

WOOD CARVING

ART NOUVEAU-STYLE PICTURE FRAME

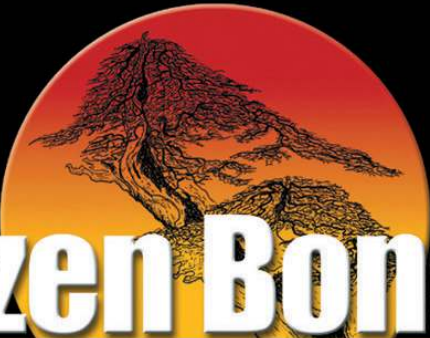
Mark Ivan Fortune's guide
to creating a scrolled
acanthus leaf design



PROJECTS TO CARVE Peacock-inspired mirror frame • Teddy bear bookends
• Black woodpecker • Relief-carved owl **TECHNICAL ADVICE** Sharpening sloyd
knives • Carving kelp • Guide to carving a seedpod • Knife-carving fonts

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Carving on turned work



PHOTOGRAPH BY PETER BENSON



I often hear about what carvers are making and doing. Most say they are not doing as much as they would like, but admit to not focusing on one thing at a time and having many projects on the go at various stages of completion.

Most carvers admit to also pursuing other crafts and hobbies, such as bird-watching, calligraphy, drawing, pottery, photography and so on and some also venture into other woodworking disciplines like cabinetry, marquetry and turning. It is the turning that I am going to pick up on here.

Many carvers know other woodworkers and turners and working together has led to some wonderful and exciting collaborations, be that carving on furniture, mirrors and frames, or cabinetry turning and so on. One aspect that keeps being talked about and asked for in this magazine is the occasional article to be included for turning which is then carved. I have included one article in this issue, but, whenever people ask for something, invariably it is not quite as simple as it sounds. How simple or complex do you want

the articles? I will invariably have to show how the item is turned, sometimes I may be able to show the plan of the turning first and then only show the carving aspects, but it will involve a bit of thought concerning what to feature, so do let me know what type of things you would like to see.

The debate of whether turning is only a powered form of carving is one that makes me chuckle and vexes many people. Of course it is. OK, that is only me saying that – you can think what you like. But the process of turning by default has limits due to working with rotating wood on the axis of the lathe which, in turn, limits the range of shapes that can be created solely on the lathe. Don't get me wrong. Turning, like carving, is a wonderful aspect of woodworking to explore, giving scope to do even more than hand carving alone. But, like power carving, it can be messy and dusty and also requires space to have a lathe and such like. Oh, I forgot to mention more tools and equipment too. Once the turning is done then comes the enhancement by using another method to alter, add and create a different aspect on or with the work.

So whether you create the turned aspect yourself

or find a friend with a lathe and collaborate, don't get caught out by having any old turned piece and thinking what can be done with it. Like carving, you have to have a game plan and work out what it is you want to do and then create the turning of the right size, shape, wall thickness, moisture content and of the right type of timber to be able to create that carved enhancement you wish to achieve. So don't think you can wing it like we do when a plan doesn't work out as intended. It takes careful consideration and thinking to get the best from melding the two disciplines.

For the actual carving on the turnings, the knife, hand or power carving tools you already have are ideal to start exploring carving on turned work. But, be careful. We all know trying new things can be quite addictive and you might just find you need some new tools.

Let me know what you have been making and what you would like to see in the magazine.

Have fun, Mark

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Lettering & Decorative Woodcarving

A weekend course with
Gary Breeze



PHOTO: David Collins

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Picture frame

Mark Ivan Fortune carves a pierced rosewood picture frame in the Art Nouveau style



This Art Nouveau pierced rosewood frame, characterised by its intricate linear design and sinuous flowing scrolled acanthus leaves, is an ideal subject study for the student woodcarver. This project presents some challenging elements on which to hone your carving skills.

Regarding the design and execution, the more complex the form the more you must vary the symmetry, the word 'symmetry'

referring here not to mirrored reflection but to the balance of mass. You must strive to evoke contrast both in variation of width in line, which is expressed within the confines of the design, and variation in depth in the execution of the design. This may be achieved by taking full advantage of the depth of the blank, visualising where the leaves and stems dip and rise and making the cuts accordingly. It is of the utmost importance that the ground of the inner

frame is not truly flat, but a representation of a flat surface, with subtle facets created by the flat gouge giving a quality of life and vibrancy. Arguably the most challenging phase of the carving is in the modelling, as in modelling we must rely not only on good technique and well-prepared tools but, most importantly, on an artistic sensibility. The mere application of technique will inevitably result in a stiff mechanical outcome.

Things you will need

Tools:

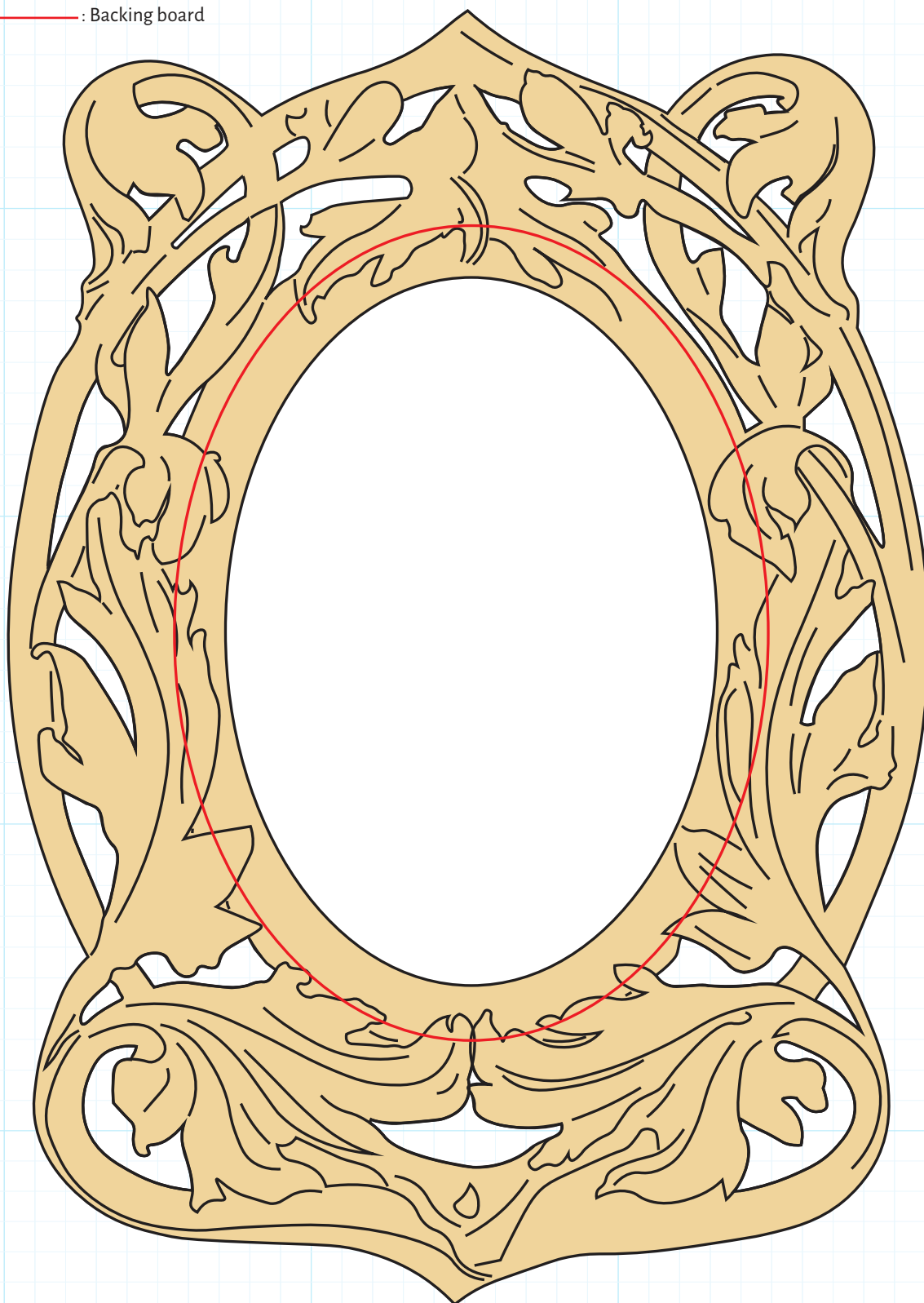
- No.1, 10mm
- No.2, 10mm skew chisel
- No.3, 14mm fishtail gouge
- No.4, 8mm
- No.5, 3mm
- No. 7, 6 & 11mm
- No.8, 10mm
- No.39, 17mm V-tool

- Fretsaw
- Padsaw
- Router
- Marking gauge
- Marking knife
- Paint scraper

Materials:

- Rosewood or mahogany blank: 235 x 165 x 10mm
- Rosewood or mahogany backing 143 x 110 x 1.5mm
- PVA glue (for gluing to MDF backing board)
- MDF backing board
- Raw linseed oil
- Beeswax polish

— : Backing board





1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8

1 Glue the templates directly to the surface of the wood. Cut out the 2mm backing plate. Then cut out the frame and inner frame.

2 Looking through the opening from the front carefully align the backing board – you can use Sticky Tack or similar to steady the positioning. Holding the backing firmly in place, trace around it with a marking knife, scoring the back of the frame. To prevent the knife's tendency to grain follow, make a shallow first pass, getting progressively deeper.

3 Mark the depth of the recess with a marking gauge and rout the cutout at the back of the frame to a depth of 2mm to receive the backing. If you do not have access to a router you can achieve the same results by grounding out with your carving tools in the usual manner. Ensure a snug friction fit, then set aside the backing plate.

4 Drill and scroll the pierced sections. It is worth taking your time making smooth, accurate cuts as it will save time in the carving stage. It is always best to mark the waste clearly with a coloured pencil to avoid the potential for mistakes.

5 Glue the blank to an MDF backing board with a few sheets of paper sandwiched between, clamp and allow to set. Gauge/mark a line a little over half the remaining thickness on the inner frame. On the outside of the frame gouge a line 3mm from the ground.

FLAT GROUND

Flat ground within the context of carving should be by no means truly flat. The effect of grounding with a No.3 gouge will create subtle facets giving a lively, vibrant surface. Where strong shadows are required the ground can be deepened in parts to strengthen the effect while still maintaining the appearance of a flat surface.

6 Ground out the outlines of the leaves with a V-tool, leaving any complex parts till the later stages. As the handle hand advances the tool through the cut the lower hand resists the cut, giving complete control and manipulation over the tool. Rotate the V-tool so it cuts at 90° on the leaf side.

7 With a No.3 fishtail gouge, drop the inner ring to its baseline. Strop the tool before cutting to achieve a nice, clean finish. Use a skew chisel to access any of the hard-to-reach recesses, deepening the ground where required (See sidebar.)

8 Avoid using any stab cuts running with the grain here as there is little weight to buttress the cleaving forces. Rather establish the outline of the sloping forked sections with the V-tool rotated to cut at 90°, and merely pare the sidewall with a flat No.3 gouge to define its form.

9 Carefully make two shallow cuts with a V-tool, separating the rolling leaf and entangled stem which passes through the leaf head. Rotate the tool so it cuts at 90° on the stem side.

10 With a No.5, 3mm stab the junction of the stem and leaf head using a vertical slicing cut. Clean the outer section to a crisp V at the root.

11 With a No.4, 8mm stab and lower the leaf so it appears to dip under the stem. Modelling is a gradual process as we have a lot of interdependent elements. Take it slowly before you commit to depth. You will probably find yourself going back and forth between these steps until you reach the desired forms.

12 With a No.7, 6mm carve the tapering cupped stem. This leans over towards the central frame.

13 Round over the back of the head of the leaf with an inverted No.4, 8mm. The ground can be deepened around the head to lend more shadow as required.

14 Separate the lobes of the rolling leaf head with a V-tool. With an inverted No.4, 8mm pare the lobes into a pleasing tilting, stacked form. Well-defined corners of the gouge are essential to achieving a good, clean cut. As the rolling leaf is an essential mass within the carving, it is worth taking the time to achieve a pleasing form.

15 Take advantage of the full depth of the blank. Using a No.9, 5mm carve down just short of the base at the knuckle of the leaf. Part the two finger-like lobes with a V-tool and round over so as to give the appearance of reaching up on to the inner frame.

16 The central vein is formed by making two parallel cuts with a No.9, 5mm creating a central ridge.

17 Part the lobes with a V-tool and round over the forms with an inverted No.4, 8mm.





18



19

18 With an inverted No.4, 8mm round over the back of the wrist. This should flow smoothly, forming a crisp V at the junction where the two leaves meet. The other lobes of this leaf are treated as in steps 15 to 17.

Hollow out the outer stem with a No.7, 11mm. Use opposing cuts with the grain to achieve a smooth finish.

19 Round over the outer stem with an inverted No.4, 8mm, creating a smooth-flowing curved ridge, seamlessly transitioning into the leaf.



20



21

20 With a small No.5, 3mm continue the hollow section of the stem as if flowing under the lobes – it may take a little tinkering to achieve the right curve. With the same tool in hand, slightly undercut the tips of the lobes.

21 Finish the union of the two meeting stems with a simple abstract diamond shape surrounded by interlocking stems. The diamond is formed with four cuts of a No.1, 10mm.

22 The rolling leaves at the top of the frame are formed as with the previous leaf forms; parting with a V-tool and rounding over with an inverted No.4, 8mm.

23 Hollow out the leaves with a No.8, 10mm and round over the parted stem with an inverted No.5, 3mm.



22



23

24 With a small No.5, 3mm gouge, cut the underlying stem so it generally conforms to the same profile as the concave stem. This does not need to be exact.

25 With a paint scraper, avoiding the sides and without levering, work the scraper under the carving from each end until it lifts.

26 Finish the carving with a coat of linseed oil. When the oil has dried, apply an even coat of beeswax polish with a toothbrush, wait till the beeswax hardens and buff with a stiff brush. ▶



24



25



26

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News & events...

Bringing you the latest news and event details from the woodcarving community

BDWCA NEWS

For the members of the BDWCA we are now moving towards the time when observation and collection of reference material has evolved into the creation of entries for our Annual Show in Bakewell, which will be held on the weekend of 14-15 September, and as always it will be fascinating to see what birds – from the demure to the exotic – grace the competition tables.

One bird that we are sure to see this year will be the long-tailed tit, the subject for our Regional Group Competition, which was chosen by our Cheshire Group who won this competition in 2018. Because they tend to travel in flocks, swooping into the garden and then off again, we're hoping to see many of them.

The majority of the categories that are competed for have the live bird as the standard for the judging, but there is one that really does allow the imagination to run wild and free – the sky really is the limit – and that is the Innovative Wildlife Sculpture!

This was introduced to the competition in 2013, and the main criteria are:-

- Entries may be of any species of bird, have no size restriction, and may be sculpted/ carved using any variety of materials, to include but not restricted to wood.
- The sculpture should be totally original in design and concept, and entirely innovative in its execution and portrayal.

While some of our members may struggle with this concept, others are game to have a go. The winner in 2016 was entitled 'Anser fabalis (other brands available)' by Stewart Langworth and was an interesting example of recycling, using a plastic jar from a well-known brand of baked beans for the body and tail.

But before our show in September we will once again be demonstrating and exhibiting in the Art Marquee at the British Bird Watching Fair – 'The Birdfair' – at Egleton Nature Reserve, Rutland Water, from 16-18 August. This event is, for our association, a great way to introduce our art form to a wider audience of people and showcase the work of our members, so if you're there please pop in and say hello.

Contact: www.bdwca.org.uk

1st in Innovative Wildlife Sculpture – 'Anser fabalis (other brands available)' by Stewart Langworth



2nd in Innovative Wildlife Sculpture – 'The near extinct Laminated Fieldfare' by John W White



Highly commended in Innovative Wildlife Sculpture – 'High in the sky – Red Arrows or Neuf Hirondelles?' by Christine Rose



SPAB's William Morris Craft Fellows 2019

Since 1987 the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) has organised the Fellowship to foster a new generation of outstanding craftspeople with the knowledge and expertise to pass on essential skills for working with historic buildings. The prestigious scheme runs in parallel to the SPAB's Scholarship programme for architects, surveyors and engineers.

The aim is for the Fellows to gain broad, practical experience and knowledge to enable them to bring a strong awareness of craft diversity to their future professional roles. The Fellowship also equips them with the skills necessary to lead and manage historic building contracts, while deepening their understanding of the importance of gentle repair – the keystone of the SPAB approach.

In March, our 2019 Fellows (and Scholars) began their six-month itinerary of site, workshop and studio visits. The Fellows have already visited projects at the Palace of Westminster and Hampton Court Palace, as well as small-scale, domestic projects in central London. The group will move further around the country over the next nine months, visiting significant conservation projects to learn about traditional building techniques from skilled craftspeople with established careers in the field.

Interest in craft building skills is steadily increasing as people turn to more sustainable and traditional methods of construction. Yet, ironically, these same skills are under threat as fewer young people are encouraged to pursue careers in these areas. Nationally, heritage bodies are concerned that there are simply not enough people training to continue Britain's distinctive buildings crafts and each year SPAB's Fellowship becomes more relevant. Three or four Fellowships are awarded each year, depending on available funding.

As usual, the SPAB's 2019 Fellows are a committed and talented group, with each individual looking to enhance a particular skill and further their knowledge of traditional craft techniques.

SPAB is Britain's oldest building conservation body. It was set up by William Morris to oppose the destructive restorations of the Victorian era and promote the alternative of 'conservative repair'. By law it must be notified of applications to demolish listed buildings in England and Wales and comments on hundreds each year. Today its broad remit is to advise, educate and campaign. The Society also trains architects and craftspeople; offers free advice, carries out research, and produces a range of helpful publications and campaigns on issues like VAT. It also has a separate section devoted to Mills.



Stonemason Sean Henderson, 27, carpenter and joiner Sam Matthams, 29, stonemason Luke O'Hanlon, 33, and bricklayer Matthew Wilson, 42, are the latest recruits to a unique educational scheme designed to nurture and develop the hands-on skills needed to care for old buildings. Chosen as the 2019 William Morris Craft Fellows, the talented group has now begun the countrywide conservation 'grand tour'.

