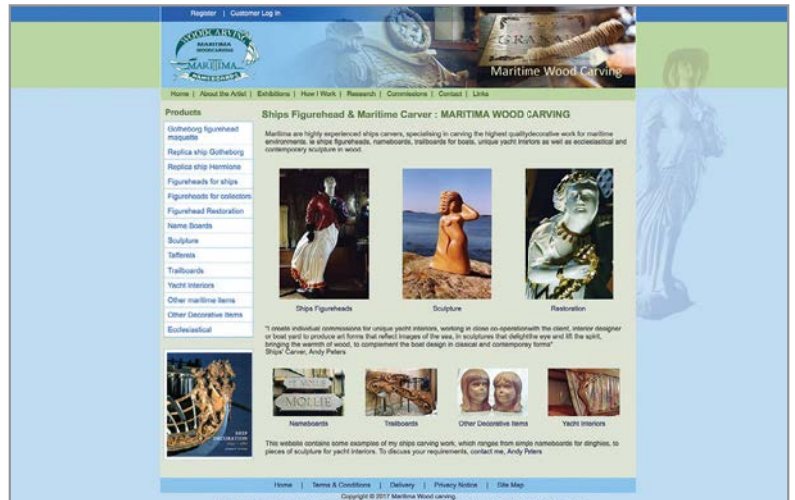


James Burger's dragon is carved on a cow's femur

ON THE WEB



Websites of the month



Carver Andrew Peters not only carves wonderfully ornate items for ships but other sculptural works and ecclesiastical items, too. Andy's site is a rich visual feast that gives a wonderful insight into his work. He also has a book for sale – *Ship Decoration 1630-1780* – which will be out soon by Seaforth Publishing. The hardback edition of 356 pages contains more than 300 illustrations. For copies, email the author at andy@maritimawoodcarving.co.uk or the publishers Pen and Sword Books at www.pen-and-sword.co.uk or on Amazon. www.maritimawoodcarving.co.uk

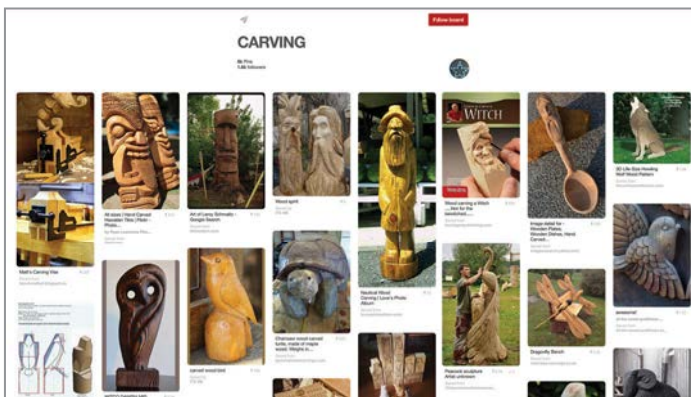


Tommy Craggs is an artist and sculptor who produces stunning carvings from trees. His site shows a wide variety of subjects and I loved looking at his pieces. The site sparkles visually and is well worth spending time on. One particularly noteworthy aspect are click arrows on some of the work – look at the swan for St Anne's Park in Dublin. These show you the carving from trunk to conclusion or the item from a variety of angles. This is a very well thought-out website. www.treesculpting.co.uk

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

YouTube

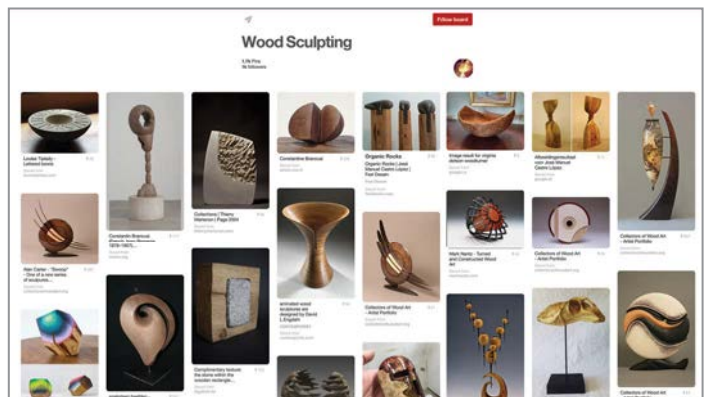
Woodcarving consoles: this clip by a master woodcarver from the Netherlands is a treat to watch. It has no voiceover or speech but being able to watch how this carver works creating an extraordinary piece is well worth the time. www.youtube.com/watch?v=OPiXBfHCCnA

Pinterest

ITS ME has a carving board that is a delightful mix of carvings of all styles. You will be able to spend a lot of time clicking on the images and following the various links revealed when you do. uk.pinterest.com/Northstar80001/carving/

Blog

Jeff Ballantyne's blog is a good read. He is refreshingly honest about what he is trying to do with regard to making, marketing and selling. I thoroughly enjoyed reading what he has been up to and think you will like his wit and honesty. www.lotsofwoods.com/blog



Paul Dodson's wonderful board of sculpted wood items of various forms. There is plenty here for you to explore and that of course leads you to all other types of work within the Pinterest site. uk.pinterest.com/dodson1196/wood-sculpting/

FROM THE FORUM

Here we share with you pieces that readers have posted on our *Woodcarving* forum. If you are interested in the possibility of your piece appearing here, or would simply like feedback and advice on your work, visit www.woodworkersinstitute.com and click on the forum button.

Phil Handy – PGH – commented: 'I finally got around to finishing and mounting my oak garden sculpture. I used preservative followed by Osmo UV protection oil on the oak and an exterior varnish on the base which is western red cedar. Now let's see how it gets on when being left out to face the weather!'

Claude commented: 'Excellent work! Perhaps a base of a slab of wood with the bark on, would be less distracting. The four faces are all different, yet still have common traces in each.'



Jean-Jacques Frezouls – JJF – posted up a start to finish sequence of a piece of work called L'enfant. He commented: 'Beginning of a bas relief on the theme of childhood. I use a plane tree which measures 50cm x 40cm for 6.5 cm thickness.'

Greg Mcateer posted: 'I have no idea how anyone has the patience to produce this sort of thing, I simply couldn't learn the skills required!'



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

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Art Nouveau letter opener

Johan Roudy adds a 1900s-style flourish to a paper knife

Flourishing from the late 19th to the early 20th century, the Art Nouveau style was probably as brief as it was inventive. Inspired by nature and Japanese art, it broke with past European styles. Its popularity spread rapidly in every field of art and craftsmanship, from architecture to furniture, painting, clothes, decoration, etc.

I designed this letter opener in the spirit of the period, with feminine flowing curves and ivy leaves running along the handle. This project will challenge your skills of precision and cleanliness. The ivy leaves are about 1mm thick. There is little wood to remove, so each cut must be made with care. I chose a piece of boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens*), a lovely hard wood with a close grain, which is able to hold very fine details... and it is so pleasant to carve.

The thing I like about carving at such a small scale is that your eye catches the overall design at a glance. Bare-bones cuts will be more likely done with a single gesture, which leads to a good understanding of the shapes. I'm convinced that you will profit from this project when you go back to carving at a larger size.



Things you will need

Tools

- No.3, 3mm gouge
- No.5, 6mm gouge
- No.5, 10mm gouge
- No.7, 12mm gouge
- No.7, 5mm gouge
- No.8, 3mm gouge
- No.11, 2mm veiner
- No.3, 16mm or a chisel
- Riffler (spoon shape)
- Small scraper
- Block plane
- Scroll saw

Material requirements

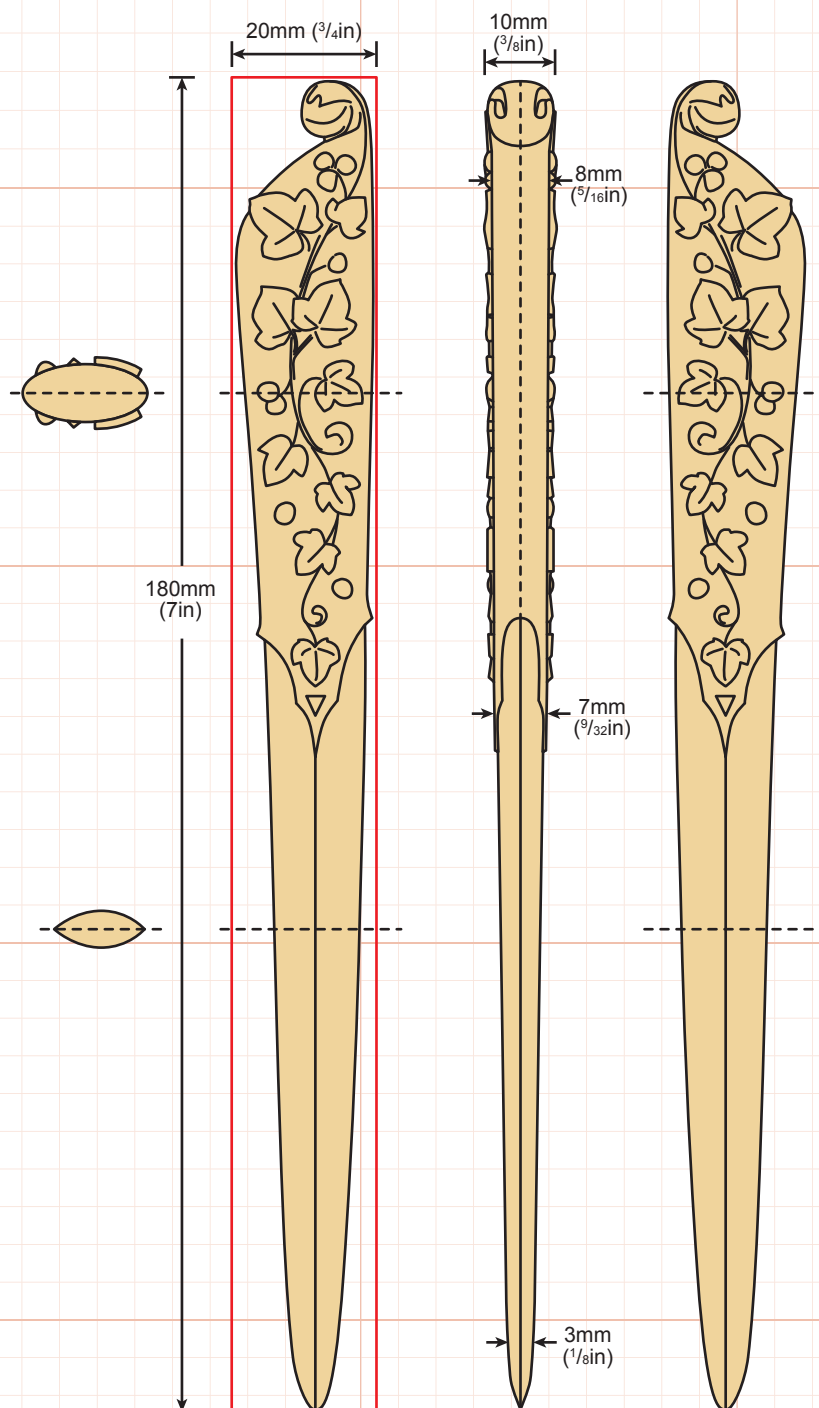
- Boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens*)
180 x 20 x 10mm
- A piece of cork

HANDY HINT

A glancing light will help you to see your work better and will highlight any mistakes, especially in the background. A desk lamp with an adjustable arm and head is very handy for changing the light direction as needed.

THE LATER, THE BETTER

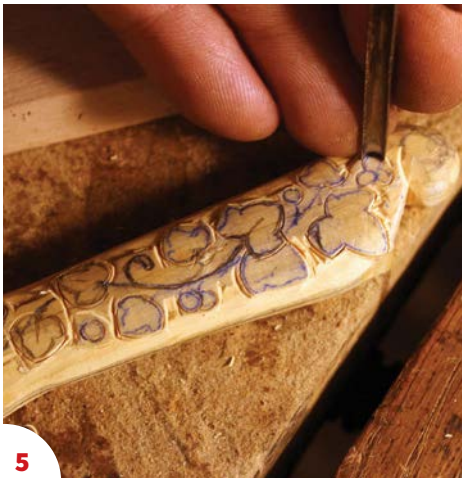
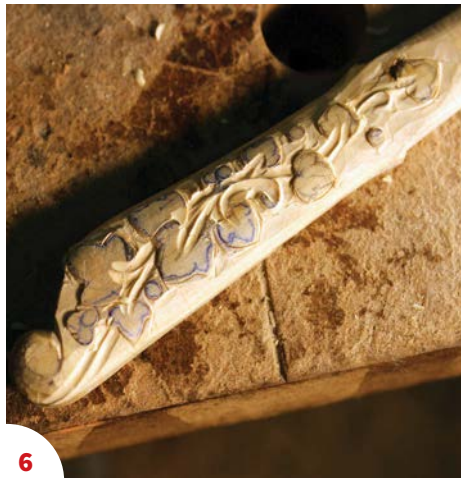
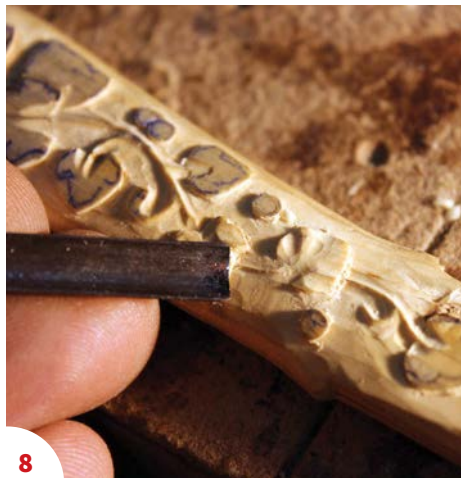
Setting in the final outline of the leaves at the very end gives you more freedom. This way you will avoid breaking the edges, you can shape the relief freely and give it more movement and finally you can redraw the leaf to its best shape once 'modelling' is over.



1 Use the block plane (small, low-angle block planes are very convenient for this) to reduce towards the tip at 8mm thick, keeping the wood 10mm thick at the top of the handle. Draw the outline of the letter opener and cut close to the line using the scrollsaw. Mark the centre line on both side and edge.

2 Clamp the 'blade' side on the bench and begin to shape the handle down to the first centimetre of the blade to give it an oval shape. Start to remove material with the riffler, then switch to the scraper to get an even, clean surface. Use the centre lines as a guide.



**3****4****5****6****7****8****9****10**

3 Round the top of the handle with the No.7, 12mm gouge. Be careful to follow the grain direction all around. It should almost look like a ball.

4 Draw the design on both sides using carbon paper. Use the V-tool to roughly outline the leaves. Don't get too close to the stem for the moment.

5 Remove the waste using the No.3, 3mm gouge. Set in the leaves roughly with the No.5, 6mm gouge, and the seeds more accurately with the No.8, 3mm gouge. Clean the background with the No.3, 3mm gouge and reshape the roundness towards the edges.

6 Given the size, the stems are brought out by carving a groove on each side of the line with the No.8, 3mm gouge. Start from the leaves and run the gouge along the line. On the top of the handle, twist the grooves towards the centreline on the top of the ball. Remove the outer edge of the grooves with the flat gouge to match with the background.

7 Now move on to the leaves. The highest points should be at the tip of the leaf and at the corner between the main and the small lobes (known as 'sinus'). Draw a line between the base of the leaf and the sinuses. Using the No.8, 3mm gouge (or the veiner for the smallest leaves), carve a groove on each side of the line.