Keep up to date with its progress on the SPAB's blog: <https://www.spab.org.uk/news>

2019 Events

• International Woodcarvers Congress

When: 8-16 June 2019
Where: Jackson County Fairgrounds, 1212 E Quarry Street, Maquoketa, IA 52060, US
Web: www.awcltd.org

• International Woodcarving Symposium Brienzen

When: 2-6 July 2019
Where: Verein, KUNA 3855, Brienzen, Switzerland
Web: www.symposium-brienzen.ch

• Yandles Woodworking show

When: 6-7 September 2019
Where: Hurst Works, Hurst, Martock, Somerset, TA12 6JU
Web: www.yandles.co.uk

• National Bird Carving Championships: The Festival of Bird Art

When: 14-15 September 2019
Where: The Agricultural Business Centre,

Bakewell, Derbyshire, DE45 1AH
Web: www.bdwc.org.uk

• Central Coast Woodcarvers 42nd Annual Show

When: 21-22 September 2019
Where: Cambria Vet's Hall, 1000 Main St., Cambria, CA93428
Contact: dmarshgcambria@charter.net

• The Festival of Wood & Country Crafts

When: 6 October 2019
Where: Bakewell Agricultural Business Centre, Agricultural Way, Bakewell, Derbyshire, DE45 1AH
Web: www.thebsg.org.uk (look under Activities & Social Events, AGM Details)

• North of England Woodworking Show

When: 15-17 November 2019
Where: Hall 1, Great Yorkshire Showground, Harrogate, HG2 8NZ
Web: www.skpromotions.co.uk

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

A study in kelp

Dave Western learned some useful lessons when carving this seaweed



The red cedar timber I used for the project

Inspiration for woodcarvings can come from the most unexpected sources. Recently, I was looking at some lovely nature photographs taken by Rachelle Chinnery (her website details are: <https://rachelechinnery.com>). Although she is renowned for her award-winning ceramics, her eye for photographic detail is vastly keener than mine and I enjoy absorbing as many lessons as I can from viewing her work. One day, a tiny (unfortunately low-resolution) photo of a small frond of kelp on her Facebook feed caught my attention and I thought it would make a fabulous subject for a carving.

Being a lovespoon carver, I fully intended to create a lovespoon design inspired by it. To that end, I sought permission from Rachelle to do so, which she kindly granted me, and set about carving my piece. Once underway, I decided it was best to leave it as nature had made it. The resulting carving was hugely enjoyable as I fought with design errors of my own making and learned just how far I was capable of pushing my material. Although it might be a somewhat unusual subject for a carving, it offers myriad challenges and opportunities.



The original low-res photo showing the single strand

Initial attempts

My initial design followed the photograph as closely as I could manage and this proved to be a costly error. There were too many unsupported cross-grain sections and areas of structural weakness and I broke several attempts before deciding to redraw it and add a few supports. You'll notice that two strands rather than one, as in the photo, now join the bottom section. You'll thank me for that when you start carving. If you are braver than me, you can eliminate that second strand, but that is work for a lighter, steadier hand than mine.

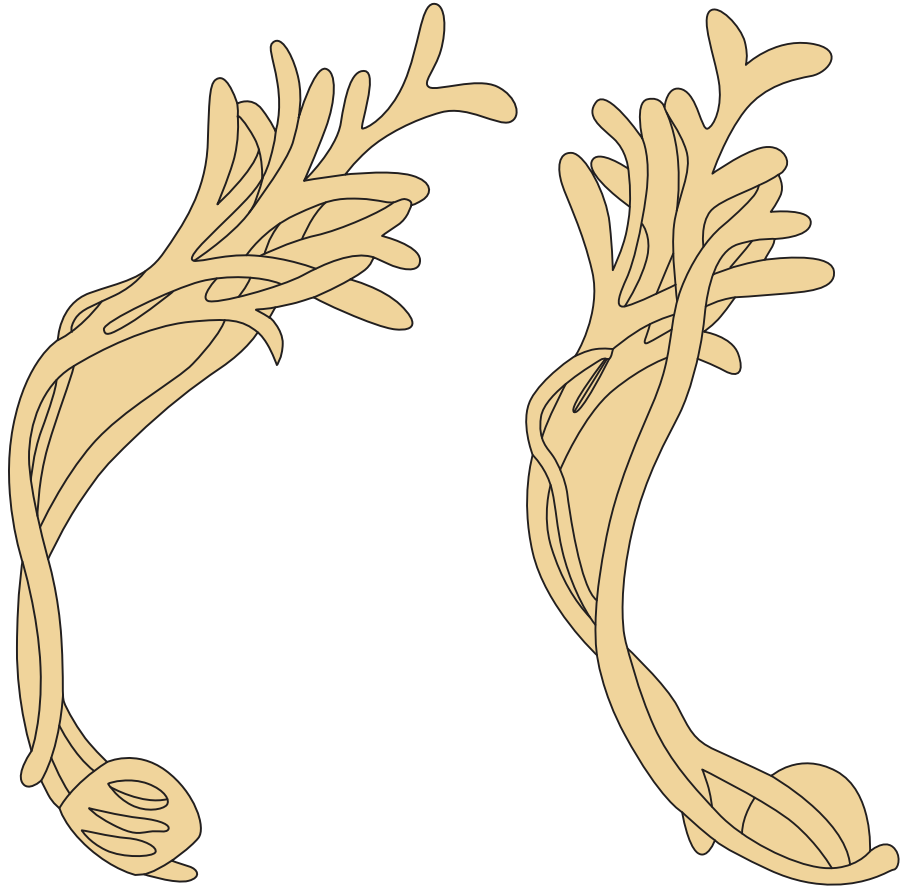
Another lesson I learned from trial and error (mostly error) was that harder woods, such as cherry (*Prunus* spp.) or walnut (*Juglans* spp.) aren't great for this design. I wound up using a lovely piece of straight-grained old-growth red cedar (*Thuja plicata*) driftwood that had washed up on the beach near my house. It seemed both a romantic and suitable choice of wood for this carving, although I would probably suggest something such as birch or lime were I to do it again.

Marking and cutting out

Before I began carving, I took some time to dome the bulk of the workpiece, leaving the area where the 'stone' would be carved. Because I wanted the fronds of the kelp to appear with as much movement as possible, curving the main body of the design and doming it from side to side helped give the finished carving lots of life. If you lack the tools or patience for all that, you can simply carve it all on the flat.

As you can see from the photo, after my earlier miscues, I decided to bolster the strength of the area around the stone by adding a second strand. I've made sure the pattern included here has that revision in it. I then drilled holes through the central cut-away sections of the carving before making my second mistake, which was to scrollsaw the outer edges first. With this design, it is a much more prudent order of business to cut away all the middle sections and keep the strength of the wood intact as long as possible.

The next hard lesson I learned was to leave a bit of material to support that top section of the kelp fronds as it is a structurally compromised section of the carving. I did catch myself in the nick of time and left some supporting wood, which I cut away at the end of the carving process when I was confident that I would not have to stress the piece at all.



Affix your drawing to the timber and cut it roughly to shape



If required, mark in the sections needed for additional strength



Drill out the inner sections with a fine drill bit ready for cutting with a scrollsaw



Now cut out the waste sections

Starting to carve

With material cleared and the bulk of sawing done, I began the carving process by marking any areas which crossed over/under each other. I was careful to only cut about 1.5mm deep at this point just in case I made a mistake. Once I was certain that all the intersections were correct, I began to deep the cuts and shape the individual fronds. Most I took down to around 4mm deep.

When I was satisfied the fronds were clearly delineated, I began shaping some curve into them to mimic the natural movement of the fronds in the photo. Some I curved outwards, some inwards and some I domed. I tried to be conscious

of how they would drape over one another in reality and wherever possible tried to follow that natural flow.

After the disasters of my first couple of attempts at this design, I decided to leave the very top section of the kelp fronds until the majority of the carving was completed and there was less likelihood of my snapping it off. One of the big lessons I learned carving this design was that I had to be very careful how I supported the carving and how much pressure I put on it. This top section is inherently weak and likely to snap, so I exercised a great deal of caution both in the sawing and the carving.



Start defining the flow of the fronds



Work carefully to avoid breakage



It is slow progress, but don't rush

Carving the back

Once I was satisfied the bulk of carving was completed on the front face, I moved around to the back face. I used a bandsaw with a support fence and side guide to stabilise and secure everything in place to remove a sizeable amount of stock and then carved the back to create a nice curve. Do not cut such a piece on a bandsaw unless you have the piece fully and correctly supported. The same outcome can be achieved by carving the back to the shape you require. However, whatever method you use, remember: the thinner the piece becomes, the greater the danger of snapping the fronds becomes and the more conscious you will have to be of stressing things.

If you are using a knife to hog away the back material be aware of the stresses it creates and try to support it from behind as much as possible. This need for support continues even when you get to the fine detailing. I utilised nests of carpet or Styrofoam to support the work when I had it on the bench and made sure to handle it very carefully when I was carving in hand.



Make sure you create the feel of movement



Be gentle with your cuts

Final adjustments

I made a conscious effort to remain aware of the angles carved on to the top fronds and to reverse them on the rear ones. Sometimes this is not easy to remember, but the nice thing is you can't look at both sides at once. Nevertheless, reversing the slopes makes the carving appear more natural. Be aware though, that as the wood becomes thinner and more realistic, it also gets considerably more fragile and likely to break. With the cedar, I felt that a compromise was in order and left things a bit thicker than I might have with lime or birch.

While leaving a carving straight from the knife often keeps the surfaces looking brighter and more visually stimulating than sanded ones, I decided to sand this piece to try to mimic the smoothness of the wet kelp in the photograph. Once I was committed, it became a long and tedious process to reach every nook and cranny and render a uniform and consistent surface. If you opt to sand, be prepared for a workout.

Finishing touches

Kelp fastens itself to a rock anchor and this tiny piece was no different. Originally, I had intended to transform the 'rock' into a spoon bowl, but decided to stay as close to the original photo as I could. This meant a lot of shaping and of sanding to keep the stone's wonderful smooth appearance. I also made sure to drape the two strands of kelp across its back.

Once I was satisfied that both front and back were mostly carved, I cleared that risky top section of the fronds and sanded them up to match the rest of the piece. Although I opted for an

oil and beeswax finish, this design could represent one of those rare occasions when a glossy varnish or surface finish might actually work to mimic the wet look of the kelp in the photo. I just wasn't brave enough to try it in case it didn't work.

Braver and steadier carvers than me might want to take the challenge of thinning the fronds down further than I managed and I have no doubt it would result in a very exciting carving. With the red cedar I used, this was about as far as I dared push it, but I must admit I am tempted to try some lime and see if I can go a bit further. ▀



Carefully sand the sections



Here are the partially sanded fronds



Sand the lower section



Apply your finish



The finished piece inspired by work by Rachelle Chinnery

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Art Nouveau peacock panel

Steve Bisco carves a pierced panel in the popular style

Art Nouveau – literally ‘new art’ – is a distinctive style that was unlike anything seen before in the western world. It developed around 1890 and dominated architecture and the decorative arts until World War I. It was influenced by traditional Japanese art, and is characterised by stylised plant forms and long, flowing lines. In woodcarving, its elegant designs are mostly represented in low-relief.

Art Nouveau (see box) shares many features with its more serious contemporary, the Arts & Crafts style (see *Woodcarving* issue 162), but whereas the hand-crafted Arts & Crafts style was not always commercially viable, Art Nouveau embraced modern production methods and was very much a commercial success. This was partly due to the support of two of the great entrepreneurs of the time – Sir Arthur Lasenby Liberty (1843-1917), owner of Liberty of London; and Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848-1933), owner of Tiffany & Co., New York. Their respective department stores are still retail icons today.

The Art Nouveau style developed at around the same time as electric light, which probably explains why so many table lamps were designed in this style, Tiffany lamps being the most well known. My inspiration for this panel came mainly from several different lamp designs by various makers, particularly the famous Peacock Lamp (1901) by Belgian sculptor Philippe Wolfers (1858-1929). The peacock was a favourite motif in Art Nouveau and, when portrayed in stylised form with long, graceful, flowing lines, it always adds a touch of grace to a design. The other elements – the long, organic stems with their sharp ‘elbow’ bends and ‘fairy’ flowers – are typical Art Nouveau elements that I have combined with the peacock to create a pierced panel carved in oak and finished with wax polish.

Like many Art Nouveau designs, it has a touch of the fairy glen about it, with an open centre framed by a bower of plant stems, among which the peacock is wandering. Piercing, which is quite a simple process, fixes the boundaries of the pattern at the start, and removes the surplus wood without the hard work of grounding out a solid panel.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVE BISCO

Things you will need

Tools:

- No.3, 10 & 20mm fishtail gouges
- No.9, 16mm curved gouge
- 10mm skewed spoon
- gouges L&R
- No.3, 10mm
- No.5, 7 & 13mm
- No.8, 8mm
- No.9, 3 & 20mm
- 6mm & 2mm straight V-tool
- 2mm veiner
- 20mm & 6.5mm flat chisel
- 16mm hooked skew chisel
- 10mm skew chisel
- Jigsaw
- Bandsaw

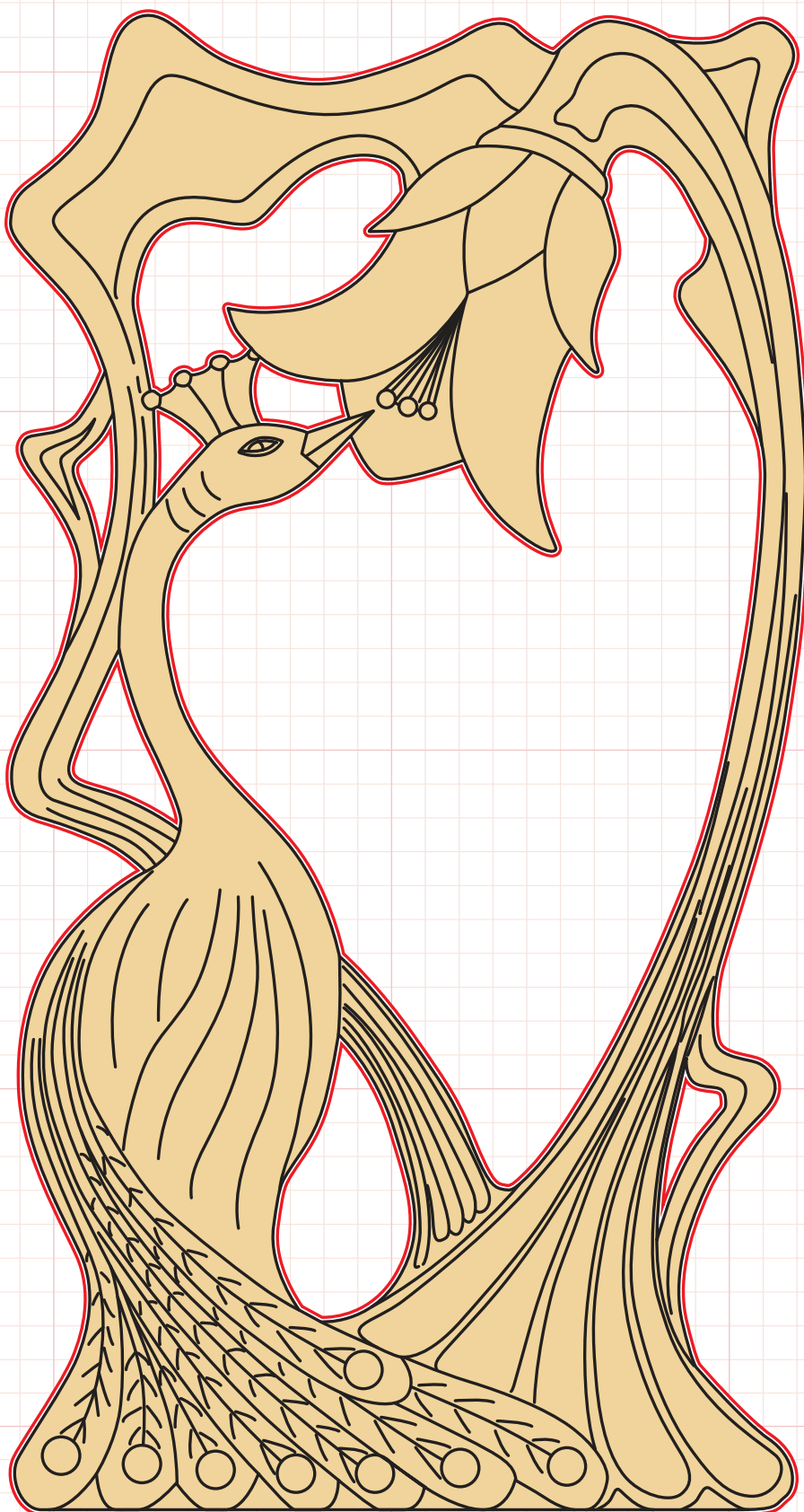
Materials:

- Oak (*Quercus robur*)
510 x 270 x 25mm
- Antiquax Original wax polish

ART NOUVEAU STYLE

The French name Art Nouveau is used because it was the 1900 Paris World Fair that did most to promote this new art that had developed throughout Europe and America. In eastern Europe it also went by the German name Jugendstil (Young Style), and in Italy it was called Stilo Liberty (Liberty Style), after the London department store so closely associated with the style.

In the applied arts, Art Nouveau found physical form in architecture and decorative objects. Cast iron and wood were used to create sinewy and convoluted columns, stair rails, canopies and other elements in buildings, especially by Victor Horta in Brussels and Hector Guimard in Paris. Beautiful glassware was created by a new breed of glass makers, most notably René Lalique in Paris and Émile Gallé in Nancy. Antoni Gaudí began his famous Moorish-influenced Art Nouveau buildings in Barcelona, and in Vienna the Secessionist Movement turned the art establishment on its head by boycotting mainstream exhibitions and setting up their own gallery promoting the new Jugendstil/Art Nouveau style. Art Nouveau itself became mainstream, until it fell out of fashion in World War I.



**1****2****DID YOU KNOW?**

Art Nouveau was closely associated with the Paris Metro system that was being built around 1900, and it was often called Le Style Metro. Architect and designer Hector Guimard (1867-1942) designed the entrances to many Metro stations in Art Nouveau style, with green-painted cast ironwork, distinctive orange lamps and an elaborate font style on the green and yellow Métropolitain entrance signs.

PREPARING THE PANEL

1 Get a piece of oak, 510 x 270 x 25mm. Make sure it is fairly straight grained and free of knots that could distort the pattern. Make a full-size copy of the drawing and get enough sheets of carbon paper to cover the board.

2 Tape the drawing securely to the wood, with the carbon paper under it, and trace the pattern on to the board. The maze of pattern lines can be confusing, and as this is a pierced carving you mustn't get lost with the jigsaw, so mark round all the cutting lines in red.

3 Cut out the internal voids using a jigsaw with a 4mm blade. Don't cut too close to the pattern lines as the jigsaw blade may flex a little on the tight turns.

4 Now cut round the outer edges. Use a bandsaw if you have one as this avoids the flexing problem, or continue with the jigsaw if you don't. One of the benefits of pierced carvings is that, when you have done this, you will have removed nearly all the surplus wood from the carving with very little effort.

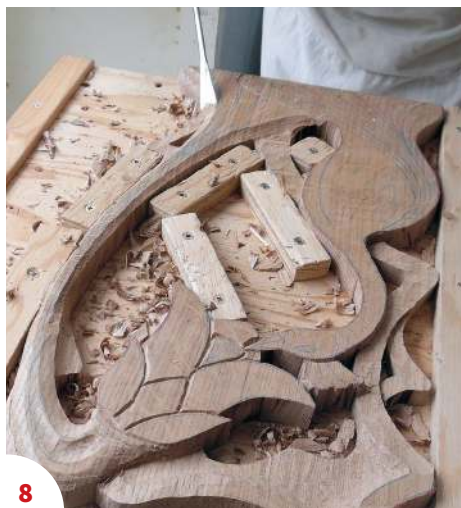
5 Set up the work on the bench, holding it in place with blocks of wood screwed on to the bench so you can move them around as the carving progresses. A free-standing walk-around bench enables you to approach each cut from the best angle, but if you don't have one you can fix the carving on a backing board so you can clamp it to your bench in different positions.

ROUGHING OUT THE STEMS

6 Start the carving by using a V-tool to mark the edges and overlaps of the various elements. For example, the peacock overlaps the left-hand main stem, and the smaller elbow bends that come off the main stems are set at a lower level.

7 Rough out the level of the left-hand stem to flow under the peacock's neck and up to the flower head. Keep the top left-hand corner at the full thickness of the board, but scoop out the flatter section below the upper stem to a depth of about 13mm at the lower edge.

8 Now rough out the right-hand main stem. The three elbow bends that come off the main stem are at a lower level, but the main trunk of the stem remains at the full thickness, apart from a slight hollow in the top bend near the flower head. Take a broad chamfer off both sides of the stem to get a feel for where the sides will be when the detail is added later.

**3****4****5****6****7****8**

9 Finish the roughing out by shaping the flower head. Round off the sides of the petals and sepals to give a foreshortened three-dimensional effect, taking care not to break off the pointed ends. The lowest petal under the peacock's beak must be reduced to about 9mm thickness at this stage, and the stamens in the middle must be lowered slightly to be carved later.

CARVING THE PEACOCK

10 Now we move on to the peacock, which is the primary feature of the carving. It is important not to lose the flow of the tail feathers as drawn in the pattern, so we need to combine the shaping with the detail carving. Start by carving a V-groove along the edge of the peacock's tail and wings.

11 At the base of the carving, bost round the ends of each tail feather to remove the triangle of wood between each feather, down to a background thickness of 10mm.

12 Use a V-tool to mark the outer edge of each tail feather where it overlaps its neighbour.

13 Round over the left side of the body and shape the flow of the tail feathers so they appear to curl in towards the unseen legs and then flip out at the bottom. Re-mark the edges of the tail feathers as you go.

14 Use the foreshortening technique again to shape the breast, which curls under on the right-hand side. The shape of the wings is formed on a virtually flat surface by making three channels with a V-tool and slightly rounding over the surface between each channel.

15 Now carve the detail on the tail feathers. Use a No.5, 7mm to prick in the 13mm roundels at the end of each feather, then a 2mm V-tool to carve the centre vein for each feather and the smaller veins which splay off from it. It helps with definition if you finish each vein by scoring the bottom of the V with a 16mm hooked skew chisel (a tool too delicate for any heavier work in oak).

16 Moving to the head and neck, form the elegant curve of the neck. The head is quite small for carving details, so work carefully to carve the eye with a No.5, 7mm, and incise the three curved 'bars' behind the head with a No.3, 10mm. Carefully shape the sides of the beak into an inverted V-shape with a very sharp chisel. Finish the head by carving the four balls of the crown feathers with curving flutes between them.

STYLISATION

A design is termed 'stylised' when a natural form such as a bird, animal or plant is represented in a simplified way which includes the key features that make it recognisable, without depicting all of its natural details.



9



10



11



12



13



14



15



16

**17****18****19****20****21****22****23****FORESHORTENING**

The three-dimensional effect of the peacock, flower, and stems is largely an illusion created in the 25mm-thick board by 'foreshortening'. By using a shallow curve at the edges of the upper surface, and then increasing it to a steep curve that curls around and under the edges, the eye sees it as a much thicker and more rounded object than it really is.

CARVING THE OTHER DETAILS

17 Carve the three stamens in the flower head by rounding them over with a No.8, 8mm, then carve flutes between them to echo the crown feathers on the peacock's head. Sharpen up the overlaps and smooth off all the surfaces of the petals. The upper sepals overlapping the petals have slight hollows carved into them – a common Art Nouveau feature.

18 Continue on to the upper part of the flower stem. The middle of the stem is concave and both sides are chamfered outwards. The upper elbow bend has a hollow carved into it, and all the key pattern lines are given definition with the 2mm V-tool.

19 Now complete the hollow section in the top right by scooping out the concave area, chamfering the outer edges, and defining the lines with the V-tool as before. This section is a typical Art Nouveau feature that bears no relation to the natural world, so just copy it as you see it.

20 Moving to the bottom right, carve the detail on the right-hand stem to link it up to the top. The base has five broad, shallow flutes that curve up into the stem, becoming narrower as they go and merging into narrow veins in the thinnest part of the stem. The elbow bend in the bottom right is slightly concave and slopes outwards.

21 Finally, carve the left-hand stem, which starts as a branch off the main stem and is carved with the same five flutes, narrowing as they go upwards and under the peacock's body, emerging on the other side as narrow veins. As the stem continues upwards, with its elbow offshoot, carve a shallow concave along the middle, chamfer the sides outwards, and carve a border line with the 2mm V-tool.

UNDERCUTTING AND FINISHING

22 With the detail carving finished, it just remains to tidy up the back edges. Place the carving face down on a soft, non-slip surface, and chamfer away the edges of each part of the pierced panel to make them look neater and less thick when seen from the front.

23 Give the finished carving a coat or two of a light-brown wax polish (I used Antiquax Original) to bring out the colour of the oak, and buff it up to a soft sheen. Hang it up against a plain surface where the light strikes it sideways to bring out the shadows. ▶

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Where do you get your ideas?

Peter Benson investigates sources of inspiration



PHOTOGRAPHS BY PETER BENSON UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED

There is a common belief that there are only two sources from which you can get ideas for a new carving: copying pictures or the work of others, or thinking up ideas of your own. There is certainly a lot of truth in this but it is not quite as simple as it sounds. I know I have covered this before, but it bears repetition. Obviously you can copy anything for your own pleasure and use, and this can be a very good way to learn techniques as you will have a clear model or picture from which you can judge your success or failure. This is, however, difficult to do well and the end product will generally be only as good as, or worse than, the original. Any mistakes made by the original artist will almost certainly appear

in your version as well. In addition, there may be serious copyright issues with anything that is copied from the work of others. More later.

Design & inspiration

It is said that 'nothing is original' and, bearing this in mind, you can get inspiration from the work of others or from pictures that are not your own. It is, however, important that the finished design is yours and the original work is not recognisable within it. I think most carvers and artists seek inspiration from anywhere they can and develop their designs using as much or as little as needed. To develop totally original pieces of work without using any kind of reference material

requires a great deal of knowledge and skill that is beyond most hobby carvers and many skilled professionals. The ability to design carvings involves keeping your eyes open and actually seeing what is going on around you, studying your subject in depth (particularly what makes it what it is – its soul, for want of a better word). Going out into the countryside and photographing a horse in a field can be so much more fun than copying a picture from a book and, of course, you can take the pictures you need for your carving.

All this takes a considerable amount of time, which many carvers are not prepared to spend, and many don't feel they have the ability to design something of their own.



As a result, they continue to struggle with sometimes not very good copies and miss the considerable pleasure that can be gained from completing a piece of their own.

There are, of course, many 'how to' books and magazine articles that actively encourage readers to follow the steps to reproduce the subject featured and learn the skills and techniques involved. Many carvers spend their whole carving life following such instructions and getting a great deal of pleasure from doing so. If, however, these pieces are entered for competition or put up for sale, or you gain financially in any way from the piece, permission must be obtained from the original carver/artist whose work was featured as he/she or the magazine/ book publishers owns the copyright and due accreditation must be given.

Some books and magazines state the items shown are copyright free. These are what they say, but it is still best to credit the original artist and publication.

All of us, I am sure, have at some time seen a picture or piece of work that we just have to carve. What, then, can we do about it? If there is no chance that your carving will ever be sold, go on display, be entered into competition or be written about in any publication – in other words will not profit you in any way at all – and has been done as a learning exercise, you are usually clear of potential problems and need to do nothing. Having said that, each country has different laws regarding copyright and it is best to check to see that you are not stepping out of line.

If, however, this is not the case, you will need the permission of the original artists and/or publisher in writing before you can reproduce or develop any of their work, even if you have changed it, but it remains recognisable.

Recent projects

My wife, Em, and I have each been in this position recently and are currently busy carving the pieces involved. She will tell you her story later.

I was very struck by a painting I saw in an American magazine and was keen to make a large carving based upon it. I did not know who the artist was, so was resigned to it remaining somewhere in the house when completed. Sometime later I saw another picture on the internet that I felt would make a good teaching piece, so decided to contact the photographer for permission and was told that I could use the picture if I paid some considerable and unacceptable sum.

This spurred me to find the artist of the mountain lion carving that was now underway and, eventually, after trawling through the internet, I found him. I duly contacted him with a request to use his picture and undertook never to sell it and to give full accreditation should it be exhibited.

He very kindly replied with his consent. He also showed great interest in what I was doing and asked me to keep in touch with progress. A very different response from that of the first photographer I contacted.

I would like to thank Guy Coheleach (www.guycoheleachart.com) for allowing me to use



The partially carved mountain lion based on Guy Coheleach's work



Photograph of Mountain Lions by Guy Coheleach

his work and showing the support and interest that can be so lacking in others. Unfortunately, as this is a commercial publication, not only is permission needed to use the picture for the carving but it is also needed to show the original picture and, fortunately, this was also forthcoming, for which I am grateful.

I know that carvers, probably more than other artists, tend to use the work of others as inspiration and to get an idea for a carving, even producing as near accurate copies as they can but they do need to realise that these artists need to earn a living. Photographers

need to sell photographs and painters need to sell paintings and they deserve not to have their work plagiarised by others. Being up front and honest about the way you wish to use their work is, in our opinion, essential.

Em and I have both found that, by doing things the right way we not only feel happier but have made some very interesting contacts.

I can now continue with the carving with renewed energy knowing that it won't be consigned to the workshop wall. Mind you, as it is around 1.2m long I don't have many options for where to hang it. The picture above shows progress so far.



Photograph of polar bears by Debra Garside

Polar bear

Em has been persuaded to tell her story and show her progress with the carving that she has undertaken, so I shall rest for a while and let her get on with it.

It started with an idea and an early morning cuppa. I had been playing around with an idea of carving a mother polar bear with her cubs but could never quite get the look I wanted, so it stayed as an idea, just kicking around him my head and occasionally getting refined by films or pictures that I saw.

I enjoy surfing the net in the morning with my first cup of tea of the day, just me and the dog – we are the only voluntary early risers. On this morning I was looking through the entries to the Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition and there it was – what I was aiming for in one picture. The love and care that a mother has for her cubs was summed up in one picture. Even the title said it all – A Warm Embrace.

Living with a writer and teacher I knew that there was no way I could use the picture without permission, so we had a look for the photographer, Debra Garside (<https://debragarsidephotography.com>), and got in touch with a simple email to

her detailing who we were and what we would like to do. This is one of those times I think technology is wonderful.

Contact

A flurry of emails followed back and forth as we discussed terms and limitations, during which we discovered Debra lived on a ranch in Alberta, Canada, had a gallery for her pictures, was a world-class horsewoman and had spent six hours in -35° waiting for the mother and cubs to emerge in order to get that picture. I love polar bears but not to that level of dedication. It is one of the reasons I think the photographers earn their copyright, often sitting in freezing cold, or a boiling jungle, having to remain still and unobtrusive just for that one picture. I wonder how many other pictures are taken that don't

make the cut. Making the effort to contact the owner is often the best part of sorting out copyright issue – you meet new people and, certainly after all our long-distance chats with Debra, we felt we had made a new friend.

Carving

The carving I intend to do is the first large carving I have attempted. It is 3ft long by 18in high and will be carved from a piece of 4in lime, so there will be quite a lot of foreshortening required, which is worrying me a little.

As there are many difficult angles to deal with in carving Debra's picture I decided to do a smaller-scale maquette in jelutong (*Dyera costulata*) to sort out any problems that I might encounter. This should not only save a lot of time but also hopefully reduce the amount of stress involved. It isn't intended to be a finished carving but just carved enough to see the issues and so that I can go back to it if anything arises during the full-sized carving. I will then be able to try to put it right on the maquette and repeat the process on the big piece. That way it is a working maquette that develops alongside the other carving. ▶



The maquette

Later in the year I will show you how I overcame the various problems and what progress I have made

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Teddy bear bookends

Terry Nokes shows how to carve some fun-to-make bookends



The wood selected for this tutorial project is basswood (*Tilia Americana*), which is very similar to our lime (*Tilia x Europaea*), and once the bulk is roughed out it's soft enough to work without a mallet. This wood is available in the UK in small lengths of 50 x 75mm from large craft outlets. The reason for the flat back is to maximise the overall size on these small bookends. The carving tools used for this project are all Swiss-made Pfeil tools so the sizes mentioned are the Swiss sizes and types which are a little different from the Sheffield list.

Remember you don't need to follow these instructions or tools exactly – make changes to slightly alter its design and use the tool you have. Think about how you could adjust things, such as: would the legs look better if closer together, or if I raise one arm? I also spent some time drawing in different eye positions – this can dramatically change its appearance so you make it your own. Perhaps use paint instead of burning and use the tools you have to make the cuts accordingly.

Many thanks to Janet Robinson, who supplied the original teddy bear template.

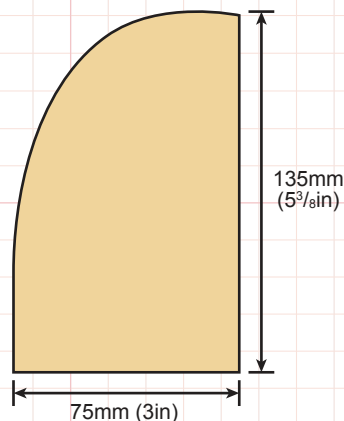
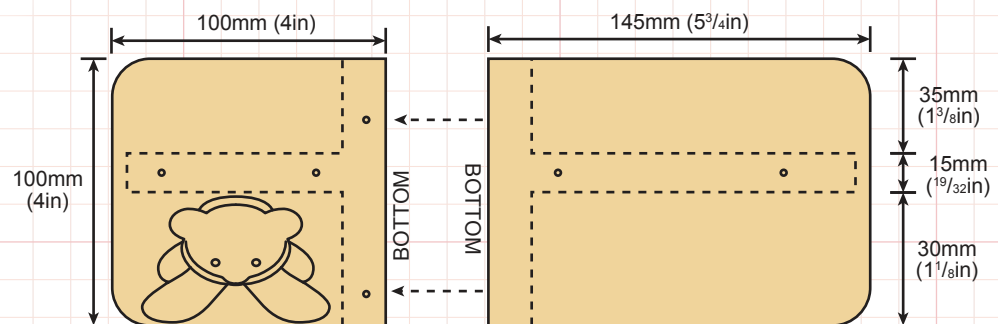
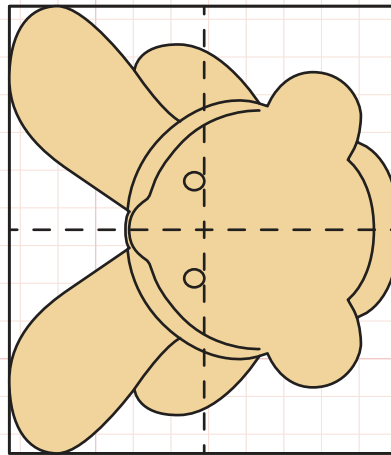
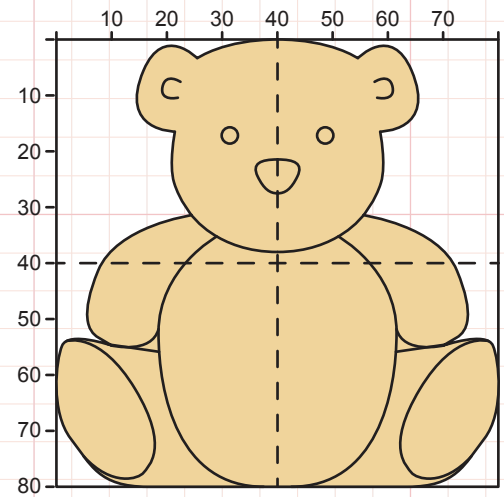
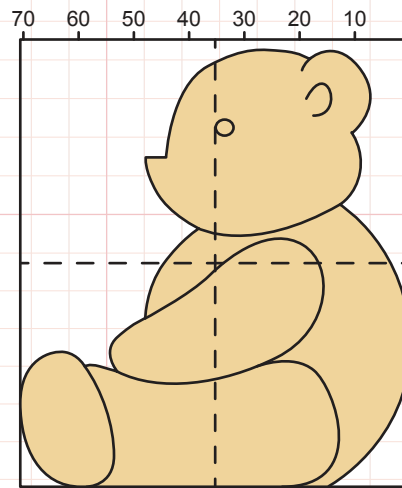
Things you will need

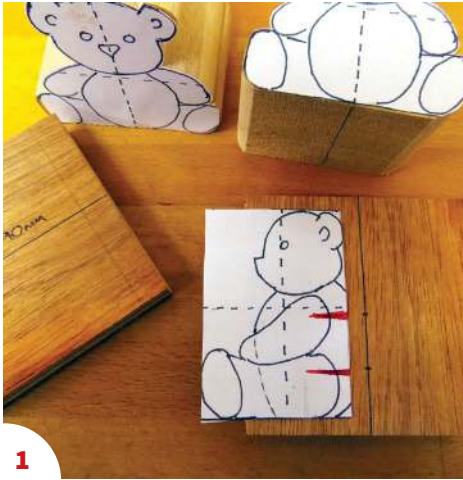
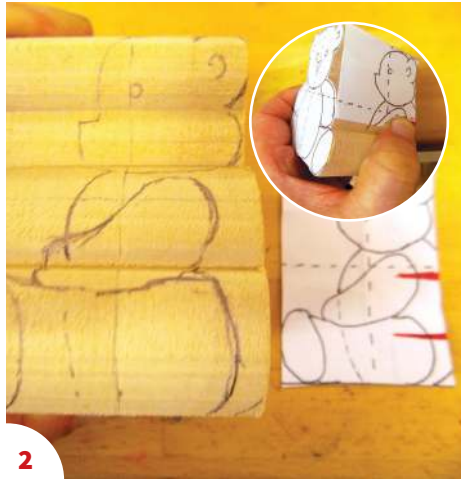
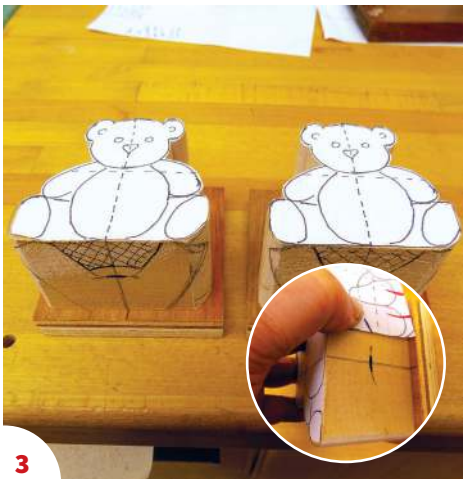
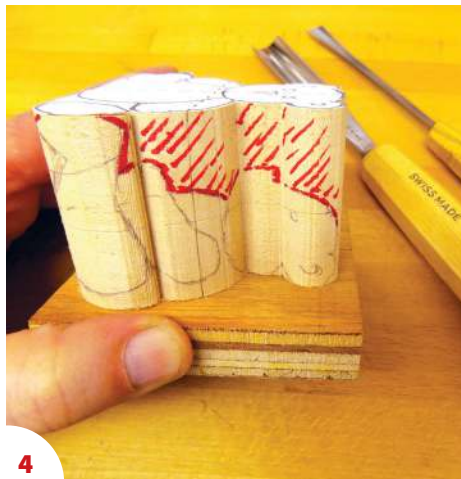
Tools:

- Personal and respiratory equipment (PPE & RPE)
- Bandsaw
- Electric/pillar drill, 2 and 4mm drill bit and countersink
- No.1, 14mm fishtail double-bevel chisel
- No.3, 12mm fishtail
- No.5, 14mm fishtail
- No.8, 18mm straight
- Carving/whittling knife
- Rotary carving unit
- 4mm or small diamond rotary ball-ended burr
- Pyrography machine
- Router with small round-over and ogee bits
- Carpenter's square/rule/pointed bradawl

Materials:

- 2x basswood sections of timber 50 x 75 x 80mm
- Hardwood board 15 x 100 x 800mm
- Glue stick/template/pencil
- Plywood 18mm
- Sanding block
- Abrasives down to 320 grit
- Black glass eyes (on wire)
- Adhesive
- Black nail polish
- Danish oil
- Brush
- Screwdriver and No.6 screws, 32mm



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

Preparation of blanks

1 Glue the paper templates to stock so the grain runs vertically and bandsaw two carving blanks, then pencil in the centreline all round. Cut out two plywood squares 90 x 90mm and drill two 4mm holes, taking note of the red screw positions in the drawing.