8 Hollow the centre of the leaf in the direction of the base. The base should be the lowest point. Break the angles on the main lobe with the No.3, 3mm gouge to get a wavy surface. This is the overall approach: try to play with the shapes on each leaf to give movement and make them more lively.

9 You can give a slight angle at the bottom of the small lobes on some leaves. It works well on the leaves on which you want to make the tiny pointy lobes at the base. Once you're happy with the shape, redraw the leaf and set it in using the No.5, 6mm and No.7, 5mm gouges. Remove the waste. In line with the small lobes, make a small cut at the sinus which will catch the light.

10 The two overlapping leaves aren't more difficult to carve. Separate them by lowering the leaf below where they meet and carve the upper leaf first. The seeds are rounded by cutting and scraping carefully the angles all around with the No.3, 3mm gouge.

TOP TIP: I use a broken bandsaw blade to make my small scrapers. There are three basic steps to sharpen a scraper: square the edge with a file and/or a sharpening stone. Draw out a burr by pressing with a burnisher on the flat side at a 5–10° angle. Turn back the burr with a few strokes of burnisher on the edge, also at a 5–10° angle.

11 With the same tool, lower the stem where it runs under the leaves and where it looks too high.

12 Redraw the stem and carve it again as in step 6. Set in the little curly ends using the No.7, 5mm gouge and give an angle on the outer side with the No.5, 6mm gouge.

13 Move on to the curly leaf on the top. The junction of the leaf and the stem is just marked with the No.11, 2mm gouge. Set in the rest of the leaf and remove the waste using the No.5, 6mm gouge until you reach the stem line, turning around the leaf.

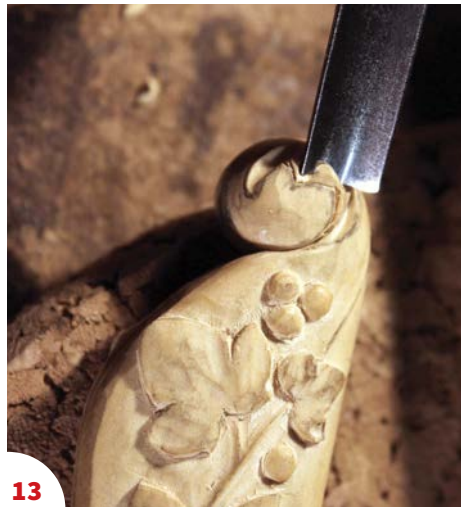
14 Add a groove with the veiner in the middle of the leaf. Repeat these steps to carve the other side of the handle.

15 Redraw the limit of the handle and separate it from the blade with the V-tool. From this step, you'll have to clamp the carved handle in order to work on the blade. To prevent damages, I used a wooden clamp garnished with a cork sole. A piece of cork is also slid between the carving and the bench.

16 The blade is first cut in the shape of a diamond using the No.3, 16mm gouge or a chisel, along the centre lines. Once this is done, use the scraper to progressively thin the end of the blade on both sides to reach a thickness of 3mm at the tip.

17 Keep working on the blade with the scraper to round both sides to the shape of an eye. Marking lines across the blade with the pencil will allow you to approach as close as possible to the edge without biting it. Clean the separation between the handle and the blade with the No.5, 10mm and No.3, 3mm gouge.

18 'Sharpen' the edge on 180-grit sandpaper glued on a flat surface. Sand both sides until the edge drawn line has completely disappeared, then switch back to the scraper to clean the sanding marks. Add the small triangle under the last leaf of the handle: a small stop cut at the top, a little chip removed with the No.8, 3mm gouge and the letter opener will be ready for the finishing. I used Danish oil to prevent fingerprints appearing on the wood and completed it with a coat of wax. ▶





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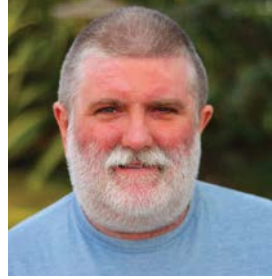
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Classical cartouche tray



Steve Bisco has been saving a special piece of mahogany for a project to do it justice

This project came about when I acquired a piece of genuine mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*) at a wood fair. Real mahogany, the favourite of furniture makers in the 18th and 19th centuries, is something of a rarity these days, so I looked for a classical-style project that would do it justice.

A cartouche is an 'architectural' feature much favoured in the Classical Baroque style. It can take several forms. It is usually, but not always, oval in shape and frequently has a domed interior displaying a coat-of-arms, a memorial epitaph or a door number. It is also often used as a frame for a picture or mirror or, as in this case, framing the flat interior surface of a plate or tray. The feature common to most of these variations is the scrolled border representing the frayed and wildly curled edges of a sheet of parchment. Cartouches occur in carved wood, stone and marble, in silverware and in printed form in 18th-century bookplates.

On the assumption that you have no need for a memorial epitaph or coat-of-arms, I have designed this example as a decorative mahogany tray, although you could easily adapt it to a mirror frame. It has tightly curled scrolls at the sides and looser ones at each end, with four small flowers to lighten it up. The cartouche is edged with a narrow border, which I have gilded in the traditional manner

to contrast with the rich dark wood. I have used imitation gold leaf (basically brass) as it is a lot cheaper than real gold and easier to use.

I have also used the traditional finish of French polish, which brings out the warm dark red of the mahogany and complements the rich glow of the gilding.

TOP TIP: Cabinet scrapers are a useful addition to the woodcarver's toolkit. They enable you to get a smooth glossy finish on a broad surface by pulling the scraper along in a near-vertical position. They usually come in threes, with a flat edge for flat surfaces and a variety of curves for curved surfaces. To sharpen them you grind or file squarely across the edge and the slight burr created will do the scraping.



MAHOGANY

Mahogany is a tropical timber that was first imported into Europe in the 18th century and quickly gained favour for its rich red lustrous surfaces, pushing our traditional oak (*Quercus robur*) into its exotic shade. Cabinetmakers and decorative carvers like Thomas Chippendale were quick to exploit its potential and it was soon established as the familiar 'brown furniture' of the Georgian and Victorian eras.

The mahogany traditionally used for carving and cabinetmaking came mainly from tropical Central America and was the species *Swietenia macrophylla*, generally known today as 'Genuine', 'Honduras' or 'Brazilian' mahogany. Because it is a rainforest species, logging is strictly controlled and it was for a while very difficult to obtain. Thanks to newer sustainable plantation-grown stocks, it is now a bit easier to source from specialist suppliers (try the internet and the timber suppliers' adverts in this magazine). If you cannot get genuine mahogany, substitutes like sapele (*Entandrophragma cylindricum*) are the next best thing and are quite easy to obtain.

Genuine mahogany carves well despite being fairly hard, and it produces a beautifully rich period effect when finished with French polish and decorated with gilding.

Things you will need

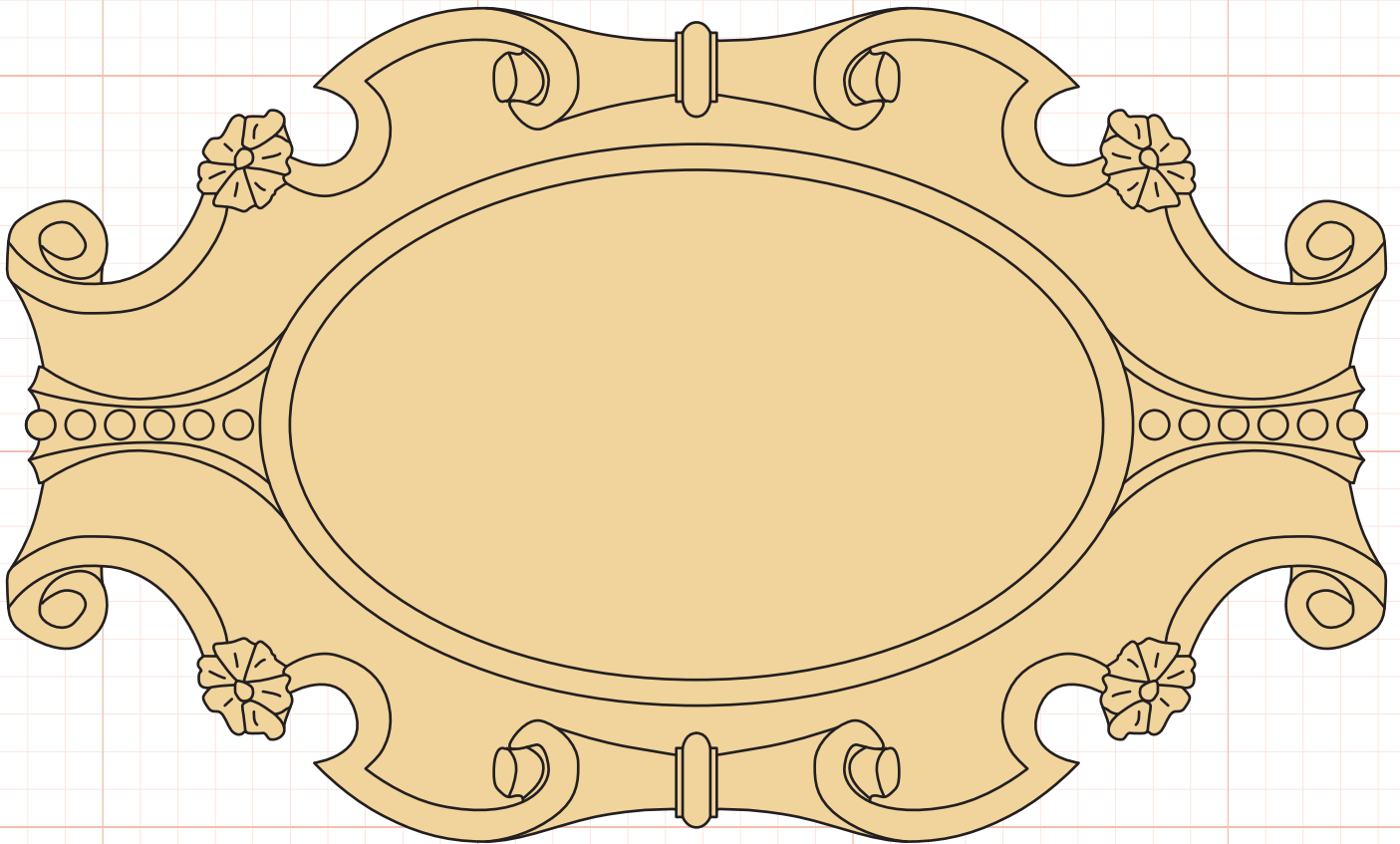
Tools:

- No.3, 20mm fishtail gouge
- No.3, 10mm fishtail gouge
- No.6, 25mm gouge
- No.9, 20mm gouge
- No.3, 10mm gouge
- No.8, 8mm gouge
- No.5, 7mm gouge
- No.9, 3mm gouge
- No.9, 16mm curved gouge
- 10mm skewed spoon gouge
- 12mm back-bent gouge

- Straight V-tool
- 20mm flat chisel
- 16mm hooked skew chisel
- 10mm skew chisel
- 6.5mm flat chisel
- Cabinet scrapers
- Various saws

Materials:

- Wood: mahogany – 350 x 210 x 50mm
- Finishing materials: French polish, imitation gold leaf, gilding size



Preparations

1 Get a piece of mahogany 350 x 210 x 50mm. Make a full-size copy of the drawing and trace the pattern onto the wood using carbon paper. Also trace and cut out a card template of the central oval.

2 Use a bandsaw, jigsaw or scrollsaw to cut neatly round the outside of the pattern. The semi-circular 'eyes' need some care and you may need to finish them with a rasp or gouge.





3



4



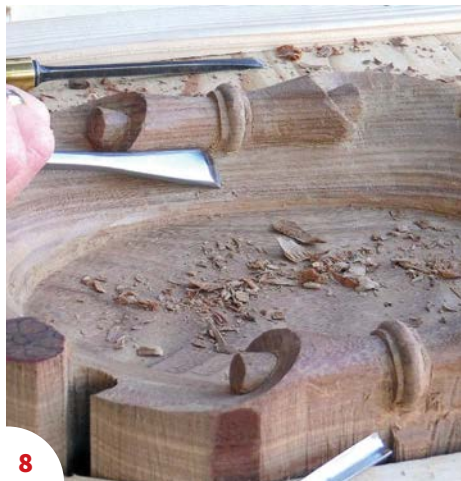
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7



8



9



10

Carving the upper side

3 Fix some wooden blocks onto a backing board to hold the carving in place. Screw or clamp the backing board to the bench so you can either walk around it or easily move it around to get the best carving direction. Start carving by using a V-tool to define the inner edge of the central oval.

4 Now use a large curved gouge to hollow out the middle of the oval, taking care to leave at least 13mm thickness in the base at this stage. 'Bost' down vertically at the edges after you clear away wood from inside.

'Create a smooth and elegant flow along the outer edge of the cartouche, dipping down from the side...'

5 To ensure you don't go too deep, make a depth gauge with a screw protruding through a flat piece of wood to the required depth. Level out the 'floor' of the tray by scraping with a flat chisel when the base thickness is around 13mm.

6 With the oval hollowed to shape and depth, rough out the inward-sloping sides of the cartouche, leaving the side scrolls, end scrolls and flowers untouched for now. Proceed carefully to get a feel for the elegant flow of the curves as you work down. Don't remove wood you may need later.

7 Now proceed to the side scrolls. Very carefully carve them into a flowing 'roll' shape that is narrower in the middle with a 'band' around the centre. The ends must show the protruding spiral of the volutes. Keep a smooth flow to all the curves, and shape the outside of the scroll into the outside of the cartouche.

8 Carve a bead and filet on the 'bands' wrapping around the scrolls. Undercut the scrolls and shape the inner sides of the cartouche under them.

9 Move on to the end scrolls, which curl away from the oval and under the outside of the tray, forming handles. Shape the scroll into the sides of the cartouche. Leave the raised section in the middle of the scroll to form the ridge and 'pellets' later.

10 Before carving the final details, refine the shape of the central oval, using the template as a guide. Then refine the inner sides of the cartouche so they curve smoothly down to make a clean edge with the oval. Create a smooth and elegant flow along the outer edge of the cartouche, dipping down from the side and end scrolls around the four flowers and the semi-circular 'eyes'.

11 Now return to the end scrolls and carefully carve the detail on the central ridge. Carve an 8mm bead along the middle, then cut the bead up into individual semi-spherical 'pellets' with a No.8, 8mm gouge, taking care not to break any out.

12 Next, carve the small flowers, making sure all four are at the same height above the backing board. Make them sit neat and shallow on the sides of the cartouche. The petals that protrude beyond the edge should be finished with a slightly rounded edge about 6mm thick.

13 Scrape the oval floor to a fine flat surface, using a flat cabinet scraper. Also use flat and curved cabinet scrapers (see box) to create a smooth finish on the inner sides of the cartouche.

14 Tidy up the outer rim of the cartouche, then draw a narrow border 8mm wide inside the outer edge flowing from the side scrolls. Use a sharp V-tool to cut a V-line along the border, making sure it is very neat.