2 Next, draw the side elevations on all sides as the carving is roughly symmetrical.

3 On the very bottom elevation, draw in the legs and belly. Note the inset picture: Fold template to transfer dimensions of where the belly meets the base, highlighted in blue.

4 Highlighted in red is all waste material as seen from the sides. Now secure the carving blanks to the plywood bases with No.6 screws 1 1/4in so the bears will be on their backs. This will enable you to safely grip the project in a workbench vice.

TOP TIP: If you don't have a vice simply screw the carving blanks on to a larger board of ply and G clamp to your work surface. Placing anti-slip matting in between will also assist.

5 With all waste identified we're now ready to carve, **two up in a 225mm vice.**

The carving process

6 Using the No.8, 18mm or other deep gouge, start to remove waste from the head and work backwards down the belly and in between the two legs. It's good practice to keep the gouge sides (wings) of the cutting edge visible at all times. This is known as roughing out and probably the only time to use a mallet on this project.

7 Remove the waste wood between the legs.

8 Smooth out any high ridges with the No.3, 12mm fishtail. This tool is the one I most frequent tend to use, and it's highly recommended for any carving tool collection.

9 Look at the side profile and draw a pencil line where the bridge of the nose will be. Make a vertical stop cut with the No.1, 14mm then align the side of the tool with this stop cut and remove waste to create a step.

**9**

10 Turn the No.3 gouge upside down to round off the forehead as shown in Pic.11 There is a possible risk of chipping off the sides, so carve from each side towards the centre line.

11 Draw in the lower face outline and make another vertical stop cut with the fishtail gouges, then remove waste under the chin – depth is shown on the side outline. Again, align the side of the gouge with the stop cut and work across the grain.

12 Draw in the front elevation and pencil-mark the centre of the belly. This is our template outline so it will remain until the very end.

13 Now vertically stop cut round the belly with the fishtail gouges and round over the belly. Make sure you create a nice rounded and bulbous belly.

14 Next, remove the highlighted area in red to round over the upper arms. The shoulder height is a personal preference – I ended up going slighter higher than the template.

15 Progress so far.

16 Reposition the ply base in the vice for better access and taper legs back towards the base.

17 Carve the arms, again a combined fishtail stop cut, and remove waste with the inverted tool. Identify the waste in front of the ears.

18 Round off the lower face and remove the waste in front of ears. I moved the ears further towards the front, so it's now in the centre of the head. Round off the legs and draw in the muzzle area.

TOP TIP: Holding work effectively and in the right position while carving is essential. There are many devices and clamping systems available to help with this. Likewise, as with this project, a scrap of plywood and a woodworker's bench vice is ideal. Whatever your project, work out what is the best way to suit your needs and your budget.



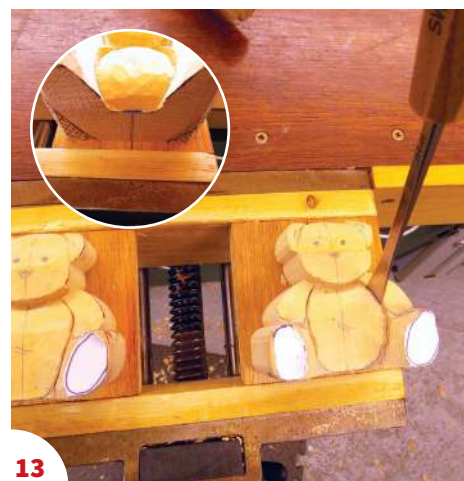
10



11



12



13



14



15



16



17



18

**19****20****19** Round off muzzle areas.

20 Remove the carving from the ply base and remount from the bottom. Drill a screw pilot hole in the bear's lower base section and remount it vertically on the ply base. This will allow you to carve around the back.

TOP TIP: Rubbing candle wax on screw threads acts like a lubricant.

**21****22**

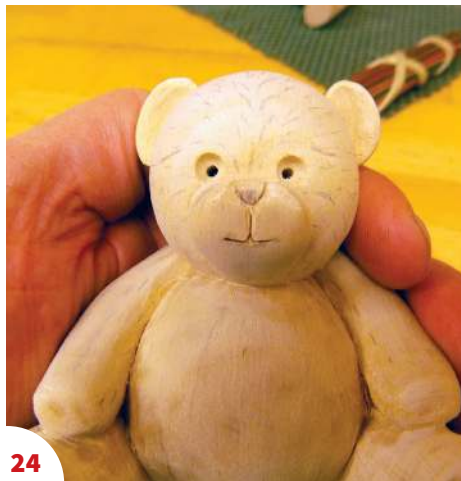
21 Round off the back of the head and extend the neckline. Finish the backs of arms, shoulders and leg joint. The deep area in between the arm and leg was made with a carving knife. Make this deep, ensuring the belly sides lines up with the belly front.

22 Round off the head between the ears, head back and shoulders and create a hollow within the ears. Rotate the ply base in the vice if need be.

Finishing touches

23 Finally round off the back of the ears. Inspect the carving all over and make any final adjustments before the finishing.

24 Sand all over with abrasives down to 320 grit. Locate with a bradawl your desired eye position. Drill a 2mm hole for the glass eye-wire then, with a rotary carving unit and a 4mm diamond ball-ended burr, create an eye socket to suit the glass eye.

**23****24**

25 Start the pyrography in any order, but it is best to lightly pencil in the fur directions first. The fur was burnt with a spear-shaped nib resembling the shape of a scalpel blade. Instead of straight burnt fur lines consider introducing a more pleasing effect by creating slightly wavy lines.

Carve the muzzle area with a carving knife then continue to pyrograph the other areas. The shadowy areas around joints were given extra burning in the form of shading with a spoon shading bit to achieve more visual depth. Next, paint the nose with black nail varnish.

26 Now you need to apply a finish of your choice. Some finishes are possible fire hazards or have usage requirements. Always read and follow the manufacturer's notes and usage instructions.

The bookend brackets have been made from a 15 x 100mm board mid-toned hardwood measuring 800mm in length and assembled with basic screwed butt-joinery without any glue. The edges have been rounded off with a small roundover bit in a router, except where the base meets the upright (note cutting diagram/template), and the curved back panel has an ogee profile.

**25****26**

TOP TIP: Follow all the router manufacturer's instructions carefully, secure your workpiece, wear safety glasses/goggles and a dusk mask. ▶

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Sharpening sloyd knives

Nic Westermann looks at the methods available to sharpen these tools effectively



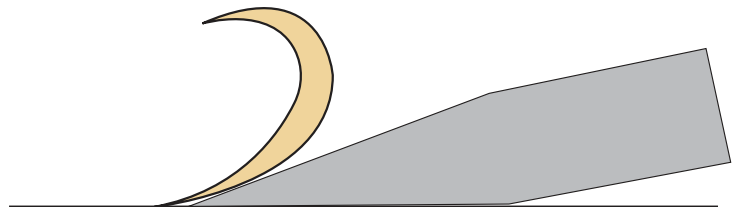
PHOTOGRAPHS BY NIC WESTERMANN

I should start by explaining what a sloyd knife is, as many will not be familiar with the term. It is taken from the Swedish 'slöjd', meaning craft, however it has morphed into a catch-all term for larger, slimmer carving blades, especially those used in green woodworking. Another feature of these blades is that they have the so-called Scandi (Scandinavian) grind-flat bevels.

As the diagram shows, flat bevels excel at planing cuts as the long bevel guides the cut. This grind will stand up to a lot of abuse and is used on bushcraft knives. However, this edge profile does not excel at all cutting tasks – it will take a shaving very well, but as the bevel is long there is a pronounced wedging action if this bevel form is plunged. Try to cut a raw potato in half with one of these blades and you will quickly find yourself looking for a better implement.

Optimum profile

So, following our two-step approach to sharpening, let's first look at establishing the optimum bevel profile. Flat bevels provide the support we need – the included angle should be around 25°. This can be measured for reference, but I find an empirical approach more practical. If your edge isn't holding or is frequently damaged then I would steepen the bevel angle. Conversely, if you are finding



How flat bevels help cut bold facets



Measuring bevel angle with a digital angle finder

the blade is not cutting as easily as you like and takes a very long time to dull appreciably, then a finer angle is worth considering. Generally, though, unless you have strong reason to alter bevel angles, I would assume the manufacturer has it right. The length

of the bevel is just simple geometry at this point, a function of the grind angle and the thickness of the blade. A longer bevel will provide more support but will be more difficult to turn in concave cut. Again, unless you have strong reasons to alter this, don't.



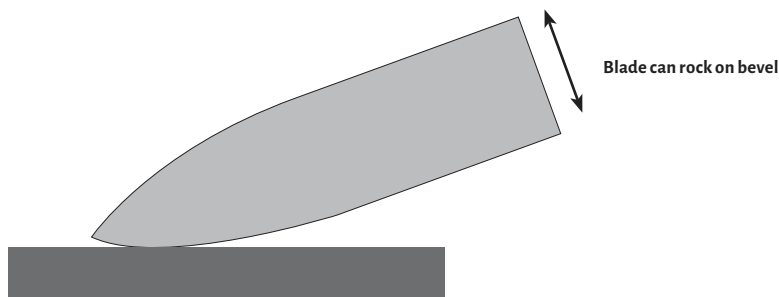
Hollow grinding a knife, using a Hewn & Hone sloyd jig

Hollow grind

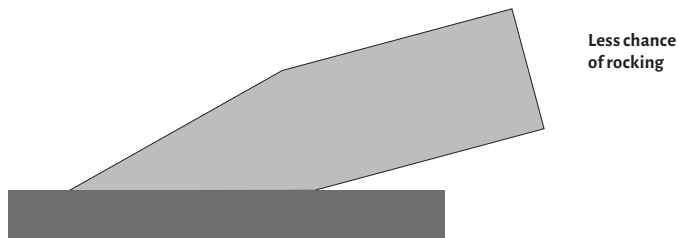
There is another option to flat bevels though, and this is to hollow grind first and then establish a flat across the hollow. This makes sharpening much easier, but the actual geometry at the edge is identical to a flat bevel. Hollow grinding really deserves an article in itself but there are various jigs available to make it easier, or it is possible to do this freehand.

Sharpening these blades is something that some people struggle with and some don't and that is partly because there are two stable states when honing. A truly flat bevel will sit flat on a stone and is relatively easy to keep flat. Conversely, once a bevel has become rounded it will rock on the stone and unless you hold the blade very accurately and consistently it will continue rocking and the rounding may well get worse.

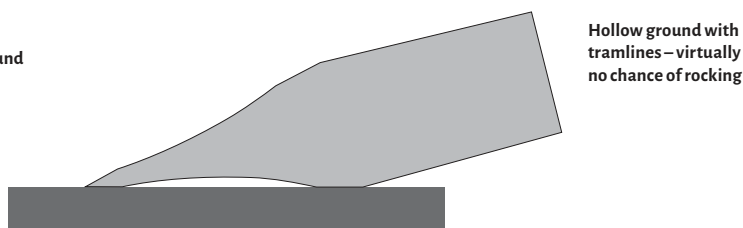
Convex



Flat



Hollow ground



Rounded bevels

A rounded bevel is not desirable for various reasons. First, the bevel will not provide support during the cut, second it will make it very hard to measure the edge angle and it is likely to be much more obtuse than the bevel length suggests. Finally though, when you sharpen a flat bevel on a flat surface every stroke you make will hit the whole width of the bevel, including the

edge. When you sharpen a rounded bevel it is a lottery which section of bevel you are hitting and could be having no effect on the edge at all. This can make sharpening a long, drawn out process, especially as you progress down through the grits.

This rocking effect is caused by the hump in the middle of the bevel – hollow grinding removes this and will make the sharpening process so much easier.

Flattening a bevel

If you are trying to flatten a bevel then a really coarse stone that cuts quickly is excellent for this, Diamond is my favourite in this scenario, but water stones, oil stones and abrasive paper on a backing pad will all work. If you are going to use a water or oil stone make sure it is flat. If it has become heavily dished then the concave surface of the stone will form a convex bevel – it will be impossible to get a truly flat bevel. Around 300 grit is a good starting point for flattening a rounded bevel, or removing edge damage. Carry on until you can feel a burr appearing – this shows that you have hit the edge with the stone. If you turn the blade over and work on the other bevel this burr should then flip to the other side on the first couple of strokes.

However, if you have hollow grind then you want to maintain the hollow for as long as possible. All you need to do is to get through the marks left by the wheel to establish two tramlines. I would start this at 2-3000 grit. Even edge damage will be removed pretty quickly as the area of steel in contact with the stone is so small with a hollow ground blade.

The actual way you do this is really down to personal preference. Some people will keep holding the knife in the same hand and have the edge pointing towards them for one bevel and away from them for the other. Others will prefer to swap hands, working on either side of the stone, but always having the edge pointing the same way regardless of which bevel you are working.

You will often find that one bevel is easy to keep flat and the other tends to rock – this is intensely frustrating but entirely normal. The best advice I can give is if it is going wrong and you are getting annoyed, then take a break. You need a firm but relaxed grip so you can feel the bevel cutting on the stone. If you are stressed you will be tense and this vital feedback is lost.



Concentrate on keeping the bevel flat and work the blade up and down the stone, while also moving the blade laterally so the full length all the way to the tip is worked on

Stab sharpening

A blade with a straight cutting edge is much easier to sharpen – you can hold the knife at the same angle all the time to hit the entire surface of the bevel. A blade with a pronounced curve or belly at the tip is more difficult, you have to lift the handle to get the tip to engage, and you can lose the support of the bevel to keep your angles consistent. Stab sharpening can help with this loss of support but can lead to gouging of the stone. Abrasive paper systems can be even more prone to this, but on the other hand it is much easier to swap out for a new sheet than spend ages flattening a damaged stone.

However, the finer tip on a blade is often used for working in slightly concave surfaces, also known as turning in a cut, so if you do end up with some convexing in this area it is not necessarily a bad thing;

While not strictly speaking edge geometry or sharpening, you will find smoothing crisp corners on the spine of the blade will make thumb push cuts much more comfortable. No real need to work through the grits after smoothing but it looks better if you do.



Stab sharpening. This can be an easier way to keep the bevels at the tip flat

Refining the edge

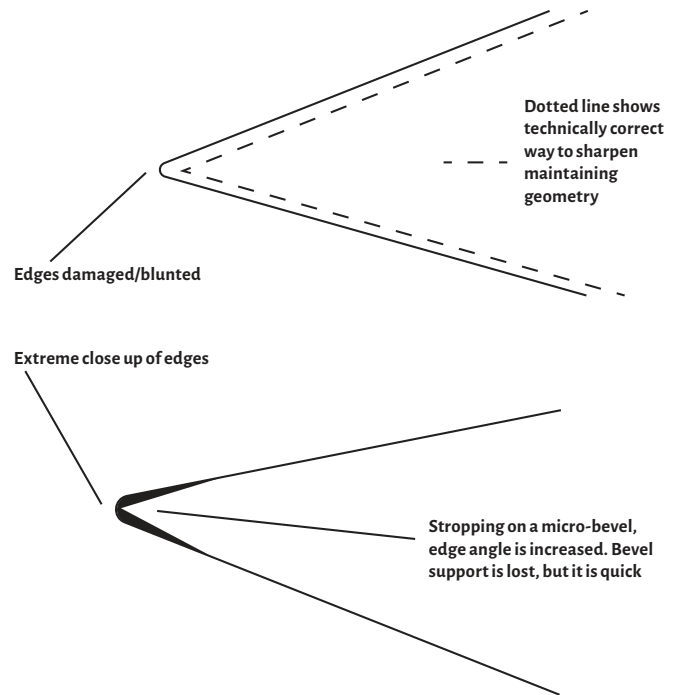
The second part of the sharpening process is refining the edge and if the bevels have been set well then this should be easy. If you have a flat bevel the surface area is much greater and you will have to make smaller jumps in grit sizes to be sure you don't leave scratch marks from the coarser grits. With a hollow ground blade it is acceptable to jump straight to a finishing grit, something around 5-8,000 with no intermediate stages.



White polishing compound on suede, the black streaks are the steel it has cut from the blade

Stropping – cheating or a necessary evil?

Stropping using a fine polishing compound on leather or suede is pretty simple. You need to concentrate on keeping the bevel flat, as ever, and also you must work away from the edge or you will cut into the leather. It is a subject though that causes a lot of debate. It can be used in a variety of ways, as a final finish after using stones or abrasives, or as a means to touch up a dull blade – it is this second option that is worth looking at more closely. A fine compound will actually cut steel, but the amount removed is negligible. If a flat ground blade has blunted the edge will have worn back. To properly sharpen it the entire surface of the flat bevel must be removed to get back to a clean edge – this won't be possible with stropping. All that is realistically happening is that a micro-bevel is being introduced. This is because the softer leather has some give and deforms, meaning most of the polishing action is concentrated on the edge.



Micro-bevel versus proper sharpening

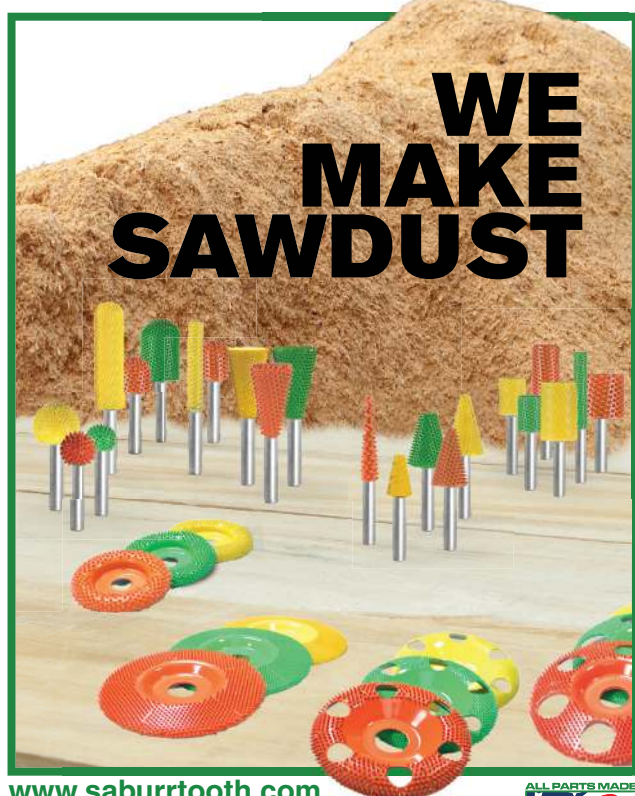
This isn't a bad thing as it is the quickest way to get back to carving. It reinforces the edge by increasing the effective bevel angle. There is a destabilising effect as the bevel support is lost, but this effect is negligible at first as the amounts of steel removed are so small, and this, I think, is the problem – a blade repeatedly stropped will suffer a death by a thousand cuts. After a while you will notice that, although it can be stropped back to sharpness, it will not keep this edge for long. It will also like bite. I think of the edge feeling buttery on the wood – it will feel like it is sliding. At this point it is time to go back to the stones. Work with a coarse stone until you feel a burr to be sure you have obliterated the micro-bevel and re-established flat bevels. How little you strop between sharpening is often a measure of how much of a purist you are. Personally, I take the easy route and strop often. ■

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This article is brought to you by the team at Hewn & Hone. The team comprises: Nic Westermann, a blacksmith and creator of carving tools and sharpening accessories; Don Nalezty, an IT specialist and respected Kolroser and carver; Alex Yerks, an internationally renowned green woodworking teacher and kuksa carver; and Adrian Lloyd, a UK-based full-time craftsman, teacher and toolmaker.

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Black woodpecker

Mike Wood gets to grips with this magnificent bird

As its name suggests, the black woodpecker (*Dryocopus martius*) has mainly black plumage with dark-brown primary feathers. On the male birds, the red crown extends from the forehead to the hindcrown, while on the females the red patch is smaller and only covers the hindcrown. These red feathers are raised up during courtship and defensive displays.

The black woodpecker's range covers a wide area, including Europe (apart from Ireland, the UK and northern Scandinavia), the Middle East, Korea, Japan and China. Its habitat is mature broadleaved or coniferous forests and its population numbers in parts of Europe have increased where ancient forests have been restored. Its conservation status on the IUCN Red List is currently categorised as of Least Concern.

The woodpecker uses its beak and powerful neck muscles to chisel into tree trunks to extract and feed on carpenter ants, beetles, wood-boring grubs and sap. It occasionally also feeds on fruit and berries. In many areas, the black woodpecker is considered a beneficial species because it helps control the numbers of wood-boring insects.

The woodpecker forms its nest by excavating a chamber inside a tree trunk, usually a poplar or pine tree. The average clutch size is four to six eggs and both male and female birds share brooding and feeding duties until the young leave the nest. The empty nests then provide habitats for other bird species and small mammals. Its main natural predator is the pine marten, which feeds on the birds' eggs.

Due to its piercing yellow eyes and distinctive high-pitched call, the black woodpecker is often seen as a malign character in folklore and fairy tales. In Finnish folklore, the bird was believed to be the bringer of death, bad luck or rain.

Things you will need

Tools:

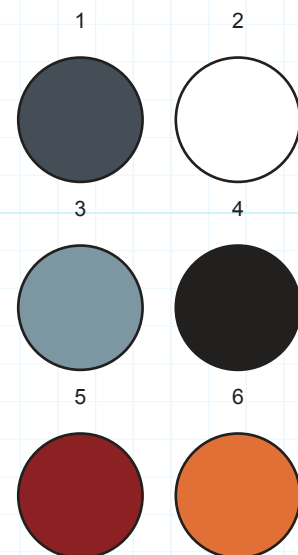
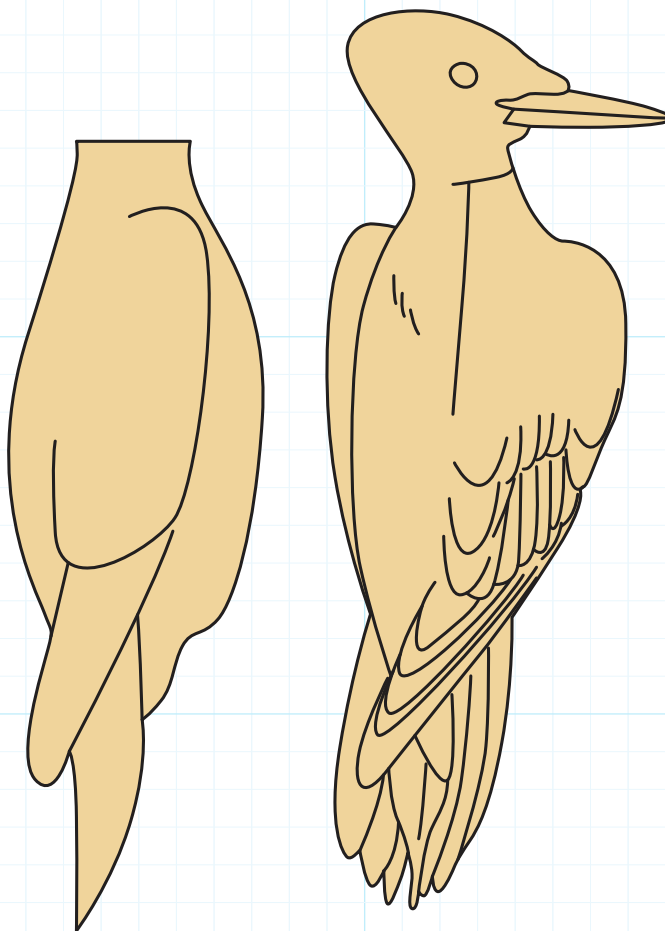
- Personal and respiratory protective equipment (PPE & RPE)
- Bandsaw, coping saw or fretsaw
- Carving knife
- Rotary power carving unit
- Coarse taper burr
- Medium flame or taper burr
- Bullnose stone burr
- Round-nose burr

- Fine ruby taper burr
- Drill and drill bit for the feet
- Sanding drum
- Pyrography unit with scalpel nib

Materials:

- Wood used. Body: jelutong (*Dyera costulata*); head is lime (*Tilia x europea*)
- Body: 280mm long, 120mm wide, 80mm deep.

- Head: 130mm long, 50mm wide, 80mm deep
- Eyes & feet
- Wire for fixing the bird to the display mount
- PVA adhesive
- Plastic wood
- Paint brushes/airbrush
- Abrasives 120-240 grit
- Acrylic colours as per the colour palette



- 1 PAYNES GRAY
2 WHITE GESSO
3 WHITE GESSO & PAYNES GRAY MIX
4 BLACK
5 SCARLET
6 ORANGE

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

Shaping the head

1 I wanted the woodpecker's head to be looking sideways to the main body, so to avoid wasting timber, the head and body are made from two different pieces of wood. The head is made from lime and the body is made from jelutong.

Use the template provided and cut out the head. Then use a high-speed rotary carving unit, or hand-carving tools, to rough-shape the head and beak. A coarse flame burr will work well for this. Mark the position of the eyes and use a ball-end cutter to create a recess to suit the eyes you have bought.

As with many projects, you can hand carve these or, if you so choose, knife carve it. Of course the look and feel of it will be different with a knife carved one, but there are some wonderful knife-carved birds out there. It all depends on what look and how lifelike you want the bird to be. I choose to power carve them for speed and time purposes, but it also affords me the control I need. The process is dusty, so do if you power carve, use suitable face and respiratory protective equipment as well as at-source dust extraction.

2 Use a medium or fine grit taper burr to refine the shape and follow this by using a sanding drum to smooth out any ridges and scores ready for the next stage.

3 You now need to mark in the main feather and beak details and carve these in with hand tools or with a rotary carving burr. If power carving, a medium-grade diamond burr will be ideal. Pay attention to your reference material and go slowly. It is very hard to replace wood once it is cut away.

4 Once you have all of the feather details in place, mix up some plastic wood and put some in the eye sockets, affix the eyes and shape any squeeze-out to form the surrounding area for the eye.

Body, feathers and feet

5 Once again, use the template provided and use this to rough-cut out the body. Once cut, use a coarse burr in a rotary carving unit, or hand tools, to roughly shape the main body, wings and tail feather areas. Note the slot cut – this is for attachment of the primary feathers which are created separately later.

6 Once cut, sand the body smooth and pencil in the large feather positions.

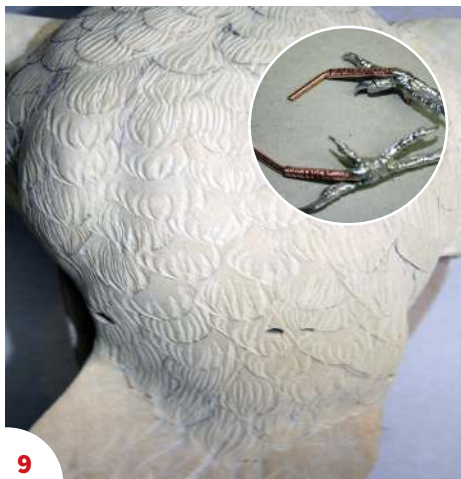
7 Use a medium taper burr to cut those feathers in and then...

8 ...move on to using a small ruby ball-end burr and a diamond flame burr to cut the finer detail. If you, like I do, aim for a realistic texture to the feathers, this can take a little while, so don't rush. Remember, the detail created now will show through the gesso paint layers later. If you are unfamiliar as to how deep to cut certain detail create a practice board and experiment on that rather than your project. Once done, move on to marking the underside feather detail.



9 With the underside feather detail marked, use a fine burr to create the required texture. Once done, drill the holes for the bird's feet and, if required, a hole for a fixing rod. The fixing rod is dependent on how you are going to display your bird. I wanted to have it mounted on the side of a tree trunk, but you may want a different look, so you choose what is right for you.

With regards to birds' feet I make mine from copper wire and solder to suit each project I undertake. But there are retail outlets that sell birds' feet for many different species, so you can easily buy feet if required.



9

10 Carve the tail feathers. It is best to do these before fitting the primary feather inserts so you have clear access to them.



10

11 Now the primary feather inserts need to be carved and temporarily fitted. Note I have created some pyrographed detail in them at this stage. Remove them and use a small round diamond bit and edge all the feathers on the belly and the chest.



11

Pyrography

12 Once done, use a pyrography unit fitted with a scalpel tip to mark in the feathers' rachis...



12

13 ...which is the pointed central elongated section that runs along the length of the feathers, off which the fine feather barbs and barbules form the vane/blade of the feather. Take your time and get them right. This detail shows through the final colour coats so any major errors will show.



13

14 Move on to the head, being aware of the flow and direction of the feather detail required...

15 ...and, finally, create the fine pyrographed detail on the primary feather inserts. Once done, glue them in place.



14

16 Here is the bird ready for colouring.



15



16

**17****18****Colour**

17 Undercoat the bird with gesso, which needs to be tinted with Payne's grey.

18 Paint or airbrush the edges of the feathers with black. Once done use a fine rigger brush to paint in some light-grey splits and repeat for the tail feathers.

19 Use a template to paint the feathers on the belly and chest and then use a fine liner to paint in all the shafts of the feathers.

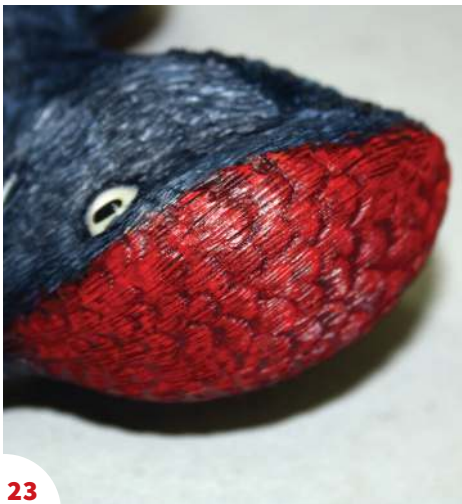
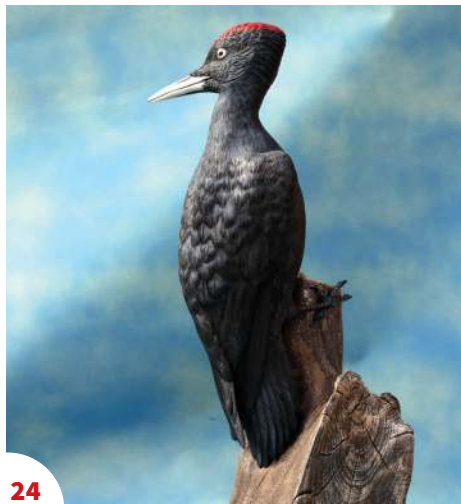
20 Go over all the bird with very fine washes of black. Repeat as often as required to achieve the desired look.

21 Fit the primaries and the feet, glue in place and touch up any damage or glue marks with paint.

22 & 23 Highlight the details on the beak using a light-grey mix and then paint the head cap red.

24 Now move on to making the mounting section. I used an old tree-trunk section for this. I cleaned all loose debris and bark away, gave it a coat of gesso and then applied colours as required to get the right look. I worked out the position for the bird, drilled holes and then glued the bird in place.

25 Here is the final mounted bird ▶

**19****20****21****22****23****24****25**

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Dave Western is a professional lovespoon carver and the author of two books on the subject. He carves to commission and also teaches carving classes. His books, *The Fine Art of Carving Lovespoons* and *History of Lovespoons*, are both available through GMC Publications. davidwesternlovespoons.com



Mark Ivan Fortune followed a traditional apprenticeship in stone carving to become a master of his craft with more than 20 years' experience. Since 2008 he has turned his attention primarily to woodcarving. He teaches from his home workshop at Raheenwood in East Clare. markivanfortune@icloud.com www.instagram.com/markivanfortune



Mike Wood has been carving all his life and professionally since 1986. Carving mostly birds, he is self-taught and takes great inspiration from the American bird carvers. www.mikewoodbird.co.uk mikewoodbird@btinternet.com



Murray Taylor was a jeweller and silversmith before retiring 15 years ago and devoting time to woodcarving. Murray has made three DVDs related to woodcarving, one of which is on chip carving, and he is involved in teaching and promoting chip carving. murraytaylor@hotmail.co.uk



Nic Westermann is a blacksmith and specialises in tool-making. He is highly regarded in the green woodworking and carving communities. He researches, designs and manufactures jigs and other kit to help make sharpening things easier. nic.westermann@btconnect.com



Peter Benson has travelled the world teaching and judging woodcarving at all standards for the past 20 years. He has written two books on the subject. bencarve@btinternet.com



Steve Bisco has been carving for 30 years, specialising in decorative carving in period styles, first in wood and recently in stone. His book, *Stone Carving for the Home & Garden*, is available from GMC Publications. steve@thebiscos.com



Terry Nokes has been woodcarving for more than 20 years and is a past member of the Rocking Horse Guild. In 2013 he launched the Bedfordshire region of the British Woodcarvers Association. He currently manages woodcarving clubs and classes and demonstrates locally at shows. nokes_terry@hotmail.com



Zoë Gertner has been a professional woodcarver and sculptor since 1980. She is experienced in the teaching and practice of all aspects of woodcarving and sculpture, including relief carving, lettering, signboards, ecclesiastical, restoration, fairground and carousel work. www.zoegertner.co.uk

Editor Mark Baker
E: markb@thegmcgroup.com
Editorial Assistant Karen Scott
E: karensc@thegmcgroup.com
Designer Oliver Prentice
Illustrator Mark Carr
Chief Photographer Anthony Bailey
Advertising Sales Executive Russell Higgins
E: russellh@thegmcgroup.com
Production Controller Amanda Hoag
E: repro@thegmcgroup.com
Publisher Jonathan Grogan
Production Manager Jim Bulley
Subscriptions:
pubs@thegmcgroup.com
T: 01273 402810

Marketing Anne Guillot
Printer Precision Colour Printing
Distribution Seymour Distribution Ltd
T: 020 7429 4000
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Simon Clements – woodcarver

Anthony Bailey meets artist and woodcarver Simon Clements

I had the opportunity to meet Simon at the Sylva Foundation in Oxfordshire where he was working on his latest project. It was a bright, sunny day and Simon was in expansive mood, keen to answer my searching questions and show me around. It was an enlightening discussion about his work and career.

Sylva Foundation

I should explain that Sylva is a registered charity that is dedicated to propagating good forestry practice and educating people about the importance of trees and forests. It was no coincidence that I met Simon there – he holds woodcarving classes in the new Wood School building and he has also been responsible for carving 11 Charter Poles, which are the physical embodiment of the 2017 Tree

Charter to which various woodland and environmental bodies have signed up – one of which is ‘planted’ on site. The Charter is dedicated to giving a protective voice to forests and ancient woodlands, making sure government and commercial interests heed warning about the need to reverse the decline of this vital natural resource while involving the public in the fight for their survival and understanding the benefits they give to all of us.

Tree Charter

As we chatted in the brilliant sunshine, I espied the Charter Pole set in the middle of Sylva’s own field of saplings, due in time to develop into a small forest. I asked Simon how much of a challenge it had been to create each pole. ‘This was an 18-month commission from the Woodland Trust. It

wasn’t the carving that was the issue – that was relatively straightforward. The big problem was conversion. Fortunately, I worked with a really good sawmiller. (Nick Keighley at Face North Forestry which has now made its base at the Sylva Foundation, Long Wittenham site.) He had a brand new Wood-Mizer saw which was used to straighten and shape each massive log. Normally the trunk would be debarked, but that inflicts damage so he had to square the log then turn a few degrees to make another cut until it was more or less round. Using a plywood template, it was then ready to carve. Bearing in mind there would be 11 poles, we needed custom-built trestles to support each two-ton pole and plenty of help to get the job done.

‘A power planer was used to turn the faceted, rather gnarly oak trunks into

rounds ready for carving. Roughing out was done by power carving using Arbortech and Rotarex tools.'