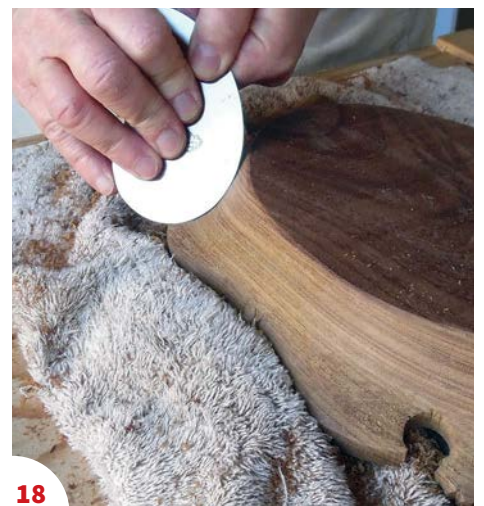
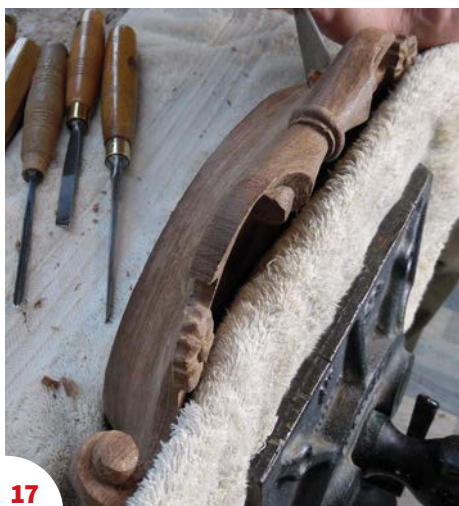
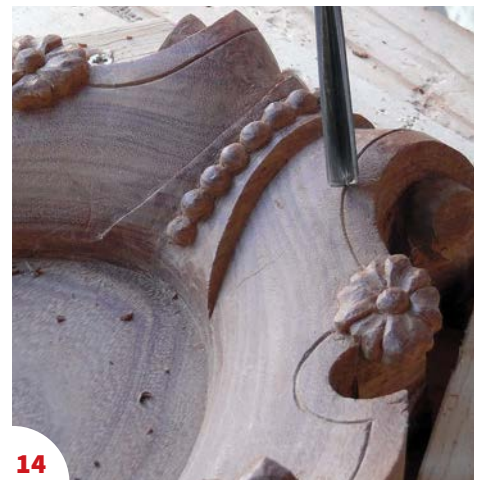
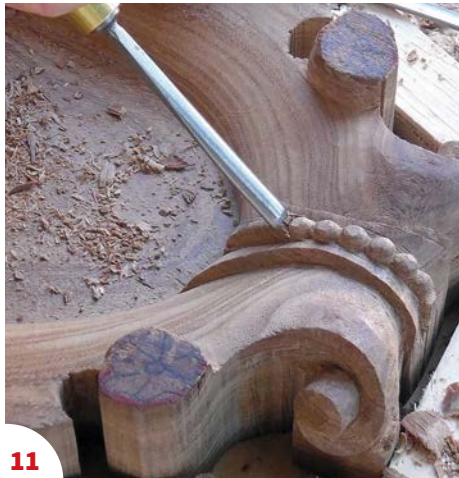
Carving the underside

15 Turn the carving upside down within the wooden blocks on the backing board, with some soft material to protect the carved surfaces. Use the oval card template to draw the position of the inner 'floor' on the underside of the tray, then draw another oval 10mm outside this to mark the base of the tray. Cut round it with the V-tool.

16 Now carve the outer sides of the tray following the contours of the inside to a thickness of around 8mm. Avoid putting too much pressure on the tray, and use saws to remove some of the end-grain wood first. (Note the batten screwed down to hold the work still).

17 Mould the side and end scrolls neatly into the outside of the tray. Preferably hold the work in a bench vice protected by boards and padding to get at the sides.

18 Finally, use the cabinet scrapers to work the base and outside surface to a smooth finish.



DID YOU KNOW?

French polish is a solution of shellac dissolved in alcohol. It is applied thinly in several coats with fine brushes and dries quickly leaving a clear hard coating which enhances the colour of the wood. Because the alcohol can dissolve previous coats you need to work quickly and smoothly without creating 'muddy' patches. If it all goes horribly wrong you can clean it off with methylated spirit, which is alcohol-based and is also used to clean the brushes.



19



20

19 The carving phase is now finished. The French polish will show every irregularity in the surface, so get the best possible finish you can with the scrapers then use fine abrasives to refine the surface without dulling the edges. Here you can see the finished carving.

Finishing

20 French polish is a traditional finish for mahogany-type woods. Apply the first coat thinly to the bare wood with a fine, soft brush, working fast as it dries in seconds. Avoid going over the same bit twice and don't let puddles form. Leave the first coat to harden overnight, give it a light sanding with 400-grit abrasive, then apply one or two more coats giving each one an hour or more to harden. Wash your brushes in methylated spirit.



21



22

21 Now for the final touch – the gilding on the border of the cartouche, the bead in the side scrolls and the round 'pellets' in the end scrolls. Get some imitation gold leaf, sold quite cheaply in most art stores, and also some gilding size, a brush to put it on with and a soft brush to press down the leaf. Apply some gilding size thinly to the areas to be gilded – the leaf will stick exactly where you put the size, so apply it carefully. Leave it about 10 minutes until it is dry but slightly tacky to the touch.

22 Use a folded piece of paper to pick up a piece of gold leaf, then slowly and carefully place it over the sized area. Press it down gently with a soft brush, and brush away any loose pieces of leaf. Continue over the whole area, and go over any gaps with more size and more leaf. To get a clean sharp edge to the gilding, remove any gold that strays outside the gilded area by lifting it off with sticky tape or rubbing it away gently with fine abrasive.



23

23 The imitation gold leaf needs a sealer to stop it tarnishing, so give the whole carving a final coat of French polish, covering the gold as well. Finally, buff it up to a soft shine with a dry cloth, and it should look like this. ■

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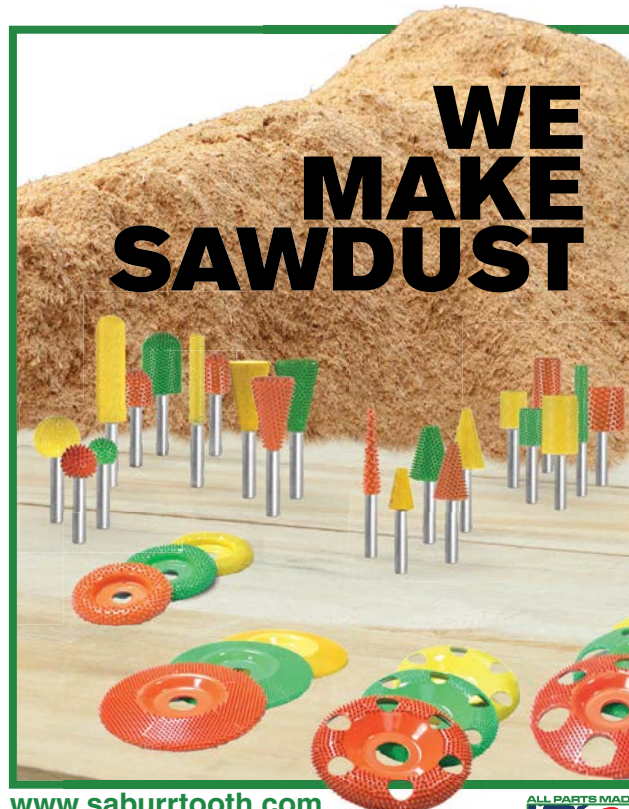
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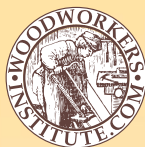
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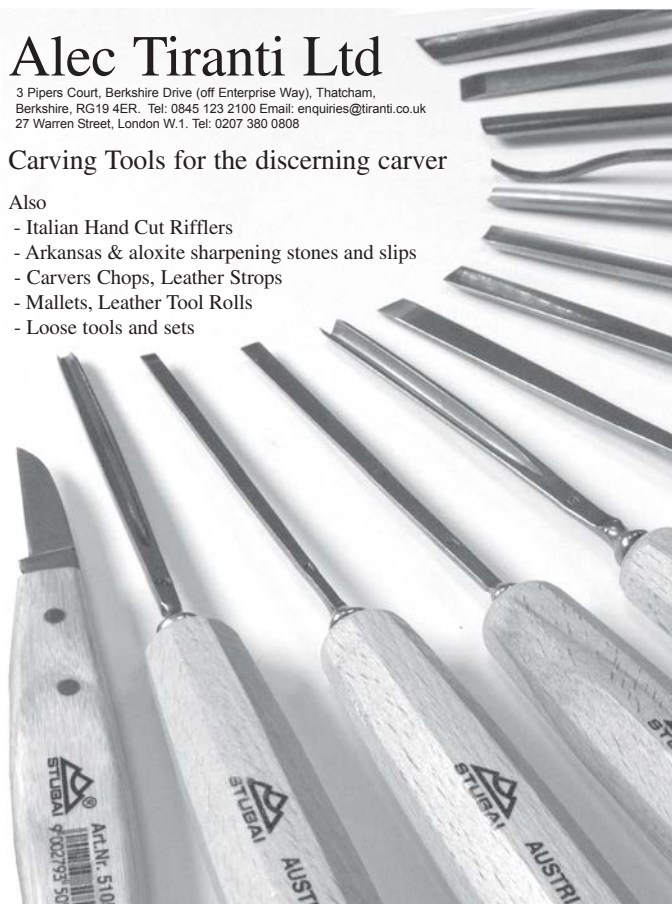
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THE DIARY

of a student woodcarver

William Barsley talks
about his experience
learning to model in clay

This series follows my journey on a three-year diploma in Ornamental Woodcarving and Gilding at the City and Guilds of London Art School, striving to turn my passion for woodcarving into a full-time profession.

As the evenings grow longer and the weather begins to warm, I realise I've been studying for almost a year now. How time flies! The experience so far has been incredibly rich and rewarding, though naturally it has also involved a lot of hard work and long hours in the workshop. I'm beginning to understand the beauty in learning a tangible skill such as carving, and all the elements that go into it. Witnessing the exceptional work being done by the current third-year carvers as they work on their final-year projects gives a daily dose of motivation to keep improving.

RECOMMENDED READING

Modelling and Sculpting the Human Figure by Edouard Lanteri, Dover Publications, 1986

Modelling and Sculpting Animals by Edouard Lanteri, Dover Publications, 1986

DID YOU KNOW?

Studies show that our visual short-term memory (also known as iconic memory) lasts for less than a second, so when sculpting from life, it is crucial to keep looking at the model again and again.



A room full of heads in the modelling studio



Fellow woodcarvers head modelling together in the drawing studio

Clay modelling

In my last article, I wrote about the different drawing techniques we have been learning that can really help to improve your carving. Clay modelling is one of the other key skills that the college places high emphasis on throughout the three-year diploma.

Whether you model in clay, wax or another material, being able to quickly and fairly accurately visualise your ideas in a three-dimensional form is a great aid and can be fundamental to the quality of the resulting piece of work. For centuries, sculptors and carvers have used

modelling as a way to develop new projects and ideas. The process of modelling can in many ways improve your carving, not only by teaching you to understand the shapes and forms of an object, but also because it is a quick and cost-effective way of showing a potential client a three-dimensional model of your work for their approval.

Here, I want to give you a taster of the clay modelling work we have been carrying out in our classes this year and how I've since applied these skills to a recent carving commission.

Relief modelling – a heraldic shield

Our first project was to make a shallow relief of a heraldic crest taken from a line drawing. This exercise forced us to think carefully about the form and shapes that make up the heraldic crest, and how to portray this in a given height, which was set at 60mm. It was a good introduction to working with clay and the different ways to apply and model it. We pierced through our designs, using a needle, onto a clay board we had prepared. This provided an outline of the design from which we began building up the relief.

It was interesting to learn what was, in effect, the opposite process to carving – adding material, in this case clay – until the piece was finished. Once complete, we learnt the process of plaster casting in order to create a permanent replica of our model.



Modelling in our workshops, using an easel to work



Piercing through the design onto the clay beneath



Heraldic shield relief

Three-dimensional modelling – human head

Later in the year, we spent eight days modelling a human head directly from a life model. This was a truly incredible experience, from which I learnt so much about the human face. It was fascinating to see that there are rough formulas in respect to the distances between certain facial features. For example, our heads can be approximately divided into thirds, from our hairline to the brow line, from the brow line to the bottom of the nose and from the bottom of the nose to the bottom of the chin. Little tricks and information such as this can be so helpful when you're first starting out.

In the first days of the head modelling project, our tutor took measurements from the life model using a set of callipers. We wrote these down so that we could make sure they matched the measurements of our own models, which had strong wire armatures underneath to support the clay. The project really taught us to 'look' properly, because we would need to look at the life model, remember what we saw and transfer this to our clay models.



Head modelling in process



The finished head model prior to casting

Modelling for a commission – the lion's head

I've recently been working on a commission for a private client in Devon who is restoring a beautiful old listed building and required a scaled-up version of an existing sculpture of a lion's head – a feature found throughout the house.

The client was keen to see a full-scale model before I began carving, which provided the perfect opportunity to put into practice the skills I've been learning this term. When it came to carving the lion, I found the clay model invaluable in helping me to visualise the piece and use the key measurements. However, there does come a point where you stop measuring and free carve, which helps to bring the piece to life.

My first carving competition

Recently, my class entered an external woodcarving competition, arranged by the Worshipful Company of Joiners and Ceilers held at the Building and Crafts College in London. The task was to carve the Joiners and Ceilers' heraldic crest in



The finished Lion head commission, carved in lime wood



Carving competition for the Worshipful Company of Joiners and Ceilers

one day, on a square piece of lime (*Tilia* spp) wood, using an incised carving method (a similar style to much of the Egyptian carving, which allows you to go straight into the detail). It's incredible how much you can get carved in a day if you really push yourself, and I was amazed and thrilled to be awarded first place for my carving!

TOP TIPS FOR MODELLING

- If you're struggling with modelling a shallow relief, just look at a coin and notice how the image on it can translate an incredible amount of depth in such a small space and height.
- If transferring an image onto clay, a needle or sharp pin can be used to pierce through your design onto the clay to provide an outline. Remember to put down a layer of cling film or plastic though, so that the paper doesn't soak up moisture from the clay.
- Don't smear your clay! One of the biggest lessons I've learned recently is not to keep smoothing the surface of the clay with your finger, as it can leave a poor finish to the piece. ▮

Next time...

In the next article, I will describe the art of letter carving, and reflect on the first year of the course as it comes to an end.

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Beauty and the beasts

Contemporary wood sculptor
Alexander Jones finds inspiration in
even the most creepy of crawlies

Alexander Jones has an unconventional approach to sourcing ideas. The Winchester-based wood sculptor, who generally concentrates on private commissions and public exhibitions, cites 'the figurative beauty of Grinling Gibbons, the humour of medieval misericords and the otherworldliness of Jeff Koons' as an inspiration for his large-scale wood sculptures. Such a curious combination is, he says, to 'challenge people's perceptions about the natural world around them'.

Alex, who was born in 1966, was initially drawn to art but was never sure what medium he wanted to focus on. He undertook a brief spell of framing and gilding high-quality art work and took that a step further when he enrolled on a traditional woodcarving course at City & Guilds Art College in London. 'I was very lucky to have understanding and flexible tutors,' he recalls. 'The more I learned about carving, the more I moved further away from the framing and traditional work.'

→

→ During the course Alex began to acquire a few commissions and as he started to develop his skill, he became increasingly fascinated by the nature of wood sculpture and intrigued by the 'love and obsession' that some people have for it.

After graduating in 1991, he served a year as an apprentice to woodcarver Peter Turing in West Sussex. Already he was looking to move the boundaries of his craft. 'I wanted to carve but also to take something and turn it on its head.' From this you will not be surprised to learn that he does not do typical 'pretty' subjects. 'Bugs can be beautiful. Fabulous beasts and rhino are ugly and beautiful too.'

Alex finds the extremes of the natural world particularly exciting. 'When you think of woodcarving, mostly what comes to mind are aesthetically pleasing subjects like otters, birds and other wildlife. As wood already brings its own beauty, I decided that by changing the expected subject matter, a different energy could be realised.'