Simon continued: 'On later trunks we found the fresh, green oak could be shaped using a drawknife. There would be about 300 letters on each trunk in the form of a poem, with carved designs in between. Stencils in a ribbon shape were applied to the trunk and one of my students, Brian, did a sterling job carving the letters which, taking 20 minutes per letter, proved his input was essential to get the job done. In fact, we had two poles at a time on trestles in order to keep the process moving. The designs were drawn straight on to the trunks and, after roughing out, they were finished with mallet and gouges. The level of detail couldn't be too fine because the timber was green. It was a big enterprise and a very personal one for me, watching the first one being raised in the grounds of Lincoln Castle. Now there are a total of 11 poles in various locations across the UK where the public can see them and appreciate the message they bring.'

Experimental art

Simon doesn't just see wood as a material to carve. He showed me around his workshop in the Sylva Foundation's main workshop building, where various small woodworking businesses – including an incubator unit for Rycotewood students – are based. He has a fascination with 'springy' wood and has created various curly or bendy sculptural forms which can move when touched or blown in the wind. He obviously doesn't like to be limited by conventional thinking or size – big or small, he does it all.



Working on bigger projects often means working with power tools using Arbortech and Saburr cutters and full safety gear



'A good heart' an over-sized votive heart carved in mahogany. It sits on a shelf full of carved ideas waiting development



Affectionately known as 'Jones the Bones', a mash up of carving styles including medieval German lettering and a stylistic nod to Walt Disney from the two small flying skeletons

Questions & Answers

How and why did you get into woodcarving?

I had achieved a ceramics degree, I set up Appleford pottery, and I then went on to teach in rehabilitation facilities in therapeutic centres and psychiatric hospitals. I'd always had an interest in working with wood and boats, so I became a mast, spar and oar maker. After a while I became bored and fed up working in a noisy, dusty environment, so I took a two-year sabbatical to get creative again and did a C&G postgraduate course in historical and ornamental carving. I then worked for a while as a conservation joiner for a heritage company. I developed a number of sculptural garden pieces which led to a residency and installation at Oxford University Museum of Natural History, followed by a commission for the Sylva Foundation and a workshop in its new workshop space. Since then I have worked with the Pitt Rivers Museum creating and delivering making workshops that include carving and canoe making and woodwork sessions with learning disability adults. I also run one-on-one carving sessions at Sylva and at the Wooburn School of Crafts near High Wycombe. Quite a busy and varied journey to where I am now.

What was the very first piece you made?

A small mouse carving on a walking stick. I got very bored while at the mast makers and carved it in ash with my penknife during breaks.

What are the influences in your work?

19th and 20th-century art, drawing and sculpture and classical Greek and modern stone carving.

What are your biggest mistakes and challenges in woodcarving?

The biggest challenge is learning how to carve figures. Mistakes? Not learning how to run a business before I started.

What would you like to see happening regarding your development in carving?

I would like to do more large-scale interpretive sculptural commissions.

What has been your oddest experience in carving?

A commission to carve some 'rocking horse dung'.

What is your most memorable experience carving-wise?

Getting the contract for the Woodland Charter Poles.

What is the best bit of carving advice you have ever received?

A tutor once told me that a woodcarver's job is 'to show off', so I try to.



Hand beaten copper oak leaf; one of 30 made for a sculpture called "Tumbling Leaves"



Spoon carving is the perfect way to chill out for a few hours at the end of a busy week

Have you ever given up on a project?

Yes. Sometimes it's about quality control and sometimes the piece ends up as firewood. A good rule of thumb is, if you have not touched a particular piece for two years or more, use it to warm the workshop.

What is your favourite type of carving?

High-relief carving, especially the large-scale, heavily modelled medieval carving that predates the more fanciful Baroque work of Grinling Gibbons.

What are the biggest differences in carving now, compared to when you first started

More effective power carving tools which speed up the boring bits of the work.

What is your favourite piece of equipment?

My hands.

What are your dislikes regarding the world of carving?

Amateur carvers who will not draw.

What helpful advice do you have for other carvers?

As I said earlier – not learning about business before I started.

A top tip or hint for fellow carvers?

Develop a 'slow' attitude to carving. It's not about speed.

Simon Clements, thank you for taking the time to answer my questions. It will be fascinating to see what new and different projects you take on next. ▶



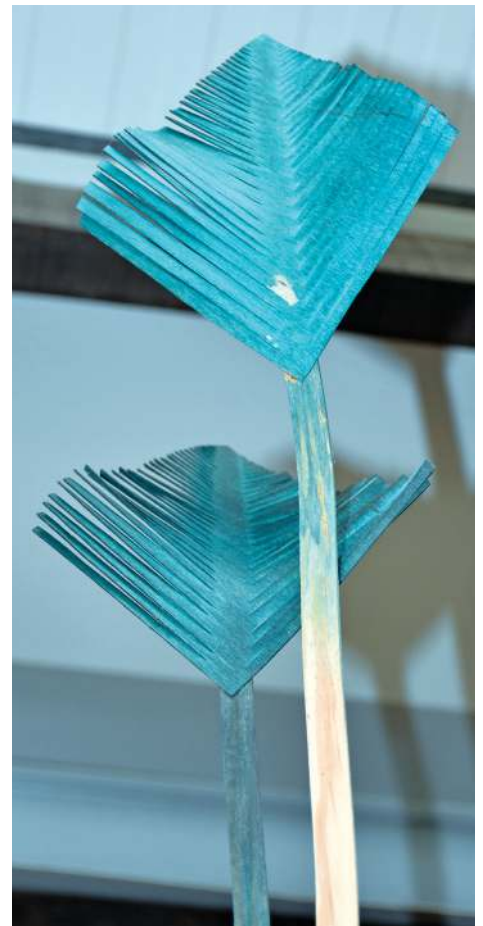
'Blue Trundle' one of the sculptures from the drawing the wind series in heat bent limewood



Natural forms are often the starting point for carved sculptures such as this 'Green Palm' piece from the Palmate series



'Spring Daisy', another wind powered kinetic sculpture carved in cedar of Lebanon and mounted on a recycled car suspension spring. Designed as a sculpture but often used as a stool



'Sedge', another heat bent piece, one of 20 five-foot sedge flowers designed to sway as people walk past them

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Flying owl

Zoë Gertner shows how to create a relief-carved owl



Some years ago I was given, for a small donation, several pieces and planks of false acacia (*Robinia*) which were inconveniencing a Somerset churchyard, mainly weird-shaped planks with bark attached, burrs and some very eccentric grain patterning. The church had offered it to various craftspersons,

including turners and a musical instrument maker, all of whom had declined.

Now, as its last resort, I took it away with great glee and anticipation. Rather than being in the mindset of always using squared-off planed wood for your relief carvings, waney-edged timber has many creative possibilities – its grain pattern, burrs, flaws

and bark edging can be used to enhance the subject of your relief carving. In addition, you will learn a lot about the species you are using and how to work with 'difficult' grain patterns which you may come across in future carvings. This project shows you how to work with an unorthodox-shaped piece of wood to its best advantage.



Things you will need

Tools:

- Personal & respiratory protective equipment (PPE & RPE)
- No.3, 3, 6, 20 & 25mm
- No.5, 10mm
- No.9, 6mm
- No.11, 3mm
- 3 & 10mm 60° V-tool

Materials:

- Mallet
- Non-slip router mat on bench to grip carving
- Colourless wax polish, old toothbrush and lint-free duster

Preparation

1 My timber was a rough-edged piece of false acacia (*Robinia pseudo acacia*) about 20mm thick, 405mm long and approximately 125mm wide. All loose fibres and any soft spots were removed and its surface prepared ready to draw on the outline of the flying owl. To position it on the timber you can use chalk and draw the outline directly on to your timber as chalk lines can easily be erased with damp cloth.

While carving, it is easiest to grip the board on a non-slip router mat so you can just lift it up and turn it when you need to work in the opposite direction.

Having roughly outlined the owl using chalk, my board seems to be too square at its ends and will not enhance the shape of the wings, but the burr beneath the head will give an interesting grain pattern. So the ends will need adjusting to a more pleasing shape.

2 The angled sections 1 and 2 were sawn from each end so that the shape of the board will relate better with that of the outspread wings.

If you are not confident about drawing the outline directly on to the timber, you can trace my original drawing and transfer it to your wood using carbon paper, or alternatively, trace it on to light card and cut this out to make a template.

3 So that the outline of the wings will be symmetrical, fold the card in two vertically down the middle of the head and beak and cut round the halved outline, holding the doubled card as you do cut.

4 Position your cutout card template and draw round it using soft pencil.

Starting the carving

5 Using the V-tool with a mallet cut round the outline, changing the direction of cut where necessary so there is a clean edge against the drawn outline. If the grain of the wood is difficult you may have to turn your work several times so that you always cut in the right direction to minimise grain tear-out.

6 Now deepen and widen the V-cut outline using sets of opposing cuts.

First cuts: using a No.3 gouge of appropriate width, place its cutting edge at the same angle against the side of the V-channel and cut downwards and away from the owl. Turn the gouge as necessary so its cutting edge corresponds with the convex and concave curves of the outline. For tighter curves use a narrower No.3 gouge. Do not twist or lever the end of the gouge, but withdraw it at the same angle that it entered. Continue thus around the whole outline. The tool handle should be held over the owl for these cuts, not cutting towards it.




7

8

7 Second cuts: these are made towards the first set, always using the gouge with its bevel down, cutting down at an angle towards the first cuts in order to deepen and widen the existing V-channel. Start these angled cuts at about 3mm away from the outline to meet up with the first set cleanly, so deepening and widening the channel from all round. Repeat both sets of cuts, moving out wider and deeper until the channel is approximately 6mm deep and wide, its sides cleanly meeting at the bottom of the V.

8 To cut a channel cleanly at the top of the head, where it lies across the grain, make alternate cuts from each side, finishing at the middle of the top of the head. As you cut towards it, swing the cutting edge sideways slightly so that the width of the tool edge meets the first cuts, and a tidy chip should be produced.


9

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9 When the outline channel has been deepened and widened, the background can be removed. Using the No.5 gouge with its bevel down, start your cuts along the edge and into the enlarged channel then, always working towards the channel, extend overlapping cuts outwards up towards the edge of the timber.

Continue thus making a gentle slope from the outer edge of timber to the outline of the owl, leaving a border if you wish. The edge of the outline adjacent to the background should be cleanly cut.

10 Shaping: using the No.3 gouge, round over and chamfer the edges of the wings.

11 Reduce both wing tips using the No.3 gouge.

The head

12 With the No.3 gouge inverted to match its curve, each side cut round the outside of the head down towards the wing.

13 Now deepen the upper surface of each wing up to the side of the head so that the head projects forwards from the wings.

14 Round off the sides of the head by cutting outwards, lifting your gouge hand as you work over the edges.


11

12

13

14

15 Using the V-tool mark the beak and the upper line of the eye discs.

16 Each eye disc is hollowed using the No.5, 6 or 10mm. First, scoop outwards from the side of the beak.

17 Because of the lie of the grain, when the eye discs are deeper you may have work into the hollow from each side to smooth their deepest area. Chamfer the edges of the division between the discs and reduce its end, the beak, into the face below. Then draw the eyes within each hollowed disk.

18 With the 3mm V-tool mark eyes, cutting in the direction to obtain a clean edge around the eye. Deepen and widen the V-channel using a V-tool or a No.3, 3mm inverted as described before, round over the edges of each away from the highest point at the middle. To enliven them, nick out a tiny cut here using the No.11, 3mm, then clean up the adjacent surface within the hollow discs.

19 Over the top of the head, working from each side and using the No.9, 6mm, start at the outer edge and make small, deep cuts back to the middle of the head, meeting them here from each side, to texture and add contrast to the smooth wings and eye discs. Chamfer and sharpen the beak to a point and mark its division above by cutting a shallow channel across with the No.3, 6mm.

20 Undercut the lower edge of each wing by tilting back the No.3 gouge against it and cutting downwards beneath it, then towards the cuts from the background, meeting up cleanly below the edge.

21 Lightly work over the wings to remove any of the original surface remaining, gently undulating the surface with clean, shallow cuts with the No.3 gouge to remove any flat areas. You could use a No.5, 10mm gouge to tool the border to make a contrasting pattern with the smooth background and wings, at the same time removing any unworked surface remaining. Check all edges are cleanly cut, and remove any deep errant cuts or digs by paring them away. The carving was finished with a colourless wax polish applied with an old toothbrush, left overnight and buffed with a lint-free duster to a very pleasing sheen.

22 The finished carving. ▶



15



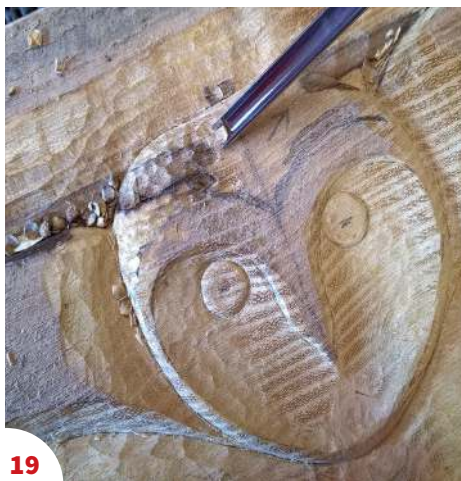
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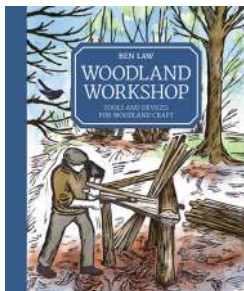
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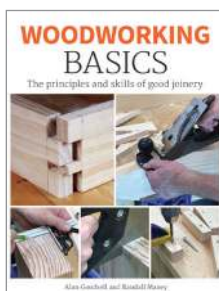
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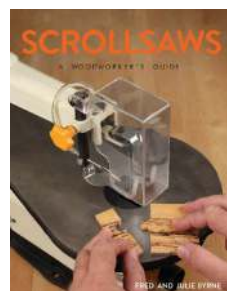
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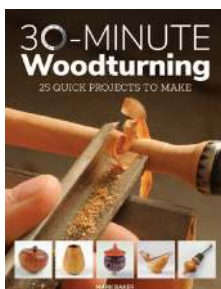
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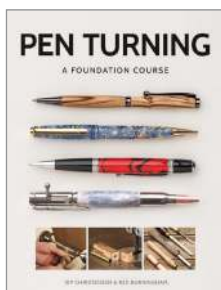
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A close-up photograph of several wood carving tools, including gouges and chisels with wooden handles, resting on a dark wooden surface. In the background, a light-colored wooden piece with intricate carved patterns is visible.

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Further decorative fonts

In this article Murray Taylor looks at the Ambrosia, Versal and Asian fonts, a method of carving handwriting and some interesting finds from car boot sales



The first font we are going to look at is Ambrosia, which can be found on many websites. This version, however, is one I have adapted from the master—I refer, of course, to Wayne Barton, who inspired me in my venture into chip carving.

This font lends itself to chip carving or to larger letters in harder woods using conventional gouges and chisels.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY MURRAY TAYLOR

TOP: The Ambrosia font hand drawn
RIGHT: The Ambrosia font drawn on to the wood



The development of the letters in the Ambrosia font



Carving the Ambrosia sampler



The completed sampler finished with a dark wax

Ambrosia is an adaptable font

Carving the Ambrosia font should not cause you any problems as the letters are mostly formed from connected chips. I have selected a few letters to show you the development of carving them.

This font lends itself to many uses. It is very decorative and is especially useful when you have limited space as the letters can be drawn quite close together without unduly distorting the words or distracting from the artistic appeal. In the project idea you will see how the 'D' and the 'A' sit so well together in the days of the week.

This now leads me to the project, which as always is meant to give you food for thought – you don't have to adhere rigidly to my design. The exercise here is to produce a perpetual calendar using a very simple construction method. It consists of a series of different-size plaques and a holding box.

You could copy the design of the box I have made or design one of your own. There are few rules, but you do need to make four small plaques, three middle sized and two large ones. For this exercise I have used 6mm-thick

material for the plaques which measure as follows: four off 50 x 70mm, three off 100 x 100mm and two off 100 x 130mm.

In order to be able to form any number from 1 to 31 you will need to duplicate some numbers and blanks as shown in the diagram. The days of the week go on to each end of longer plaques and on both sides, while the months are on the middle ones. The box is a simple pinned and glued construction, made to give about a 1mm gap all round the plaques to allow for easy removal. You could, of course, make a much more technical construction and alter the dimensions to suit your requirements, but the general idea should be fairly obvious and the example I have made can be freestanding or hanging.

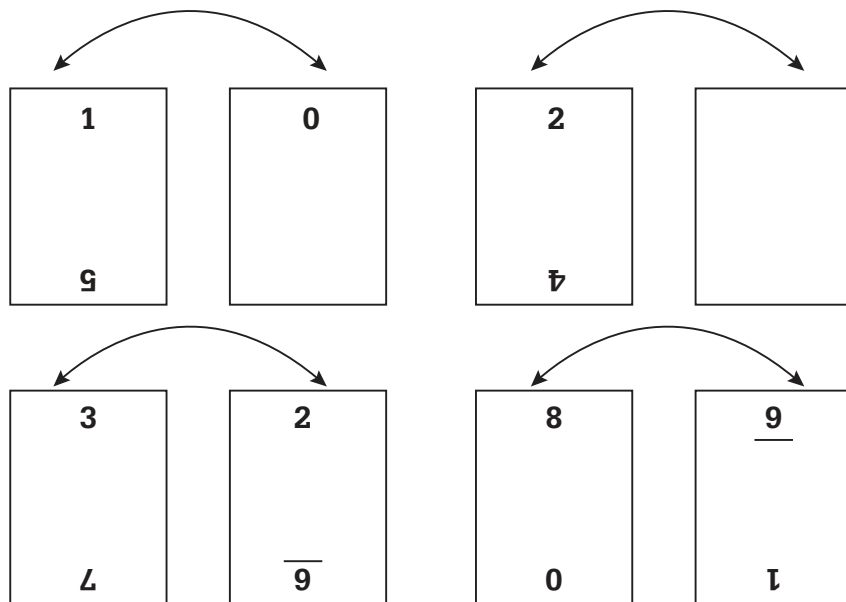
CARVER'S NOTE: Draw out the days and months on tracing paper and copy on to the plaques using graphite paper. Remember to work from a centreline.