Through carving fearsome creatures such as spiders or bugs with anatomical accuracy and the beauty of detailed traditional carving and wood inlay, 'an audience, rather than be repulsed, could be drawn to look on the subject matter with new eyes; a sort of push-and-pull effect'.

Alex has chosen in his work to explore the creatures that 'haunt our childhood', including spiders, wasps and fleas, hoping in a small way to challenge our perceptions about nature. He firmly believes that even the most unlovely of creatures possess a beauty of their own.

When it comes to experimentation, Alex isn't afraid to go big and size is a distinguishing feature of his work. 'I have lately been experimenting with movement and have carved an 8 x 8ft crane fly with spring-loaded moving wings for a client in Jersey,' he says. For the Lost Gardens of Heligan in Cornwall, he created an 8ft golden-haired long horn beetle. Another articulated sculpture is a 5ft-long, predatory Amazonian centipede with moving body carved in oak (*Quercus robur*), lime (*Tilia vulgaris*) wood-hinged legs and ebony (*Diospyros* spp) eyes.

Last year Alex finished what may be the biggest wooden butterfly in the world, a swallowtail with a wingspan of 15ft.

In fact some of his projects are so huge, they have to be assembled on site because he only has a tiny workshop at the bottom of his garden.

He has over the years acquired a diverse range of public clients including the Royal College of Ophthalmologists, the White House Private Members' Club, Twyford Church, South Harting Primary School and King Edward VI School, Southampton. Alex's many unique private commissions include a bronze chameleon, a 7ft dandelion in aluminium resin, silver gilded prawns, an intricate dragon in natural wood and a full size portrait of a man.

Between 2003 to 2009, he staged solo exhibitions in Winchester and London



Above and previous: Heligan golden-haired long horn beetle; 134cm x 72cm



Crane fly, 244cm x 244cm x 62cm

which featured collections of work based on Greek myths and insects from a six-month tour of Australia, with sculptures created out of indigenous wood.

But the sculptor does not just focus on flora and fauna. He admits that he loves the 'grandeur of the coat of arms and I love gilding too'. He is currently working on a life-size carving of Abbot Aston, a monk who rose to be head of Hyde Abbey in the 13th century. 'The sculpture has been commissioned by a group called Hyde 900 and I am carving him in large chunks of walnut from a tree out of which I fashioned one of my first commissions more than 25

years ago,' Alex says. 'I am looking at carving more wooden portraits of interesting faces. Wood is a great medium for depicting people as it is alive and warm and draws people in to touch it. Like a human, the tree has a trunk and limbs which shows its age through its cracks and crannies.'

Alex believes the future holds much promise. 'Woodcarving has so much potential I do not think it has been explored fully as an art form. Interesting gritty observed carvings are ripe for testing and exploring. Wood is so light and one can do big things that would not be possible in other materials.'

CARVING COURSES

Alex Jones runs courses at West Dean College in Sussex to explore woodcarving and its potential to depict the beauty and vibrancy of the natural world. 'Wildlife wood carving in relief' will cover how to realise a design carved as a decorative panel and the safe use of woodcarving hand tools. The next course takes place on 9-11 June, 2017. Cost £227. Contact: www.westdean.org.uk/study/short-courses/courses/we7038-wildlife-woodcarving-in-relief

PHOTOGRAPH OF OWL BY ALEXANDER JONES



Dragonfly, 82cm x 136cm x 33cm

ALEX'S ADVICE FOR OTHER CARVERS

- Carve things that really interest and fascinate you.
- Do lots of drawings. I use my i-pad and search for information.
- The secret to good carving is lots of information. With information you can do many things, without it people tend to fudge.
- Never, ever give up on a project. When things start to go wrong, dig deeper and make them work. You have to react all the time.
- I like carving that challenges perception and is insightful. I would like to see carvers push the boundaries more with their work. I like to be surprised or see things that make me laugh or think about something.

ABOVE INSET:

Owl,

110cm x 80cm

RIGHT:

Swallowtail

butterfly, 110cm

x 170cm x 80cm





The human touch

Although Alex Jones has built a reputation for his distinctive menagerie of colossal insects and woodland creatures, he is also developing a new body of work featuring life-sized human figures. A newly completed carving of a medieval monk is one such.

Walter, Abbot Aston of Hyde Abbey in Winchester, was Hampshire-born and worked his way up from humble beginnings to the pinnacle of the ecclesiastical community in 1222, a position he held for 26 years.

Alex has shown him holding a staff of office, with a hand extended in greeting. Alex told the *Hampshire Chronicle*: 'Although Aston is a historical figure separated from us by 800 years, I felt that he should also come across as someone who would be recognisable to us today because of the basic humanity which we all share. I undertook a lot of research into what Abbot Aston would have worn and also into the crozier which he is holding which is modelled on a 13th-century crozier from Hyde now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, and which was quite possibly his.'

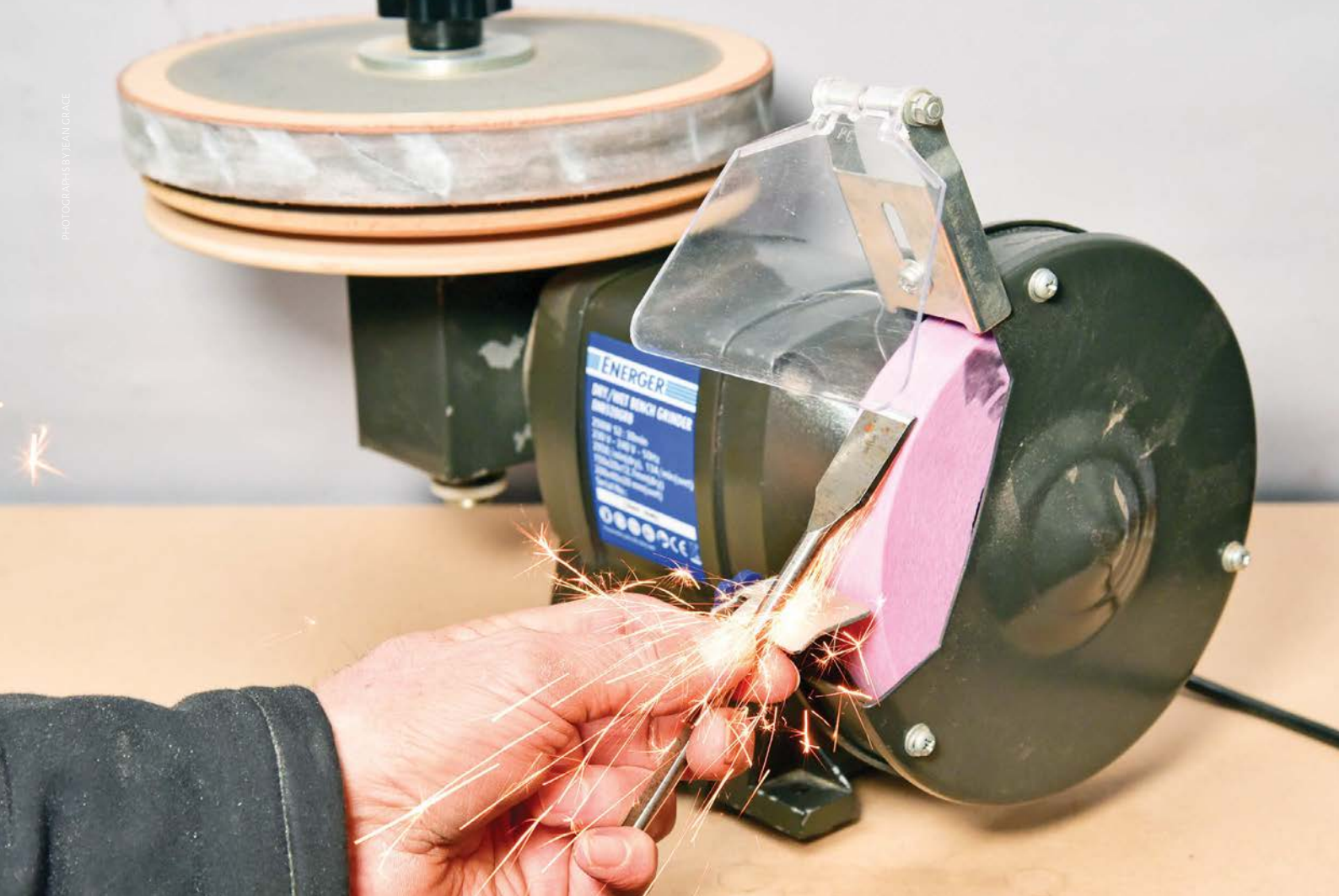
The work is carved from a piece of walnut Alex has had for more than 25 years. Lime wood is used as inlay to heighten the abbot's eyes and his staff is carved from oak. The monk's habit has been embossed by patterning to give it texture and a tactile quality to imitate the rough and modest nature of his robes. A flash of gold leaf on the mitre, staff and knotted cord signify that although a humble man, the abbot was nonetheless an important figure.

The work was commissioned by Hyde 900, a community project in Hampshire to celebrate the 900th anniversary of the founding of Hyde Abbey. ▀

Contact

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Web: www.alexjones.co.uk





Build a dedicated carver's grinder

Grinding carbon steel gouges and blades can be tricky, so Chris Grace opts for a DIY solution

In recent years I have embarked on carving with the intention of using it as a complement to my woodturning. I belong to a carving group and have discovered why many experienced carvers have so many tools – using the right tool makes life easier. Having bought a number of used carving tools and experimented with making some of my own, I realised there must be a better option than using a bench grinder, where it's easy to blue the steel, or the wet grinder which is so slow. Even the finer wheel of a wet grinder leaves an edge that requires a lot of additional work before it's usable. So I started thinking about a dedicated carver's grinder that could grind efficiently, which means quickly but as cool as possible, produce a fine finish and then hone the edge – all in one machine. It was clear that a standard bench grinder couldn't do all of this, but I had seen grinders with a

conventional wheel on one side and a wet wheel on the other, that I might be able to adapt to my needs, so the hunt was on.

Research

I often visualise what I want but have no idea whether it has been done before, so I do an internet search. It's typically cheaper to buy a tool rather than develop one. Unable to find a machine to do what I required, I found something I could adapt. I also wanted diamond discs and found some used in the lapidary trade. With this piece of information it's easy to source inexpensive parts.

Modifying the grinder

The inexpensive grinder I found had a grindwheel on one side and a wet wheel on the other driven through a reduction gearbox. Similar units are sold under

a number of brands, so I picked the cheapest, hoping I could modify it.

I discarded the water bath and wet stone, realising that it wasn't ideal having the slow wheel vertical and started to think of alternatives. A bit of exploring with a screwdriver revealed that the gearbox could readily be removed.

Unfortunately the mounting holes were in a rectangular, rather than a square pattern. I carefully measured them in relation to the centre of the shaft, added masking tape to the housing, and simply marked up the case for some new holes. I centre punched the case carefully to ensure I had a good start for my drill to ensure accuracy, and drilled four new holes. This enabled me to reassemble the gearbox on the shaft at 90° to its original position, providing a horizontal wheel.



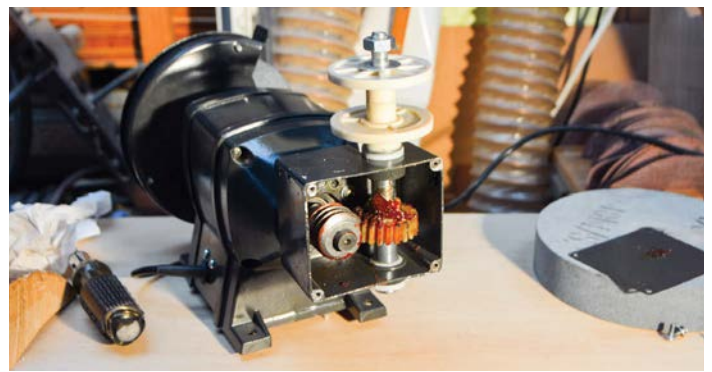
The donor machine



Investigate rotation options



Carefully mark, punch and drill



Reassemble gearbox and check

Making MDF discs

I cut a series of MDF discs to use with honing compound all about 225mm in diameter. I used different thicknesses of material to provide flexibility later. The honing discs were trued up on my lathe by pressing them against a cork-covered faceplate using the pre-drilled centre hole. The wide discs were simply smoothed while the thinner discs were shaped so that the inside profile of curved or vee gouges can be honed.



Cut MDF discs freehand



True and profile disc edges

Making a leather disc

I used one of the MDF discs as a template to cut some 4mm leather for a honing wheel. The leather required a heavy pair of scissors and a

strong hand to trim roughly to shape before sandwiching between two MDF discs so that I could trim it to an exact circle using a skew

chisel on my lathe. The centre hole could then be punched using a heavy duty hole punch with a selection of interchangeable cutters.



Cut leather disc



True disc edge with skew chisel



Carefully punch centre hole

Adding leather to a disc

Having determined leather holds compound better than MDF, I decided to wrap my wide wheel with that. I marked the leather slightly oversize before cutting a strip with scissors. This time it was much easier as the leather was just under 2mm thick.

I primed the MDF with PVA as the cut edges of MDF can soak up glue even more than end grain and provide a weak bond. I spread glue with a discarded plastic card. With the PVA well spread I wrapped the leather around the wheel. Cutting it at an acute angle minimises the chances of it separating in use and helps when butting the edges perfectly on assembly. The carefully aligned leather was taped in place to allow the glue to dry. I cut the excess leather away with a skew chisel. However I wasn't satisfied with the edges so these were sanded, and the leather face roughed up slightly to help it retain the compound better.



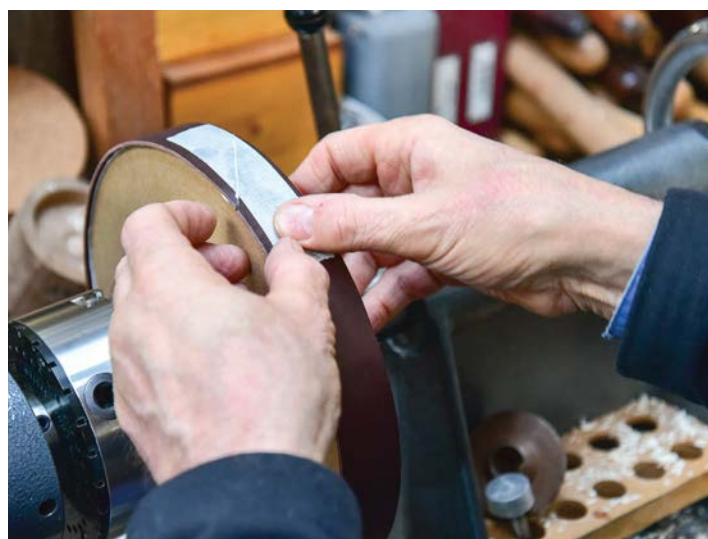
Cut thin leather strip



Prime, then apply PVA evenly



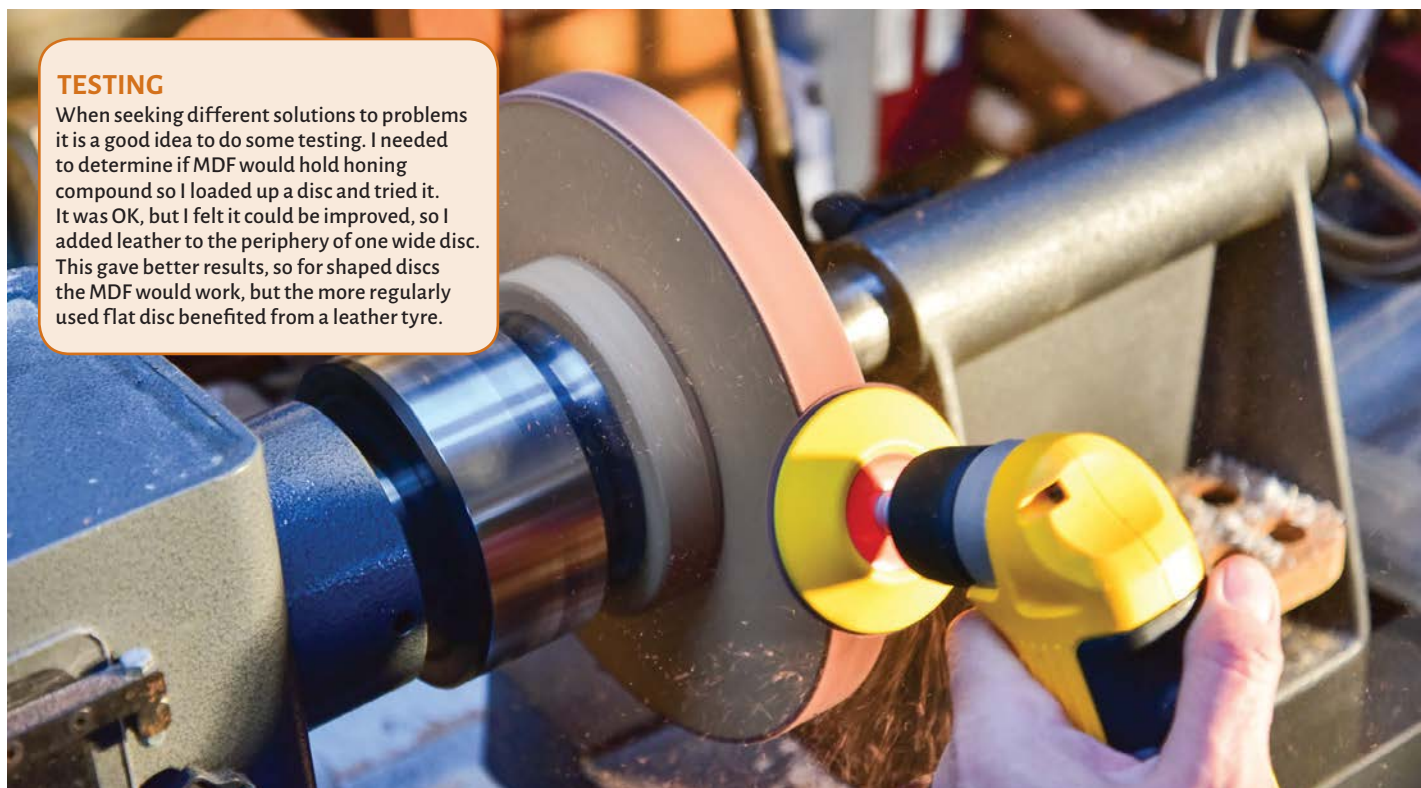
Wrap leather strip tightly



Press edges together and tape

TESTING

When seeking different solutions to problems it is a good idea to do some testing. I needed to determine if MDF would hold honing compound so I loaded up a disc and tried it. It was OK, but I felt it could be improved, so I added leather to the periphery of one wide disc. This gave better results, so for shaped discs the MDF would work, but the more regularly used flat disc benefited from a leather tyre.



Sand edges and face to key

Changing the grinding wheel

Standard grey grind wheels aren't well suited to grinding carving tools, so I added a Pink grindwheel, which cuts more quickly and cooler, and replaced the side guard. A stack of leather and MDF wheels were fitted to the slow side, and finally a diamond lapidary disc.



Final assembly and check

MODIFYING TOOLS SAFELY

- Any changes you make to a machine will invalidate any warranties and are undertaken at your own risk
- Adapting tools is often worthwhile, however it is essential that changes do not expose you to risk of personal injury while making the changes or compromise the safety of the tool in future use
- If the tool is powered, ensure the power is switched off and disconnected while making changes - however simple
- Guards are an important safety feature, so ensure any guards provided by the manufacturer of the donor machine continue to serve the necessary function following your modifications
- Do a risk assessment before you start: are the changes appropriate, safe, and are you competent to make them?
- Here there were no changes to the electrics or the high-speed grind wheel. I changed the slow-speed side, and ensured the machine would be stable and safe in its new configuration. I tested the modifications at each stage to ensure there were no unintended consequences
- If in any doubt, seek appropriately qualified assistance.

Conclusion

This combination machine allows me to quickly shape carving tools before refining the edge using the slow-running diamond disc and then

power stropping the gouge to its final finish, no matter what shape it is.

Finally, an almost finished 32mm straight lettering chisel created in a remarkably

short time. The star knob on top of the stack of discs allows for quick and easy configuration changes to set the machine up for any type of carving sharpening job. ▶



Stage one - shaping



Stage two - fine grinding



Stage three - honing



Honing inside a gouge



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Kingfisher on a leaf

Paul Purnell carves this distinctive river bird in a moment of stillness to create a decorative dish



There are around 90 groups of kingfishers in the world ranging from the African Dwarf at 10cm in length to the Giant Kingfisher at 42-48cm, unless the Australian kingfisher, known as the Laughing Kookaburra, is included, which can be larger.

The bird native to the UK is the common kingfisher (Latin name: *Alcedo atthis* – family: *Alcedinidae*) also known as the Eurasian kingfisher or river kingfisher.

They are widespread in central and southern England, but become less common further north especially in Scotland.

The common kingfisher is blue-green on top with an azure-blue rump and tail, orange underparts and bright orange feet. The brightness of the colours is not due to iridescence or pigmentation, but the way the structure of the feathers scatter blue light. The male and female are the same

colour, except the female has an orange-red patch at the base of her lower mandible.

Often the first sighting of a kingfisher will be an electric-blue flash flying fast and low over slow-moving or still water. It is exclusively fish eating and well designed for this purpose with a long dagger-shaped bill; excellent vision; adeptness at judging water depth and refraction and a membrane that covers the eyes to protect them when the bird hits water. →

Things you will need

Tools

- Bandsaw
- Rotary carving tool
- Coarse and medium spiked burrs
- Carbide fluted burrs
- Selection of diamond burrs
- Carving knife or scalpel
- Cushioned-drum sander
- Cloth sandpaper 120 through to 400-grit

- Epoxy putty

- Epoxy glue

- Finishing oil

Eyes

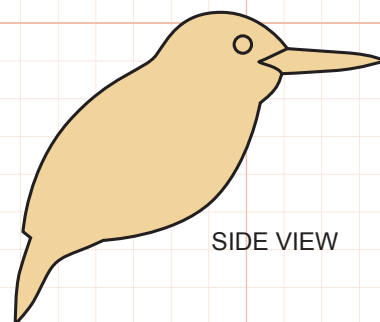
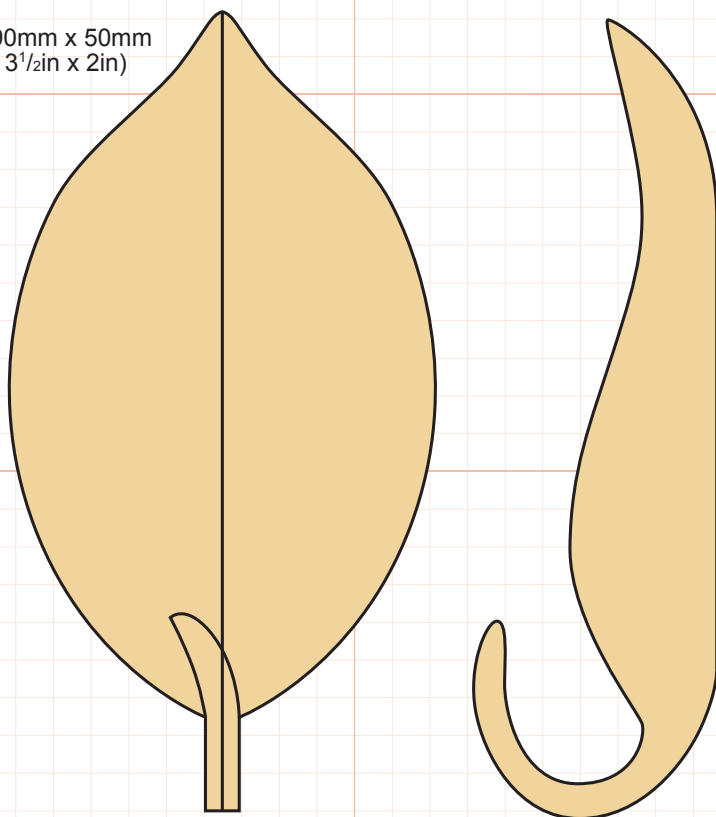
- Glass eyes: 4mm black

Wood

- Kingfisher – piece of yew: 75 x 40mm

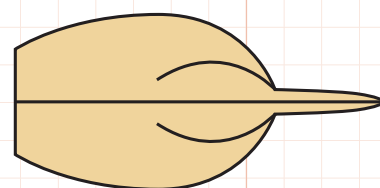
- Leaf dish – piece of olive ash: 160 x 90 x 50mm

160mm x 90mm x 50mm
(6⁵/₁₆in x 3¹/₂in x 2in)



SIDE VIEW

75mm x 40mm
(3in x 1⁵/₈in)



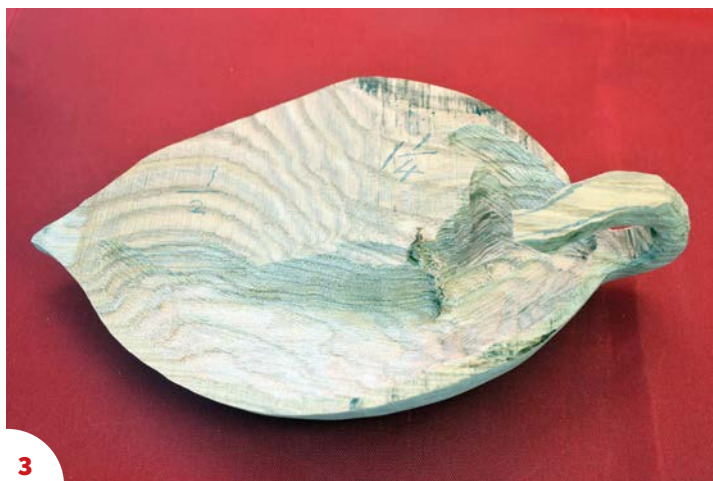
TOP VIEW

Leaf dish

1 Have reference material to hand, especially for the kingfisher. Use the diagram to make a cardboard template of the side view of the leaf. Use this template to bandsaw the blank. As the upright of the stalk is cross-grain, keep it on the chunky side.

2 Shape the underside with a coarse bull-nose carbide burr. When you are happy with the profile, give a rough sand with 120-grit on a cushioned-drum sander. Ensure that you leave a flat area for stability.





3 Hollow out the top side of the leaf using the same coarse burr. This is a slow process. Work methodically and do not try to take off too much wood at any one time. Plenty of material is needed for several rounds of sanding, so be mindful of carving the leaf too thin.

4 Shape the stalk with a medium flame burr. The upright part of the stalk is cross-grain and will need to remain robust enough to support the weight of the kingfisher. When shaping the stalk, think about the final position of where the kingfisher will be perched. It should interfere as little as possible with the main area of the leaf if the intention is to use it as a dish. Depending on the coarseness of the finish after using the burr, you may choose to use a medium burr before sanding. Normally, 120-grit paper on the cushioned-drum sander will suffice to remove most of the marks left by the coarse burr.



5 Sand the entire leaf with 180, 240 and 320-grit paper on the cushioned-drum sander. Finally, hand sand with 400-grit paper. Wipe over the leaf with white spirit and check in the daylight for any remaining blemishes. Put the dish to one side.

Kingfisher

6 Use the diagram to make the side template of the kingfisher and use it to cut out the blank. There is no need to cut the kingfisher blank in two dimensions.



7 Draw a centreline. Using the plan template and reference material for guidance, start to rough out the top view of the head and beak with a coarse cylinder burr.

8 Once you are happy with the plan-view shape, round over the head and body using the same coarse burr. Do not round over the beak nor carve the tail at this stage.

9 Define the area of the under tail coverts with the coarse burr.

10 Work on the top of the tail to reduce the thickness ready for sanding. Carve the edges with a slight downward movement.

11 Sand the entire piece with 120-grit paper on a cushioned drum sander. This is only a rough sand to help with perspective, symmetry of the carving and to provide a clean surface to pencil on details. Redraw the centreline.

12 I prefer to shape the beak with a carving knife and hand sanding. This way there is more control of the material you remove. If you prefer, you can use a diamond burr instead. Whatever method you use, remove very small amounts at any one time to ensure you achieve the chunky, dagger-like shape – one of the kingfisher's distinctive features. To provide some rigidity to the sandpaper when hand sanding, stick different grits to a variety of sticks, such as coffee stirring sticks or toothpick. I also find my wife's emery boards useful for this purpose!

13 Once you have achieved the overall shape, pencil on where the beak meets the forehead, chin and the gape. Use the carving knife to define these areas. Separate the upper and lower halves of the beak with the knife. When you are happy with the dimensions and symmetry of the beak, sand it with 240-grit paper. Also sand the head down to 240-grit.

14 Use a flame-shaped fluted cutter to outline the eye channel. Blend the channel into the crown and cheeks with 240-grit paper on the split mandrel sander.

15 Locate the position of the eyes. Draw the position of an eye on one side. Mark the centre with a pin. Then use another pin on the other side to align with the first. Check from above and from the front to ensure correct alignment. Drill a hole on both sides with a 2mm drill to depth of 10mm. Then use a diamond bud-shaped burr to widen and deepen the socket to receive the 4mm eyes. As you enlarge, keep checking the alignment. The eye socket needs to be deep enough to accommodate fixing the eyes with epoxy putty. Ensure that you achieve the tightest fit of the eyes to avoid the putty showing through once fixed in place. Even good quality eyes can differ in size by a fraction of a millimetre. This is not a problem if you are carving a bird that is going to be painted. If there is a slight difference, enlarge each hole to match one of the pair of eyes and mark each eye with left and right to identify them when fixing.

16 Sand the body and tail with 180 and then 240-grit abrasive on a cushioned sanding drum. Constantly check symmetry from all sides as you sand.