The holding box and plaques



The holding box and plaques assembled



The sequence for the numbers. The diagram shows both sides of each plaque

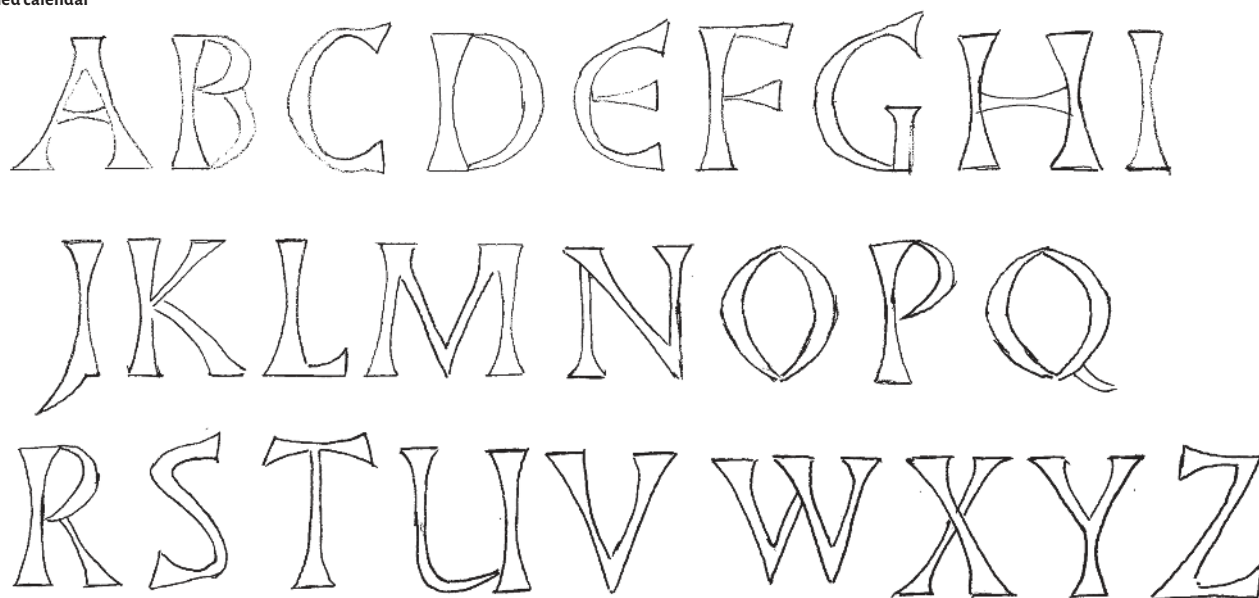


The finished calendar

The Versal font

The next font I want to look at is called Versal. It is a variation of the standard Roman font in which the straight-sided letters become concave, which makes it very decorative and, in my opinion, much easier to carve. There is a further advantage in that the 'O' and 'Q', which seem to cause problems in the standard font, are formed by joining two crescent-shaped chips. You can play around with the serifs of this font and make them quite a bit over-sized, which gives a pleasing result.

The letters in this font fall into natural categories, the ones with straight and curved elements such as 'B', 'D', 'C', 'P', 'R' and 'U', the straight line letters, and those with all curves, 'O', 'Q' and 'S'. The 'D', for example, can be carved as the upright section with the curved section being treated as a simple two-cut crescent chip barley touching the upright, or it can be run on to the upright and form a more professional-looking letter.



The Versal font, hand drawn



The development of a selection of letters from the Versal font



Variation of the Versal letters



A carved example of the six variations. They do not look a lot different when carved but are much easier to achieve

You should have no difficulty carving these letters as they are based on relatively simple cuts, so I have just carved the development of eight letters to show how they are formed.

However, a problem that does arise in carving this font is getting crumbling or breakout where straight sections meet on the letters 'A', 'M', 'N', 'V', 'W' and 'Y'. One of my students was having a problem with this in a project he was working on, so I devised a variation for these letters which has worked very well and may help you if you are struggling with this issue. This works by avoiding the acutely

angled connection between the limbs of the letters but rather running one into another at a more obtuse angle, making it easier to carve but not drastically altering the appearance of the letter.

CARVER'S NOTE: It can sometimes be difficult to copy very small letters, so draw out the required words at a much larger scale, then reduce them in a photocopier.

Looking to the East



The Oriental font in upper and lower case, hand drawn

The next font is a more oriental style, which I find very useful for objects of a Japanese nature and for inscriptions on martial arts trophies. It consists of very simple three-cut chips and can be adapted and varied according to needs.

Unlike more formal fonts, which need to be copied accurately in order not to lose the form, this font can be modified without losing the integrity of the letters, which generally makes it much easier and quicker to carve.



The Oriental font carved as a sample board



Martial arts presentation plaque in the Oriental font



The Cherry Blossom Haiku. In this piece I have used the Oriental font to give the phonetic representation of the Japanese and the Ambrosia font for the translation. Note that the use of the Ambrosia font in a vertical format works well

AN EXPLANATORY NOTE:

The haiku is a form of Japanese poetry in three lines, made up of five, seven and five syllables. The lines do not necessarily rhyme as we might expect, but it is more to do with the meaning. The English translation, however, does not conform to this format.



Two views of a box carved with a haiku written by Kito (1740–1788)

I made the Haiku Box to hold the tools and oils, powders etc. used in the cleaning of antique Japanese swords. I realise that the words of the haiku are a little confusing when translated, but their significance is not important here – I am showing it to illustrate the use of the font and the chip-carved Japanese motifs.

It is worth noting the use of the wood with a natural knot and the simple construction method I have employed in

making the box. It consists of simple mortises on the front and back panels with extended tenons on the sides, all held together with simple pegs. The sides and lid of the box are made of lime. The construction of this box can be achieved with a scrollsaw or a hand held fret saw. You could use the idea for any carving design of your own and, of course, the box could contain anything you wish.

Carving handwriting

During my working life as a jeweller and silversmith I was often asked to engrave an inscription on various silver objects. They would usually be of a fairly formal format, but there was a style that became popular as it really personalised the sentiment behind the words. The donor would write the words in their own handwriting and we would copy this in miniature. The tools we used were not that different from the chisels and gouges that carvers use for wood; just a lot smaller, called scorpers or gravers. I thought this idea would be useful to personalise wooden items, so I have just written some words on a piece of lime and then simply chip carved the lines.



Some handwriting directly on the wood



The handwriting chip carved and wax filled



A button box made by one of my students, his first attempt at lettering this way. The 'buttons' are slices of a branch, drilled and sewn on to the lid

A NOTE ABOUT THE BOX:

The box was simply made with four cross-halving joints and two screws for a hinge. It was constructed just using a fretsaw and could be the basis for many project ideas.

Foreign alphabets



The Peace Plate: This was carved for the Bishop of St Asaph. The central dove of peace is surrounded by the words 'peace', 'pax' (Latin), in Roman font, 'heddych' (Welsh) in Celtic font and 'shalom' (Hebrew) in the Hebrew script. The four crosses are set with tiger eye stones



The Tanto Box: This box was made to display and store an antique Japanese knife called a tanto. The kanji, or Japanese symbols, represent the five elements in Japanese martial studies: chi (earth), sui (water), ka (fire), fu (wind) and ku (void)

Found treasures

Readers who have contacted me about my articles have referred to the fact that they like the photographs I take when out and about as a source of ideas. You could expand on this by looking for inexpensive carved items at car boots and bric-a-brac shops. Here are a few examples.

Sometimes you may wish to carve foreign alphabets on a special project. Having covered various fonts in detail in previous articles you should by now be able to overcome the problems involved in unusual fonts, the tools required, and the difficulties incurred. The photographs show examples of two foreign fonts.

I hope these pieces encourage you to keep a look-out for interesting carvings. I find them very inspirational, my students get lots of ideas from them and, of course, they make an attractive collection – or so I am trying to convince my wife.

And so, with apologies to the Japanese poets of old, here is my usual mantra in five, seven and five syllables:

'Carve comfortably,
Keep sharp and never tired.
Only practice brings perfection.'



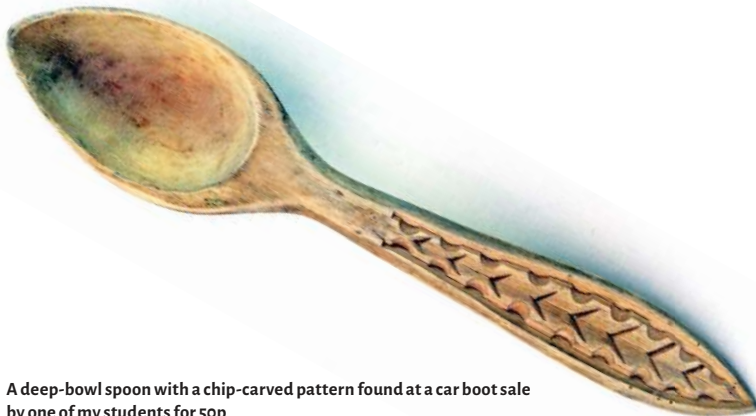
A relief carving found at a car boot sale for £4



A low-relief and chip-cut plate, a little the worse for wear but only 50p



A mochi press found at a Japanese street market in Tokyo for the equivalent of about £2 (mochi is a Japanese rice cake and the press is similar to a butter pat)



A deep-bowl spoon with a chip-carved pattern found at a car boot sale by one of my students for 50p



A moulding plane with chip-carved decoration found in a bric-a-brac shop in Zurich, for which I paid the princely sum of £4

NEXT MONTH In the next article I will be looking at decorative plaques

From the community

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

The Eagle has landed

Carving ideas and projects sometimes come from the most unlikely or surprising sources. A few years back I was given a piece of heavy, dark-brown 'wood' about 2in x 2in x 9in with the words: 'See what you can do with that.' This lump haunted me for a long while – what to do with it? Eventually I picked it up, again, but this time I cleaned one of the surfaces to take a peek at what I had got. Was I surprised? It turned out to be black soapstone (compressed talc). Dense but soft to work.

Carving projects often require a bit of adjustment to a design to make them better fit the material. I came round to a seemingly simple idea of carving three equally sized intersecting balls to show off this odd (to me) material. A brief excursion into trying to carve three balls via gouges showed me that wasn't going to be the way to go. Round things need lathes. I had not used my old lathe for many a long year but what about giving it a go? Having glued two wood blocks at the ends I tried it on my lathe. Holding my breath and standing well clear I turned it on at the lowest speed I had. It didn't come flying off the mountings. Wearing full respiratory and face protection, alongside scrapers, abrasive and good dust extractor, my trio of balls emerged. The shape proved very pleasing to the eye but when I polished it with a small amount of wax, wow what a transformation. It gained an almost mirror-like surface. It reminded me of something – now what was it?

The memory came back of Sunday 20 July 1969 when at 20:17.40 (Universal Time

Coordinated, GMT to you and me) Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin landed on the moon. With just 25 seconds of fuel left they landed and Armstrong said: 'Houston, Tranquility base here. The Eagle has landed.'

My wife and I watched the rather grainy black-and-white low definition (405 lines) live TV pictures of the first walk on the moon's surface some six hours later. It was all stark grey, white and black, not very well defined and the lander looked like a long-legged insect sitting on a powdery surface. It was a momentous time and was watched by many billions of people around the world.

My carving is a memento of that occasion. The shiny three interlocking balls became the lander and the subsequent (white) containing circle the moon with the larger round base signifying the earth. The lander (balls) is sunk down very slightly into the base as if into a dusty but firm surface. There were real concerns at the time that the lander might sink and topple into the unknown soft surface. In fact, the lander's foot pads just settled a little. The black balls and white contrasting surround/base are representative of what we looked at – no colour whatsoever. Full-colour 35mm images followed when they got back to earth with the film.

Quite an event and an interesting carving/sculpture project. The soapstone was given to me and the mounting is made of MDF that has been sealed, painted, sanded, painted, sanded etc. The base is about 230mm in diameter and the three balls are about 130mm long.



I had not previously heard of anyone turning stone on a horizontal lathe and none of my friends had either. A quick look on the internet, however, showed that some turners, particularly in the US, have more than had a go and with very impressive results.

My take on this tale is: don't leave that lovely prize piece of timber (material) hanging around in your workshop for too long. It deserves to be worked into something beautiful that really shows it (and possibly you as well) off to its best effect.

Ken Veal, British Woodcarvers Association

Sharing and learning together

Dear Mark,
What a fascinating and thought-provoking editorial. As you say, there are people who choose to carve in isolation, but surely they miss out compared with those in a club. I am convinced that one's ability and skill advances much faster when there is an interaction between carvers who share their expertise. A particular point is tool sharpening, a problem for many. While there are lots of excellent guides, there is nothing more effective than for another carver to say 'try this tool' and to hear that hissing sound that emanates when a really sharp tool cuts wood, and then hear the old adage 'but I thought my tools were sharp', and 'can you tell me how you do it?'. But of course, most members of a club also carve at home.

Another point you make is that often there are no local clubs, and some people complain about how difficult it is to set one up. Indeed, I have been told so many times. But my experience is just the opposite, for I have been through the procedure on two occasions. If you look at it in the simplest of ways there are just two

requirements – a group of like-minded woodcarvers and a suitable, affordable, local venue. On my second time there were nearly 20 of us, ranging from beginners to those who had carved for many years. We look on ourselves as a group of 'woodcarving friends' who meet to carve and socialise each week. We have intentionally followed the 'group of friends' approach instead of a club, which is more formalised and often involves establishing a constitution, leader and committee. That is fine for some. Our choice is for a totally informal approach, the only rule being to respect each other. We have no membership fees and make a charge each week that is just enough to cover the cost of hiring the hall, and for tea and biscuits. We have no equipment as each member provides their own. The atmosphere and the expressions on people's faces when they leave tells us that it has all been worthwhile.

And of course there is *Woodcarving* magazine to inspire us. But I think a combination of all three is best. And yes, we do have fun.

Peter Downham, Billingham Woodcarvers

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

Clubs

In a previous issue Mark, the editor, raised questions that have also been occupying the the British Woodcarving Association (BWA). That is, the membership and establishment of clubs throughout the country. The social advantages, the spreading of knowledge and the spirit of carving (that's why three BWA members wrote an article for the May/June issue) and the development of skills with support have all been mentioned. There are many other positives, some perhaps less obvious, as a recent survey of my local club, Shropshire BWA, revealed.

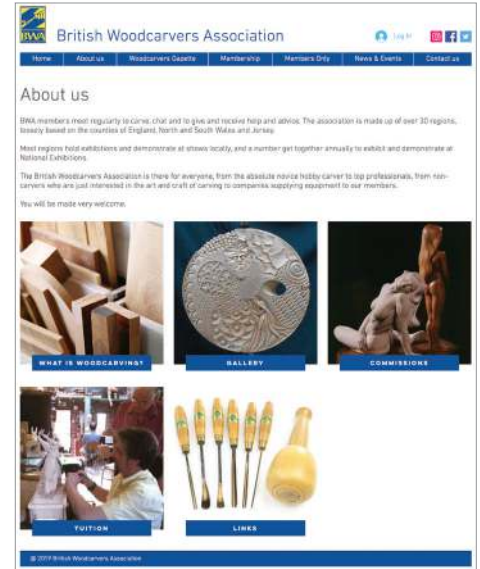
How about these?

I went to a girls' school so never got the chance to use the tools I watched my father use: a distraction from work; therapy after bereavement. It's better than watching television; because my wife bought me the tools and so they needed to be used. The only practical hobby that worked for me; great ginger beer/bacon sandwiches; gave me an opportunity to show off my work;

joining in group projects within the club and in the community; confidence in my work and to try different styles of carving; teaching others including youngsters and getting such positive feedback; etc.

Agreed, there are not clubs everywhere but the BWA does have a network of 32 regional groups meeting regularly. There are also a few satellite clubs meeting at alternative venues, within these largely county-based areas, thereby catering for more than 1000 members. That is, therefore, pretty extensive though I appreciate the meeting timing could be inconvenient or the venue may not be near enough for some people. All of these groups would welcome new members. Even if none of the venues are accessible it may well be that there are some members in the area of those looking for a club and may be amenable to meeting up or helping with lifts. We also offer an online community.

For anyone looking to set up a club we have a council willing to advise with sample constitutions, structuring a group, suitable



contacts, information re insurance etc. A list of contacts and more is available on the new website : www.britishwoodcarvers.com

Dave Tarplin Regional Liaison BWA

Starting a group

Mark

Your editorial about starting a group has prompted me to write to you again (26 June 2018) and update you. I did exactly what you were urging people to do. I walked in to the local U3A open day and asked the chairman if he would like me to start a woodcarving group. There were three people at the first meeting – one did not think he had the time, the other two are still with us. We now have 30 members, twelve of them women. Our initial premises secured us some sponsorship from the local parish council, which was a

big help. We sadly outgrew those premises and had to move.

On another issue, my last letter was read by another U3A woodcarving group which has been in touch and we are going to have exchange visits shortly. We are not alone, in fact, that was the first. One of latest members, a lady, hails from Hawaii. We are about to hold our 300th meeting.

*Regards, Bob Hanlon
Stafford U3A Woodcarving group*

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.

Jack-in-the-green-1 posted: Hello folks. My latest carving continues the Arthurian theme, this time depicting Guinevere the wife/queen of the legendary King Arthur. It is carved from an incredibly hard piece of cherry and measures approximately 4 x 4 x 7in. The slight gloss on the finish is because I have just buffed the wax (this will naturally mellow overtime).

*Kind regards
David*

Ian Thorne responded: Great facial likeness and detail when the size of the piece is considered, also the roses on the headpiece.

Ian



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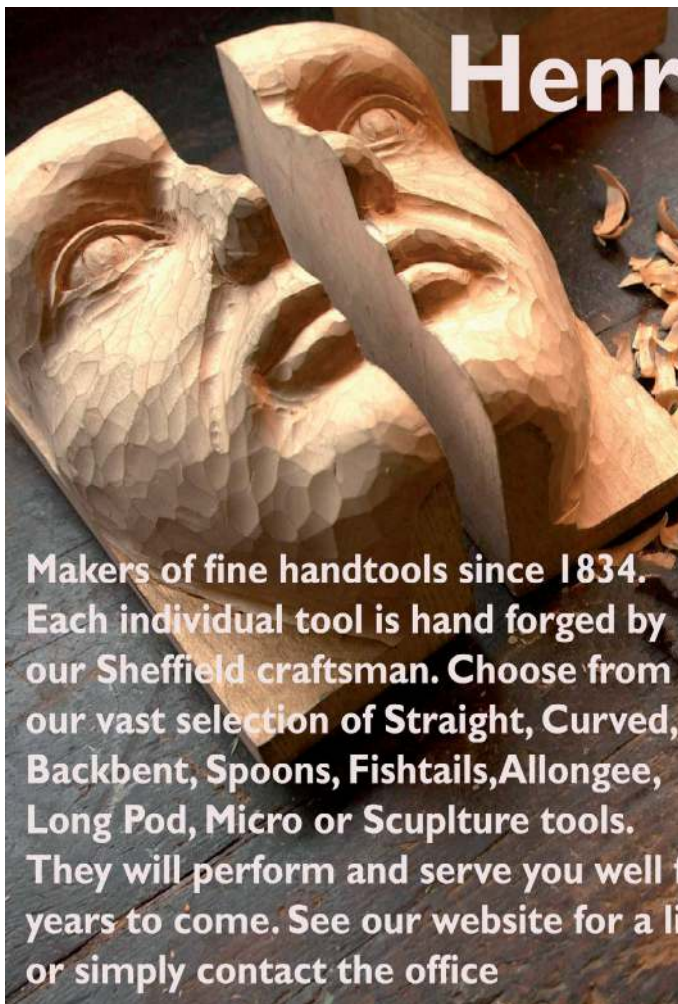
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Turn a seedpod complete with pearl ‘seeds’

Taking inspiration from nature, Jack de Vos uses a variety of techniques to create this Trinitas seedpod



The Trinitas seedpod is the most recent addition to my seedpod series, which I have been adding to gradually over the years.