17 Pencil on the upper tail coverts and the primary and secondary feather groups.



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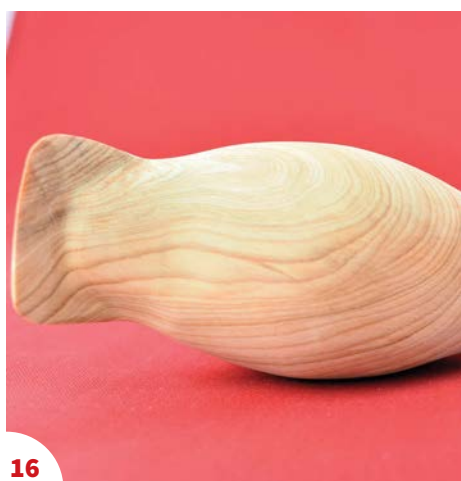
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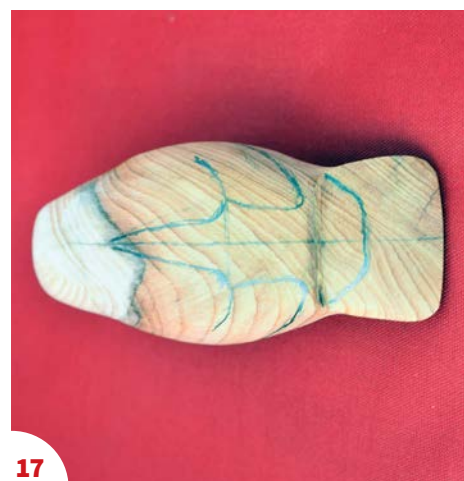
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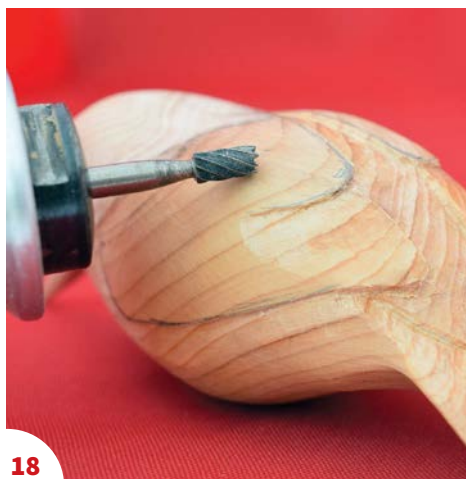
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18 Define these areas with a 3mm, fluted cylinder cutter.

19 Use the diamond bud and then mandrel sander with 240-grit abrasive to blend these areas into the body. The aim is to remove all marks left by the cutter.

20 The kingfisher's shape is now complete. Once you are happy that everything is symmetrical, finish with two rounds of sanding by hand – firstly, with 320 and lastly with 400-grit abrasive.

21 Now fit the kingfisher to the stalk of the leaf. Find the best stance, keeping the bird aligned so that the beak does not intrude over the leaf dish. Draw a line across the lower body to match this alignment. Use the 3mm fluted cylinder cutter to carve a groove to match the profile of the stalk. Take tiny amounts away at a time and keep checking until you achieve a good fit.

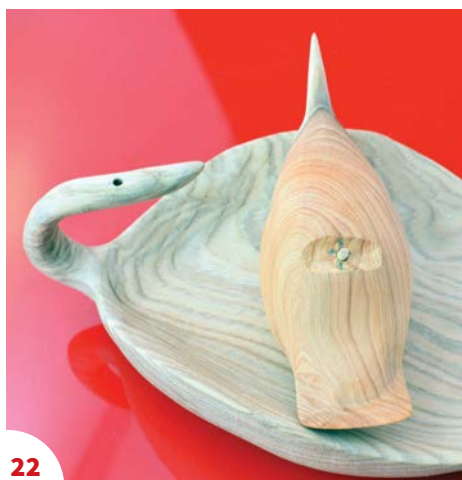


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22 Mark the centre point of the groove that will fit on to the stalk. Mark the stalk to align with this point. I have used a 2mm dowel for this fix (you could also use a nail or pin with the head removed). Drill into the bird and stalk to accommodate the dowel. When drilling into the stalk, ensure you do not drill through to the bottom surface. Mark the drill with a piece of masking tape at the depth you need. Wipe down the kingfisher with white spirit to remove any remaining dust. Do a last check for marks left by the carving burrs or sandpaper. Yew is unforgiving when it comes to any small blemish showing through after oiling.



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23 Apply four coats of finishing oil of your choice. Fix the 4mm black eyes using a small amount of epoxy putty. If you have drilled deep enough at stage 14, and providing your pair of eyes are on a wire, leave a good proportion of the wire on the eye when you snip it off. The wire can then be held in the drilled hole with a small amount of putty. This way it ensures you will have no putty squeezing through and around the eyes and spoiling the look.

24 Finally, with epoxy glue attach the kingfisher to the leaf. This is the finished carving. ▶



23



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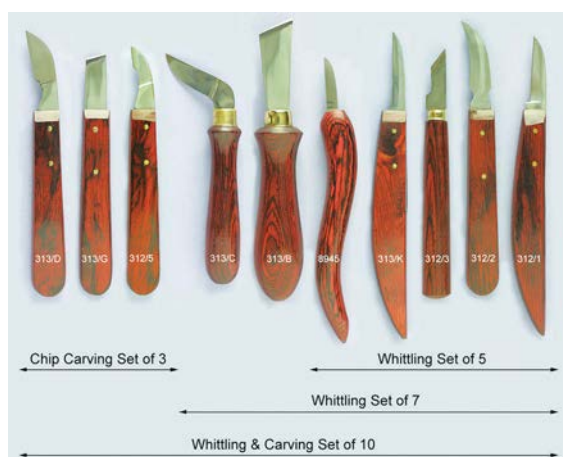
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sharing expertise

TALKING HEADS

This issue, we go behind the scenes with portrait specialist **Bill Merrington**

PHOTOGRAPHS BY IBRAHIM EDWARD



For the first time during the 20th century, through the development of new technologies such as photography, film and the rising power of the media, we became intimately familiar with the faces of those who transformed the world around us. This exhibition of wood and clay sculptures explores popular mythology, cultural fame and political leadership across the 20th century. Looking back over the past century, the exhibition

questions how we represented our political, cultural and spiritual leaders.

Bill Merrington portrays individuals who had a significant effect upon their communities: from spiritual and political leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, to cultural icons such as The Beatles, the Queen and Mother Teresa. These portraits raise questions about what makes a popular icon and why we choose certain individuals to follow, admire and revere.

Main image: Bill demonstrating at his first exhibition
Inset: Self portrait in lime (*tilia vulgaris*) 560mm x 300mm x 300mm

Bill Merrington has been working with wood since 1995. His first project was a rocking horse he made for his children. Since then he has worked commercially and developed a specialism in portrait sculpture, winning the international Wood Carvers 'in the round' competition in 2012. Woodcarving is a slow and attentive craft, each piece can take up to 300 hours of work.

How long have you been carving?

I have been carving since the early 1990s, usually one day a week on a Saturday as I listen to sport on the radio.

How long have you been working at the university?

I have been in an academic setting for nine years as a chaplain and lecturer of two universities (Bournemouth University and Arts University Bournemouth). I lecture in the subjects of bereavement, how to give bad news, crisis management and counselling skills. So enjoying my weekends carving is a great way of relaxing.

When did you begin carving?

I found myself at a loose end when my wife was working on my day off, so I signed up for a basic wood working course, but I quickly moved into carving. My wife said: 'just buy enough wood for a rocking horse head and see if you can do it.' Fortunately, my first horse's head was good enough to become a full rocking horse.

How did you get into carving? And why?

I guess it all began when I was a child. We had a rocking horse, which I loved playing with. When my children were small I wanted them to share in my experience so I made a large rocking horse and then made some commercially, but this became repetitive and I wanted a new challenge. When I heard that portrait carving was a very high form of woodcarving, it became a life-long challenge.

Who were your inspirations when you begun carving?

Historically I love the work of Franz Xaver Messerschmidt from the 18th century. He made conventional portraits in wood and various other materials. His fascinating character heads intrigued me capturing the flip side of human expression.

Mike Painter has also been significant in my development. I think he is the best portrait carver in the UK and proved to be a sympathetic and patient teacher.

Did you have any major influences?

I have now developed a process in my carving, which begins with drawing and perhaps painting the person I'm studying. This leads to sculpturing the head in clay. This might be just in a quick form or fully formed to allow a rubber mould to be made for a bronze resin bust. Sculptors such as Jean-Luc Brandily from France or Philippe Faraut from the US, have inspired this approach. Attending the Unika exhibition in Italy raised my understanding of top quality carving. I'd recommend every wood carver to have at least one trip to Italy to appreciate the diversity of the carvers at Unika.

Are there any other types of carvings you've worked in your spare time?

I have been developing my skills on human body sculptures and my next target is to produce a series of athletic and dancing forms in wood and clay. ▶



The Beatles in lime (880mm x 330mm x 80mm)



Bill sculpting Aung San Suu Kyi in clay (400mm x 280mm x 280mm)

'We shall not find life by refusing to let go of our precious, protected selves' – Rowan Williams



Former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, in lime (540mm x 300mm x 300mm)



Left: Queen Elizabeth II in lime (460mm x 280mm x 220mm)



Right: Mahatma Gandhi in lime (620mm x 340mm x 340mm)

'Let us touch the dying, the poor, the lonely and the unwanted according to the graces we have received and let us not be ashamed or slow to do the humble work' – Mother Teresa



Nelson Mandela in clay (480mm x 280mm x 280mm), left, Mother Teresa in lime (1580mm x 600mm x 420mm), right



Roughing out

Peter Benson talks us through a crucial stage of the carving process

The production of any carving can be broken down into four parts. First comes the research to produce the pattern of whatever it is that you intend to carve. Second is the roughing out process to remove as much of the unwanted wood as you can, until the basic shape or form of the subject is recognisable. Third is adding all of the necessary detail and finally comes the finishing.

In this article we will look at roughing out and the tool in your collection that is most suited for this function. In general I always advise carvers to use the largest

tool that they can handle comfortably for any particular task. This tool selection is inevitably affected by the strength of the person using it, so there can be no hard and fast rules here. Any size gouge with a sweep from a No.3 to a No.9 can be used, preferably with a mallet, and with practice it can remove quite large quantities of waste wood. If you want a finished surface that is relatively flat, I would recommend that you use a tool with a No.3 or No.4 sweep, but for a general-purpose roughing gouge I have chosen a No.6 gouge, 18mm wide. This has a cutting edge equivalent to a

slightly larger No.3 but will actually remove more waste material, cutting deeper into the flat surface of a block. The big advantage of this tool is that you can go as deep as the tool will allow, yet can also make very shallow or small cuts by not cutting as deep into the surface – something you cannot do with a tool of a shallower sweep. A No.3 or No.4 sweep will, however, work better on a rounded or angled surface where it can remove more wood and leave a flatter surface afterwards. When adding to your toolbox you might like to bear this in mind.



A fluted surface resulting from using the No.6 gouge



A smoother surface from the No.4 gouge

To begin

The first and most important part of roughing out is to ensure that the block is securely fixed to the work surface. This can be done with a variety of proprietary carving clamps, a suitable bench vice or even by clamping directly to the work surface. When I was a lot younger, I roughed out a horse that I was carving by kneeling on an extension of the block on the floor. If I say that I was also using a shoe as a mallet you can understand that my tools and experience were severely lacking. But I was still a schoolboy at the time!

Quite a high proportion of the carvers

I meet nowadays are ladies and, no matter how we feel about equal rights and opportunities, there is no doubt that, in general, ladies don't have the arm or hand strength of most men. As a result more thought about technique is probably desirable, rather than brute force, when approaching the roughing out process.

When getting novice carvers to rough out a large carving, my biggest problem is to persuade them that white knuckles and a grip of iron are not necessarily the best way to go about it. This part of carving is one that takes the most time and is very important to

get right. If it goes wrong, the whole carving is likely to suffer. Therefore, you should pace yourself, removing only as much wood as you can manage comfortably. As long as your gouge is kept sharp and you have a mallet that is not too heavy, you should be able to continue carving for as long as you like, but stop before you get tired and you will be able to continue the next day.

One small tip when roughing out is to give yourself plenty of room and sit, or stand, in a comfortable position. Let the mallet do the work and don't rely too much on your shoulder for power or you will suffer the next day.



It is well worth investing in a decent holding device



Give yourself plenty of room

Grain direction

You should always be aware of the grain direction when carving, as you will have more control when working across the grain but can remove more wood working with the grain. You may well be able to take advantage of the fact that the wood will tend to split when cutting along the grain as not so much effort will be needed. However be careful, as I have had some very unpleasant splinters in my hand and arms in the past, when I have tried removing large amounts of wood

this way. The wood can split quite suddenly and violently. Although this may be to your advantage, more often than not it will happen quite unexpectedly, causing large pieces of wood to end up in undesirable places.

As with all the tools in your toolbox, the No.6, 18mm gouge has more than one use. It can of course be used without a mallet as a small or large gouge, depending how deep you push it into the wood. It can be used in a slicing motion to give a smoother finish or even upside down

for convex curves. It will carve concave hollows as well as long sweeps for foliage or fabric folds. The only limitations that many carvers experience with a larger tool like this are down to them not keeping it sharp enough. It is quite a big tool for a novice and will take a lot of effort to get it through the wood if not kept regularly honed. As a result the carver resorts to using a much smaller tool requiring less effort but giving an inferior finish. The larger the cutting edge the better will be the finish attained. ▀



Watch out for the split!



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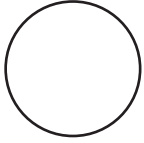
Bearded vulture

Mike Wood shows how to carve this beautiful bird of prey

The bearded vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus*) – sometimes called a lammergeier – can be found in the skies above Europe, Africa and Asia. They love rocky, mountainous regions and flying over the alpine meadows below. Sadly, this majestic bird has been suffering the effects of a variety of man-made environmental hazards, such as poison appearing in their food chain, habitat degradation and reduced food supplies. The latter includes tortoises, when they can get them, which the lammergeier drops from great heights onto rocks to crack open the shells. It scavenges for food and while mainly feeding on carrion, it will often leave meat in favour of bones, since it thrives on marrow which makes up nearly 90% of its diet. The bird grows to a length of around 1.25m, with a wingspan of up to 3m. It weighs on average about 5.5 – 6.3kg. Unlike many vultures which have bald heads, the lammergeier has a feathered head and the adults are generally coloured dark grey, rust and white.

Painting Swatches

No 1 White Gesso



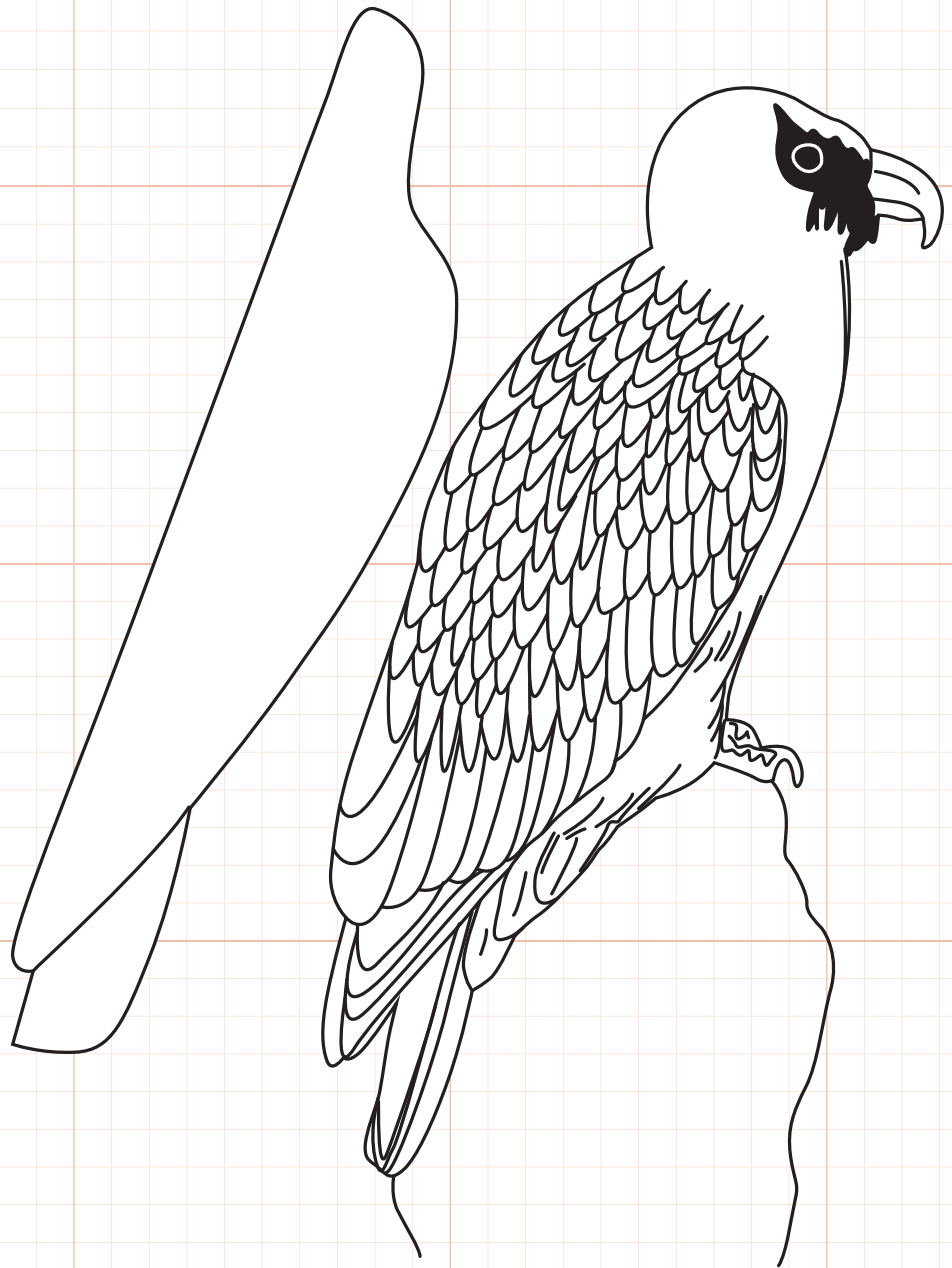
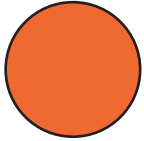
No 2 Black



No 3 Paynes Gray



No 4 Cad Orange



Things you will need

Tools:

- Rotary carving unit
- Handpiece to hold various cutters and sanding units
- Drum sander and abrasives to fit hand unit
- Coarse and medium grit tapered rotary cutter
- Angle grinder with medium grit disc cutter
- Medium grit ball rotary cutter
- Fine grit small ball rotary cutter
- Fine grit pointed ruby rotary cutter
- Fine grade flame/tapered cutter
- Medium sized fine grade ball-ended cutter
- Airbrush/brushes as appropriate
- Coloured artist's paints

- Eyes
- Two-part epoxy putty or similar to bond the eyes
- PPE – face mask/goggles, dust mask and extraction
- Pyrography unit, and shading and incising/scalpel-type tips
- Selections of acrylic colours shown in the palette plus black
- Airbrush and/or brushes to apply the colours
- PVA or similar adhesive
- Cyanoacrylate adhesive

Materials:

- Jelutong (*Dyera costulata*)
Body: 360mm long x height 160mm width 15cm
Head 120mm long 60mm high 90mm wide
- Plywood to form a stand

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

1 First cut out the bird shape on a bandsaw, coping saw or similar, following the template. Once cut, mark the main large features on the bird and then rough cut the shape of the body and head to represent the main profile lines of the bird and the main body, wing and tail sections as best you can. Note that I cut a separate head section and join it to the main body.

2 For the next stage you need to secure fix and clamp the body so it is secure. Once secure, start to shape the body using a small or large angle grinder. The smaller ones can be used one handed and are relatively gentle to use. The larger 100mm versions are only to be used with two hands. You can of course carve by hand. The power tool method is fast, but you do have noise and dust to deal with, which many people do not want. Shape the top of the bird – your holding method must allow you to angle the wood in various positions so you can shape it effectively and safely.

3 Continue shaping until you get to the desired profile all over.

4 When your profile looks as you want it to, draw in the wing feather positions. Check your reference material so you get the form right. It really isn't just a case of putting in a few bits that look like feathers. They need to look right, in respect of texture, the number, the size and the lay of them too.

5 With a high-speed rotary carver handpiece and a small point, carve in all the wing feathers, getting the depths right and also start profiling them.

6 Now do the same for the other side and continue until you have all the feathers carved in on the back. Once these are done, move to the underside of the bird and create the chest form required, but do note where the wings need to come to and where they touch and how they fit against the breast.

7 Now you need to smooth them out to remove the roughness and make them more feather-like in shape. A stump cutter works well for this, but there are numerous ruby, diamond, carbide or HSS cutters that will do the job well.

8 Refine the head profile, making sure the beak is correct. Mark and cut the eye sockets and then draw in all feathers on the head. Once the feathers are drawn in, use a small ruby point to carve in all head feathers. To create the beak, the upper beak needs to have a point at the very end. This is a curved shape with a pointed end that needs to be hard and unlikely to fracture. One trick is to insert a small piece of wire into the end of the beak. Once secure, you can use a simple trick of applying cyanoacrylate and baking powder to form a point at the end of the bill. Simply put, soak the end of the bill in superglue then dip it in the baking powder until you get the point you want. This builds up with repeated applications, is hard when set and can be shaped as required.

9 Now you need to create the surround for the eyes and and fix them in place. To do this, create a bed of two-part epoxy putty and press the glass eyes into the putty. You will end up creating a ring of epoxy putty around the eye before inserting the eye and epoxy putty mix into the socket. Due to the surrounding area of the eye being red on the finished bird, this helps with the colour scheme. It is worth noting that epoxy putty can be coloured later on, but if you do not need to, then all is good due to your having the right colour mix in the first place. Just a little hint, if you cannot get the colour scheme of the epoxy putty or epoxy resin or other fixative you use right, most of these adhesives and fillers can be coloured using specialist colourants or powder-based dyes. Just remember to make sure you mix enough of the adhesive or filler for all your needs all in one go, as you will not be able to get the exact same tint again if you mix a second batch.

10 Fix the eyes in place and sculpt the surrounding epoxy putty to the required shape. Once done, use a pyrography machine with a scalpel edge tip and start burning in the feather shafts on the wings, the back feathers, then carry on burning feathers on the underside and up onto the head around the eye.

11 Continue with pyrographing in the head feathers and then back to the main body and burn in the finer details of the feathers. The head is burnt in.

12 Create the finer detail in sections, cross-checking your reference material all of the time.

13 Once all the feather detail has been burnt in, create your base for the bird to perch on. I chose to laminate layers of plywood sheet together and sculpt them to resemble a rock. You will also need to turn your attention to the feet. You can buy feet from various suppliers or make them yourself. However to get the feet, you need to drill two holes to fit the feet into the bird and the base. The bird rests at the angle you want it to when it is perched on the base. Give the base a coat of grey before bonding the feet in the base section and the bird permanently.

14 You need to create a couple of primary feathers to get the end of the wing form correct. You can shape and burn these prior to bonding them in place.

15 Once they are bonded in place, coat the bird in white gesso, being careful not to coat the eye and surrounding red area.

16 Use a template and airbrush with black, paint all feathers on the back and wings. You can do this by hand painting, but it is a longer process and you need to experiment on waste wood to get the graduations and shapes right before you tackle the colouring on the bird.



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17 Once the edges and relevant outlines have been created, coat all the back and wing sections with very thin washes of Paynes gray paint to get the desired colour to match your reference material.

18 Once you have your desired colouring, use white gesso to paint in all of the shafts.

19 Now coat the breast, the head up to the lower eye section and part of the feet with orange.

20 Using white gesso and a fine paintbrush, edge all the feathers. Define those on the neck area and the back of the head up to the eyeline. Check your reference material as to what the various sections need to look like.

21 Now use very thin washes of the orange on the breast to create a slightly muted effect. After this, define the neck feathers with white if you have inadvertently tinged any section that needs to be white. After this, paint the beak a mid grey and graduate the colour from the mid section to a black tip. NB: the black area around and under the front of the beak. It has whiskery bits and you can stick fine bristles from a very soft hair brush of cotton thread to create this before coating it with paint, which will stiffen the bristles. Paint the areas around the the eyes black, just above the eyes and under the beak. Now, paint black flecks in the area just above the beak and just under and to the rear of the eyes. After the last stage, make sure the top of the head is a pure white. If you have inadvertently coloured a section you should not have, adjust it now.

22 Now just finish off the primaries and tail section. I know I have said it before, but check your reference material to make sure it looks right.

23 The last section to deal with is the base. I chose to paint this with texture paint so that it more closely resembled a rock, but you can stick sand or other gritty material on the ply and then paint it if you want. Once done, step back and check that you are happy with the look. You can still adjust things until you are. ▀

Helpful information

- Not everyone will use an airbrush. I find that it is the easiest way for me to create the look and consistency I require. As with any technique there is a learning curve but if you want to colour items regularly, it is time well spent and is a quicker method of working that using a brush. I do use brushes for certain very fine detail work.
- If you are not going to colour your bird and want keep it all natural wood, you have work out what elements you need to show in order to get the look and the degree of detail you require. This route is a lot of fun to explore.

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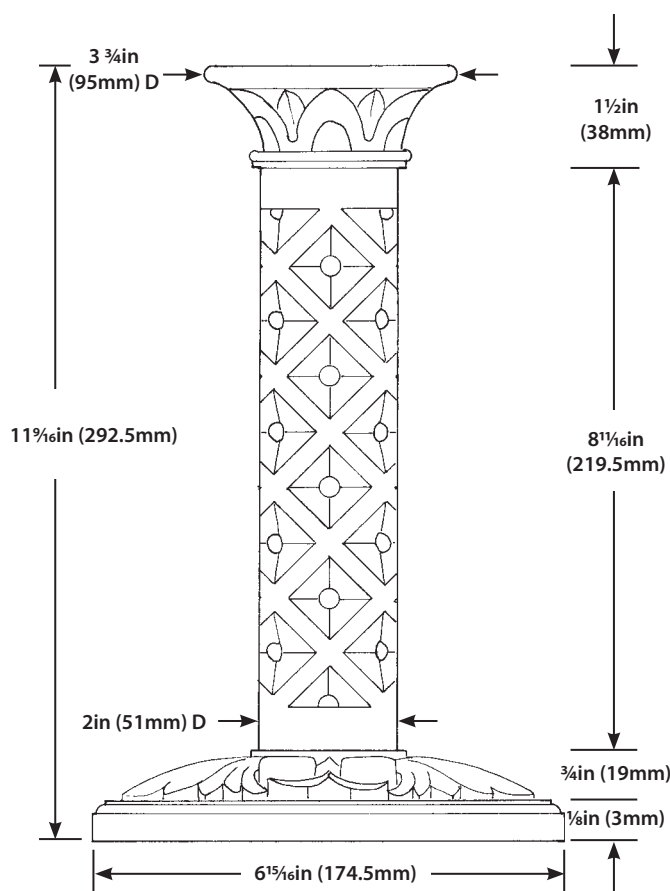
English Renaissance Candlesticks

In an abridged extract, Frederick Wilbur describes how to create these ornate carvings for the home

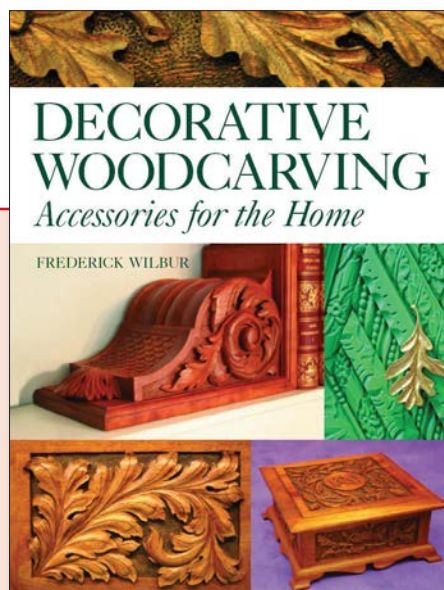


English Renaissance candlesticks

These candlesticks are reminiscent of the woodwork of the English Renaissance. While unsophisticated in design, they have a bold and sturdy presence. They are straightforward with relatively simple elements and the execution of these elements is uncomplicated. Tool marks give it a painterly quality. The pierced carving of the base is similar to that of the Florentine frame, also covered in this book.



Drawing of the English Renaissance candlestick



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1 Referring to the drawing, prepare the blank for the top by drilling the hole in the stock. The candles for these candlesticks are 1½ inches (38mm) in diameter and 9 inches long (228mm). Square blanks are safer and easier to drill on a drill press because they can be secured against fences and can be clamped. Allow the paddle bit to just project from the bottom as this will locate the centre during assembly.

2 This does present a difficulty in mounting the piece to the lathe, so mount a scrap piece of wood to a faceplate and turn a plug (or spigot) with a shoulder so the drilled blank will be held without wobble as shown.

3 An off-centre screw will prevent the blank from slipping on the spigot. Turn the profiles as shown on the drawing. The beads can be shaped by hand or with the assistance of a beading tool. The top is dished a little to catch any dripping wax.

4 Lay out the design while the blank is still on the lathe, dividing the diameter into 32 divisions. It is easy to divide the circumference into quarters, then eighths, etc. If you do not have an indexing mechanism, using the tool rest as a starting point, you can 'walk' your dividers around the turning and by trial and error determine the quarters. Mark the upper extent of the points of the design and the placement of the small holes near the bottom bead. Sketch in the larger curves first, then the smaller points between.

5 Begin carving by stabbing in the small eyes with a No.9 gouge, 4mm. Rotating the gouge between your hands will 'drill' the hole. Many plugs will pop out, but those on end grain will need coaxing from the point of a 5mm skew or knife. With a No.7, 20mm gouge, stab in the large curves from the tip to the hole. Do the same for the smaller curves using a No.5, 8mm gouge.

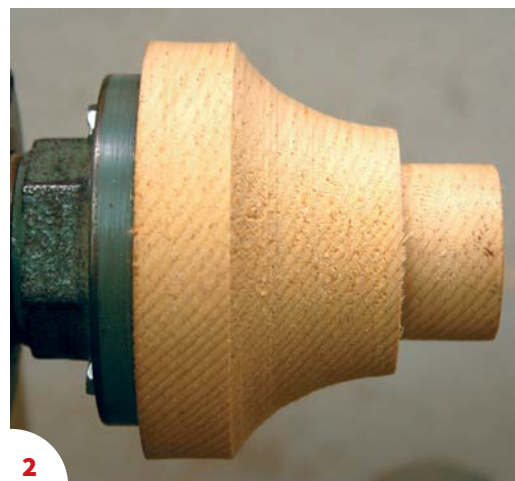
6 Relieve the triangular areas between the points with a fishtail chisel or No.3 fishtail. A skew chisel cleans out the acute corners. The ground should be perpendicular to the axis of the turning.

7 Lower the small points by cutting towards the adjacent large points. Scoop a thumbnail depression at the base of the large points using No.8, 10mm to complete the top.

8 The shaft should have parallel sides, facilitating the layout of the grid or diaper pattern. Mark 16 longitudinal lines using the tool rest as guide. Calculate four and one half divisions, allow for more margin at the bottom and spin the blank to mark circumference lines. Mark the centre circle of each square. The picture shows a method for marking the diagonal lines using a flexible wood strip or veneer as a straight edge. Mark lines either side of this diagonal grid to define the flat band between the sloping elements.



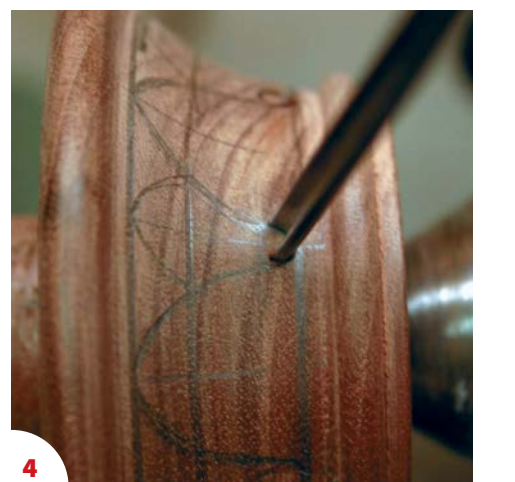
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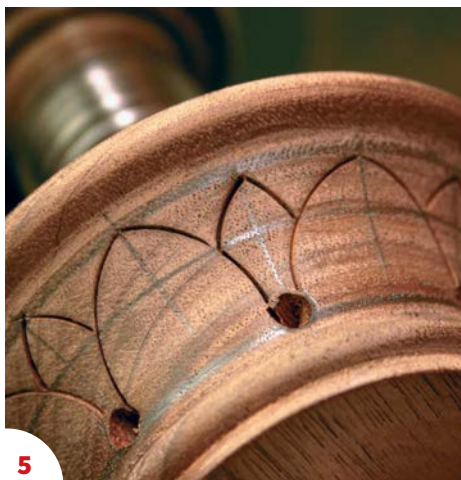
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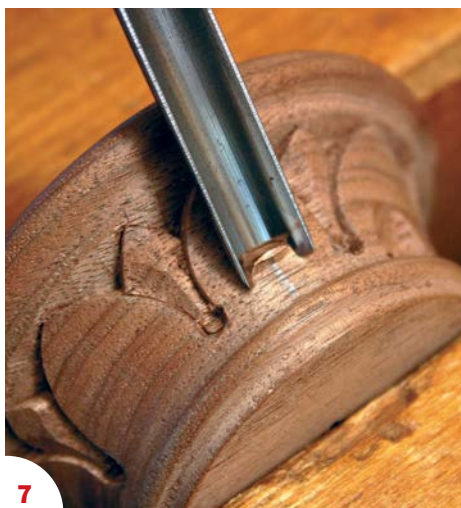
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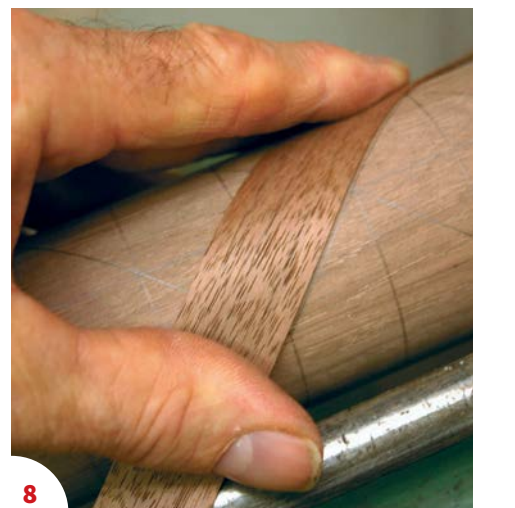
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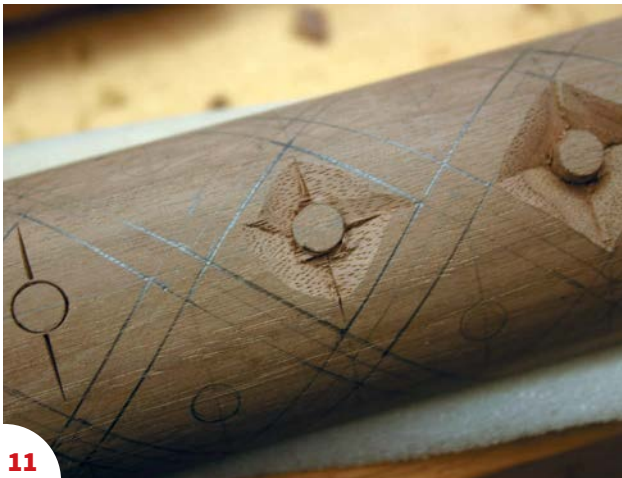
10

9 If carving on the bench, a V-shaped 'cradle' will hold the cylinder while allowing it to be easily turned. Note the block for clamping at the left end.

10 To carve, set in the centre bead with a No.9, 8mm. Then, using a chisel, slope the sides of the inverted pyramid beginning towards the bead and working out to the lines of the grid. Several settings-in of the circle will be required to obtain a depth at least half as wide as the circle.

11 Use the same No.9 gouge, turned over, to round the beads.

12 A No.5, 8mm (or No.7, 8mm) gouge will round the end half beads sufficiently.


11

12

13 For the carved base piece transfer the profile to the ends of the stock. On the table saw create the 'step' in the stock and cut off waste from the sloping profile. Hand plane the sloping profile.

14 Mitre the four sides and join with biscuits or splines. Place the slots away from the curved (front) side of the stock so they are avoided while carving.

15 After glue-up, make sure the top and bottom surfaces are flat. Use the carbon paper method to transfer the design of the corner leaves to the material.


13

14

16 Scroll or bandsaw the outer silhouette of leaflets and drill and cut the pierced holes. To begin carving, lightly stab in the arcs of the scroll with the No.7 gouges which match the curves.

17 Relieve into the round part of the scroll both from the corner leaf direction and the centre element. Continue the relief around the centre of the scroll.


15

16

17

18 Further relieve the curve as it touches the raised square by removing material along the centre line of the centre leaf.

19 The scroll slopes into a triangular hole. The fishtail chisel is helpful here.

20 The scroll arcs down the corner (along the mitre joint). This cut should also be sloped into a valley which dies about $\frac{1}{3}$ down the leaf towards the corner.

21 Round over the 'eye' of the scroll with the No.5, 8mm as in the picture.

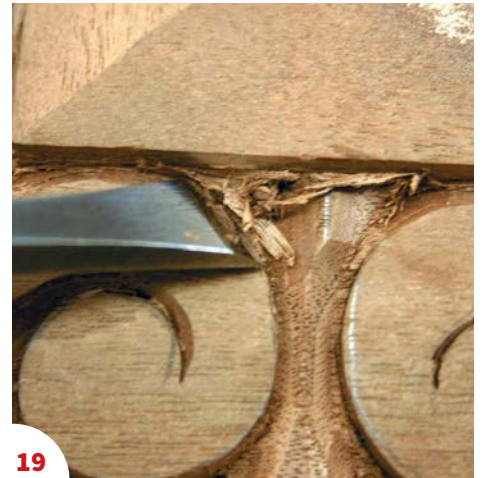
22 Set in the flaring leaflets of the centre design to define their curve and to act as stop cuts so the back three leaflets of the corner leaf can be lowered. The No.7, 10mm is used to carve grooves down each leaflet. If necessary, make centre points symmetrical and visually compare the flaring leaflets. With larger No.7 or No.5 set in the sweep of the flaring leaflets to meet at the centre line. Take down the centre point by angled cuts either side with No.5, 8mm creating a peak. Round the outside of the flares with the No.5, then scoop out the inner side of the flares creating a curved peak from the centre line to the tip of the flared leaflet.

23 Remove the piece from the vice or work station and clamp it to the bench for access to the edges. With a No.7, 8mm approaching from the edge, make sure the three inner leaflets of the corner leaf arc smoothly into the scroll. The thickness of the leaflets should be about $\frac{1}{16}$ of an inch.

24 With the No.9, 8mm gouge cut two grooves either side of the mitre to the leaflets, which breaks up the flat surface of the corner leaf. To finish, turn over and back cut around the holes. Then, using a knife, do any final shaping of leaflet tips and clean up the acute angles between them.

25 The plain base piece has a routed quarter round moulding. The pieces are glued and screwed together. The centre hole of the top lines up with the turning centre dimple of the shaft, and a centre hole in the base pieces lines up with the bottom dimple of the shaft. Screws directly in the centre should also have a second or third screw to prevent torque. The carved base is glued to the plain base before drilling the centre screw hole.

As for finish, Renaissance woodwork is usually very dark, so use walnut stain and then a paste wax or similar product to add a little sheen. Four cork or adhesive backed felt dots on the bottom protect the tabletop or mantelpiece surface. A square shaft version is illustrated in the picture. The base is identical to the one just described, but the treatment of the shaft makes it more in the aesthetic style. ▶



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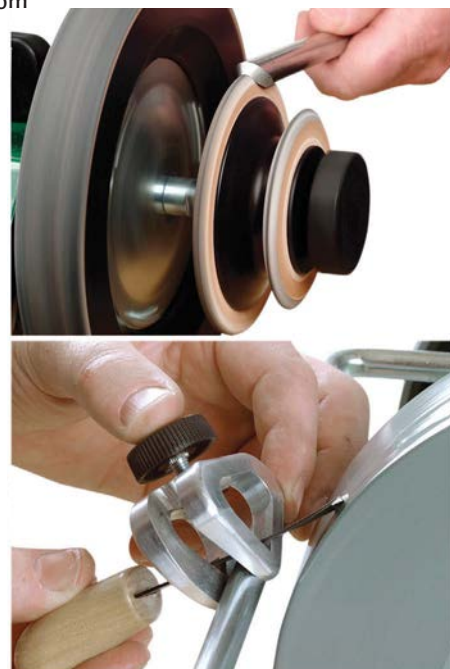
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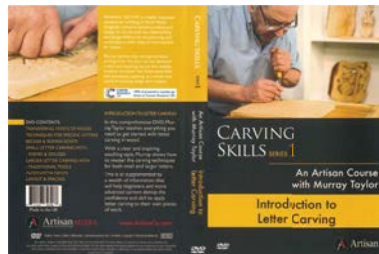
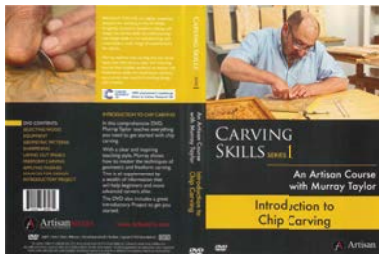
tools you need, spacing and finishes.

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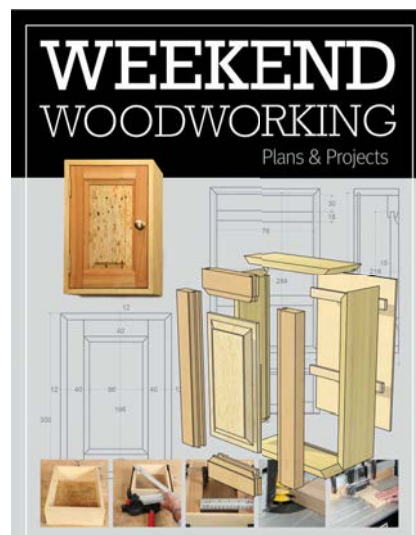
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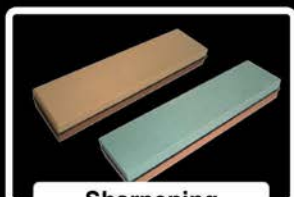
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Bernard Harris – sea turtle

The great storm of 1987 brought down many trees, one of which found new life in a workshop

I was inspired by a television programme a while back when I saw some wonderful sea turtles. I decided to carve one myself. Now I must admit that I struggle with drawing plans, so went to a friend of mine – Bob Jubb – who listened to my ideas and created scaled drawings for me.

I wanted to carve a life-size sea turtle so needed a big piece of wood. I was working on the Arundel Estate in Sussex sometime

after the storm of 1987 which had wreaked havoc with the trees – thousands blew down. I was told I could have a piece of wood. There were so many trees down that most of it was burnt on site. That said, there was a massive replanting on the estate and many more trees than were blown down were replanted. It ran into the thousands. Eventually, I spied a large burr of elm and this is what I used for this turtle.

The burr chunk weighed about 20kg and

it had been sitting in my workshop since the storm before I started the carving in 2004. The whole piece was used. I used power carving to roughly get the log to shape. A 115mm Arbortech carving blade in an angle grinder did the rough shaping and a large flap-wheel sander in the angle grinder refined the shape somewhat, before I moved on the hand tools to create the detail. It took about 200 hours to complete and I enjoyed every moment.

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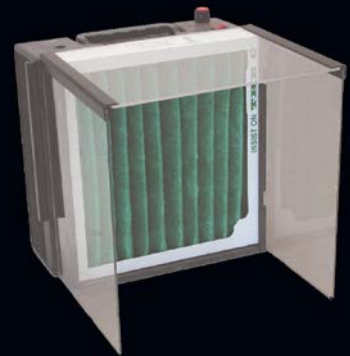
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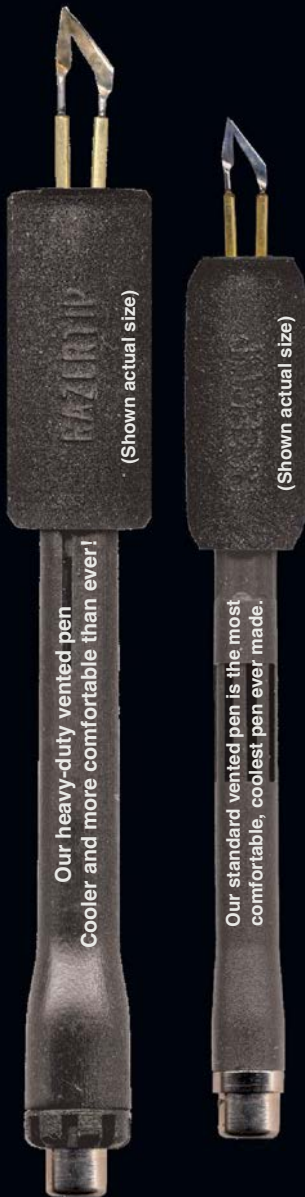
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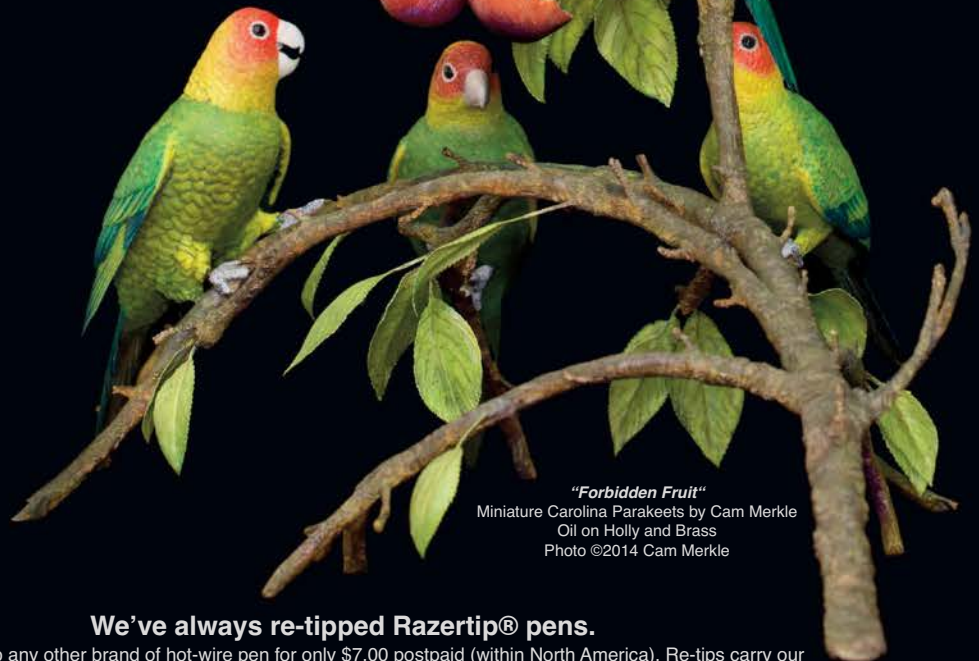
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