I have been intrigued and preoccupied with seedpods for many years – the first one saw the light of day back in 2001.

My Trinitas seedpod is a ‘flow-on’ from a previous pod, the Andromeda; the shape of the flower of that name inspired the seedpod.

Having previously made a living off the land, I developed a strong affinity with

nature. Inspiration is all around us: while at first you look for it, eventually you are so receptive to it that it will jump out and hit you squarely between the eyes.

Then it is a matter of having a system to retain the received information. Though most of us rely on our mental filing system, a note/sketch book is a safer way.

A few of my pods are semi-copies of real pods, however, most of them are a far cry from the original inspiration and have taken on a life of their own.

Most of my design work is a progression

of ideas from nature, previous ideas from that source, and – last but not least – my mindset at that particular time.

The wood I chose for the pod is our local sheoak (*Allocasuarina fraseriana*). This is quite a dense wood with a tight grain, it takes detail very well and is ideal for a small piece, such as a seedpod.

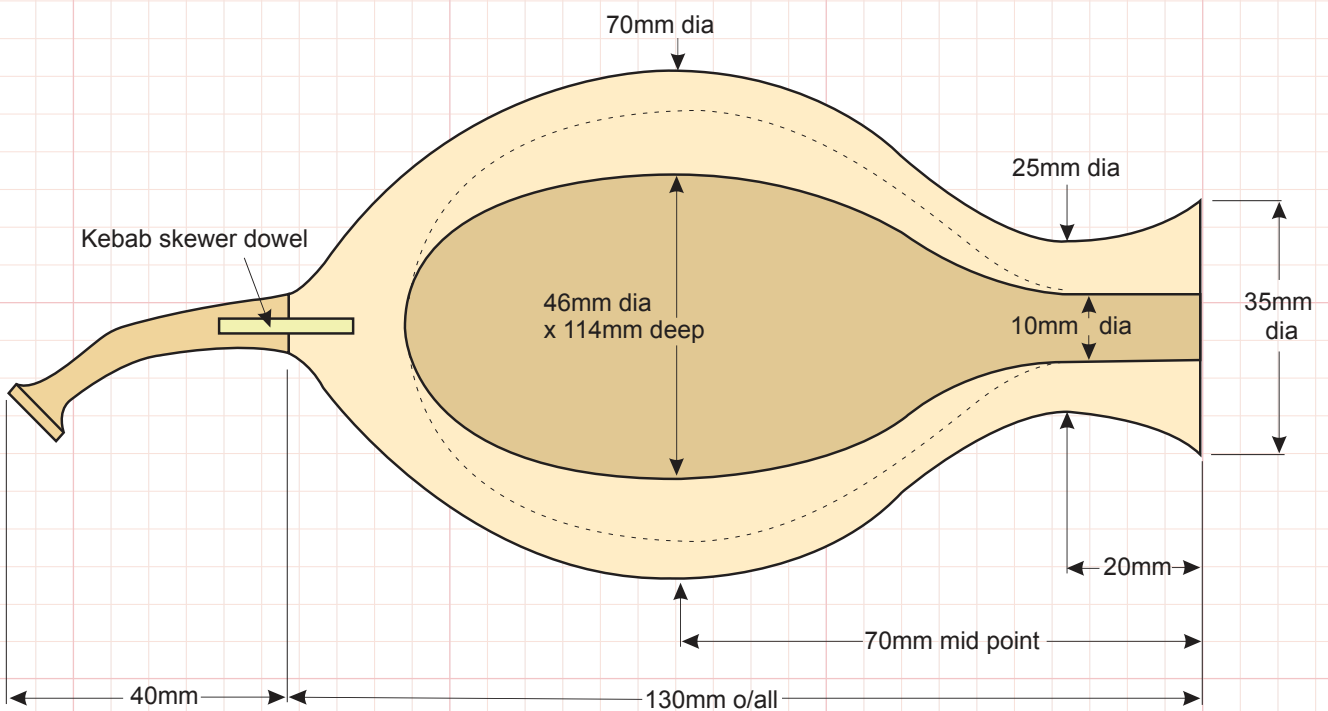
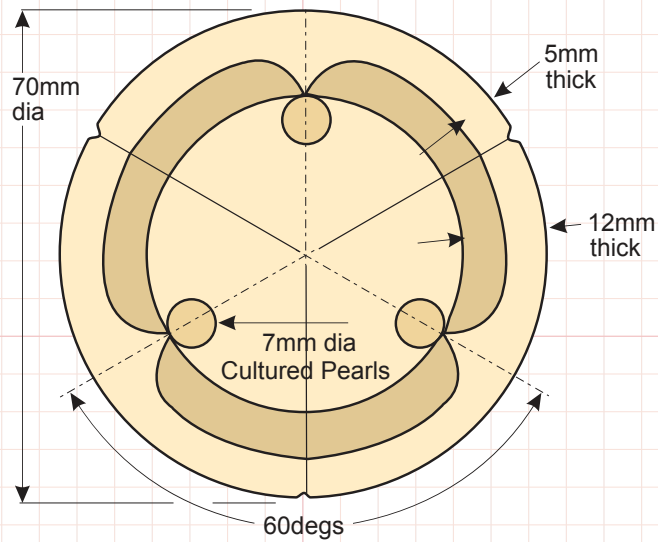
Wanting to insert cultured pearls as ‘seeds’ required some thinking about in order to get all the steps in proper sequence. Many sketches helped to visualise the end result.

Things you will need**Tools:**

- Personal and respiratory protective equipment (PPE & RPE)
- Spindle roughing gouge
- Spindle gouge
- Hollowing tool
- Chuck
- Drive spur & revolving tailstock centre
- Rotary carving unit
- Pyramid-shape burr
- Cylinder burr
- Diamond disc
- Pair of compasses
- Compound drop saw (or bandsaw)
- Callipers
- Duct tape

Materials:

- Sheoak (*Allocasuarina fraseriana*)
- Acrylic paint
- Spirit stain
- Spray-on furniture lacquer
- Cultured pearls or imitation

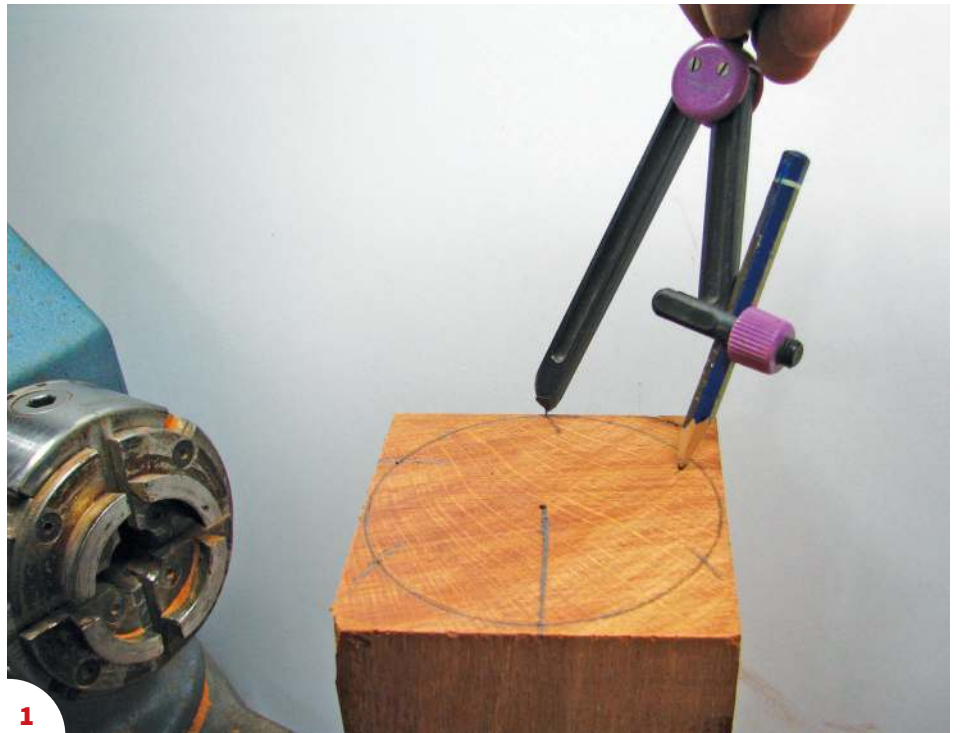


1 Select your wood to suit the finished size you have in mind. I used a piece 130mm x 70mm diameter. Because this piece consists of three sections, it needs to be marked out and cut. Use a pair of compasses to draw out the required diameter and draw a line to the centre point, squaring off the baseline. Keeping the compass on the same radius, bisect the circumference starting at the previously drawn line. You will find having gone round that you will arrive back exactly on the point where you started. Meanwhile, you have divided the piece into six equal portions from where it is easy to mark out the piece into three equal sections.

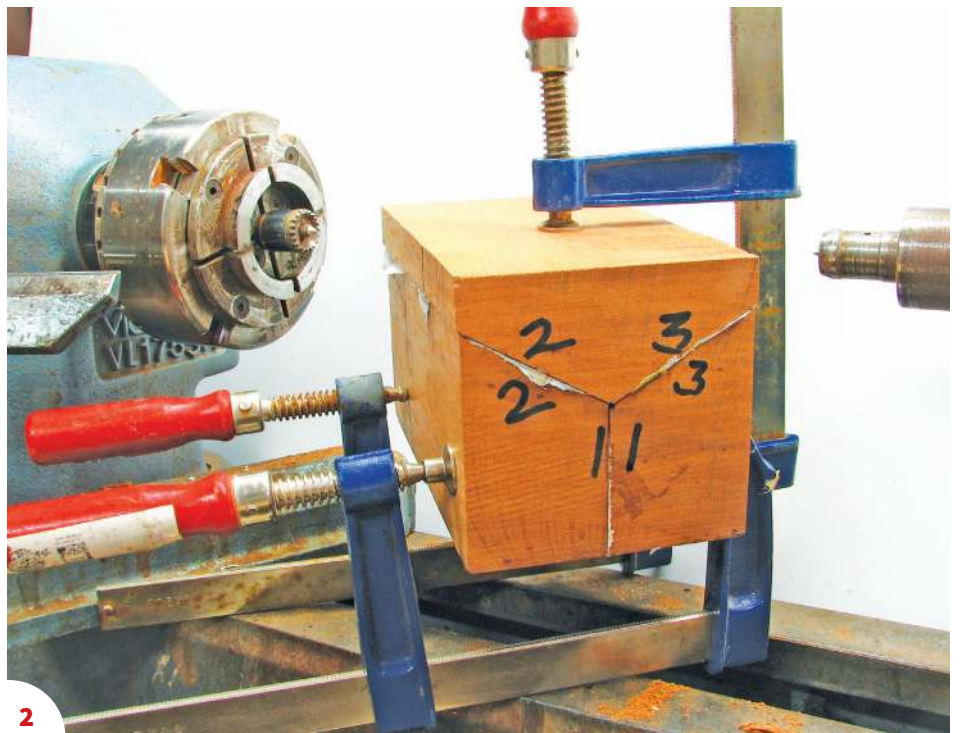
2 To cut the blank into three use a compound drop saw. However, 'many roads lead to Rome', so if you are careful, a table or bandsaw will also do the job. A sanding disc on your lathe will clean up the cuts to give a perfect fit. Some wood glue on all the surfaces, a sheet of newspaper in between, three clamps to keep it all together, and hey presto. We're nearly ready for some turning. Before you put chisel to wood I suggest you make a full-scale drawing of the item. You are then able to set your callipers to whatever section you are turning and transfer the exact measurements, and consequently the exact drawn shape. Incidentally, this is a good procedure for any piece you may wish to make. A full-scale drawing (even on a bit of cardboard) will allow you to get the most out of your costly blank.

3 A paper glue joint needs to be treated with some respect, so be sure to take care during this step. The idea is to split the blank in three when we want to, but not before. Therefore, it is important to use a ring drive as well as a live ring centre when turning between centres – these hold the pieces together instead of wedging them apart and having them bounce off the wall. With the help of your full-scale plan, you are now ready to turn your shape. Turn a spigot on the base so you can hold the piece in your scroll chuck, and now you are ready for hollowing.

4 Not having any support at the opening end now means you will need to do something to stop the piece splitting apart like a ripe banana. A great tool here is duct tape, which helps ensure that the piece will not split during this process. Duct tape is strong yet has a certain amount of stretch – perfect for this task. Wrap the tape tightly around the neck. Next, drill a 10mm hole to the required hollowing depth. After this it is just a matter of peeling the wood off to the correct thickness – as per the plan you have previously drawn out. The hollowing tool used here was one of my own design and manufacture, with a high-speed steel (HSS) hook cutter on the business end, but a scraping tip will work as well.



1



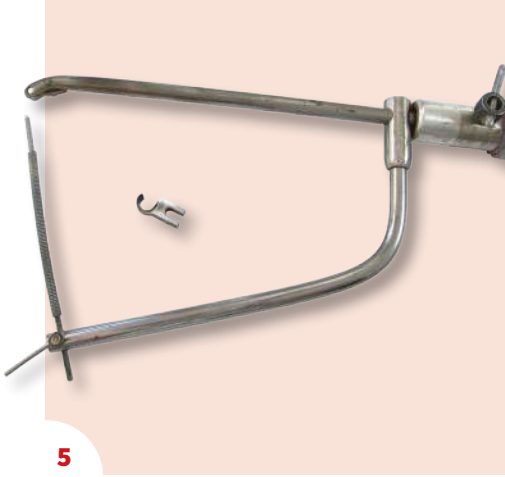
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5



6

5 Here is the homemade hollowing tool shown more clearly. The tool is made out of bright steel rod, which is generally used for shafts – it is a higher tensile than the black steel. The outrigger is not welded, but a bigger diameter section is drilled to the exact same diameter as the shaft steel and pinned and clinched together. The adjustable spring can be set to the required thickness, with the spring trailing on the outside until the desired thickness is attained, when it will just run clear of the piece (see previous step). The cutter is made out of HSS using the drill press and the grinding wheel.



7



8

6 Having satisfactorily hollowed the piece you are now ready to mark out the bits, which need to be cut away to create the points. You can mark this out later if you wish, but I find now is the more convenient time. A line on the piece while the lathe is spinning gives you the depth of your incision. The point is exactly halfway between the glue joints – all you need is a pencil.

7 Take a wood chisel and place exactly on the paper joint. A few gentle taps with a mallet and you will be relieved to find you have your three equal sections.

8 Here are three pieces at various stages. Using a coarse sanding disc is an easy, controlled way to do your rough shaping.



9

9 To further refine the outside shape you now need to focus on rounding the corners. First, mark out how far the rounding is to go, then proceed with whatever tool you have best-suited to the task.

10 Having roughed out your shape the three sections now need to be joined together for the final outside shaping of the pod. Use small nails as 'dowels' to keep each section in its correct position. First, drill two holes on one side and insert nails and cut so only the point protrudes (these are your 'marker nails'). Now, line up the two sections in their correct position and press them together forcefully. The imprints will now give you the exact position for the matching holes on the opposite section. Drill these, insert dowels and now you have one joint done. Use the same procedure for the other two joints. No glue yet, at this stage. Holding the three sections together, use a file, rasp, or coarse sandpaper to tidy up and align the joined sections.



10

11 The next step is to mark and carve out the interior, leaving a central ridge to attach the pearls to.

12 It is now time to put the fine rim into place, which is easier than may first be thought. What you require is a pyramid-shape burr. When fitting the burr, set the distance between it and the chuck to the thickness of the thin rim, which is about 1-1.5mm. You are now able to use this as a marking gauge. To prevent the chuck from damaging the work, round off the chuck corner by holding the spinning chuck against a spinning grinding wheel. Now, move your marking gauge gently around the perimeter and you will notice that you get a nice, even score mark – that is if you keep the Dremel square off the work. Once you feel comfortable with the technique, switch on the unit and gently, with even strokes, carve away 1-1.5mm. The cutter shaft can be used as a depth gauge – the deeper you want to go, the bigger the cutter needs to be. All this effort leaves the rim section standing nicely proud of the rest of the pod.

13 Do the same on the other side where the sections do not touch each other – the 'open' part of the pod. If you find your 'fine rim' doesn't look so fine but is rather angular, don't worry, this can soon be rectified with some simple files, rifflers or abrasive paper.

14 Now, mark the veins on the outside of your pod. These veins are relief carved so they protrude about 1mm.

15 The relief carving is made easier by doctoring a cylinder type burr. With a diamond disc cut a 1 x 1mm groove in the cutter. This cutter now leaves a nice, neat vein – of course the neatness depends on how controlled the cut is.

16 Here you can see the result of using the cutter. Ensure you are as controlled as possible when using this to create a neat vein.

17 It is now time to dimple the interior of the pod. Care must be taken so you do not damage the fine rim, but do dimple right up to it. You will notice here that I am holding two sections together while dimpling randomly over the joint – this will help to disguise it.

18 Half-drilled sweet water cultured pearls can be purchased from a jewellery supply shop. I suggest you do a web search and compare prices as they vary greatly. You need short pieces of thin wire or small nails that match the diameter of the drilled hole. These are then positioned in place with cyanoacrylate glue. Prepare the position of each pearl by grinding a small dish for them to sit in, and in the centre of that drill a hole for each pin.





19



20



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22



23



24

TOP TIPS

1 While I do have a variety of rifflers to tidy up carved beads and ridges, my favourite tool is a 5mm square file, purchased at my local hardware store. To make it suit my needs, I ground one of the four sides completely smooth. By running the smooth side down you are able to tidy up the side of a bead without damaging the surrounding area. Conversely, by turning it cutting edge down you can flatten the surrounding area. This is also good for cleaning the internal corner without marking the bead.

2 A bland piece of wood can, with the right design, be made into a pretty piece of turning. Conversely a pretty piece of wood can be turned into 'a nothing' with bad design.

3 Better a small, well-thought out piece of turning than a large, badly-designed piece which is only good as a doorstop.

19 There is still some work to be done on the outside, and that is the texturing. Use the smallest possible burr to texture between the veins. Practise on a piece of scrap until you have a pattern you are happy with.

20 Now, apply several coats of your chosen colour for the inside of your pod – I generally use acrylic. When dry, the pearls can be attached; a drop of cyanoacrylate glue works very well to hold them in place.

21 The project is finally starting to look like a pod and it is now glue-up time. Use normal wood glue sparingly as you don't want it oozing and dribbling inside the painted pod. Use a small brush to clean up any glue that may show on the inside (watch out for those pearls). Mix up some paint with a little acrylic modelling paste so as to get a slightly thicker paint, and very carefully paint over the interior joints (as before, be mindful of the pearls). While things are drying, carve the stalk. This is done to the pod using a short piece of bamboo kebab skewer.

22 It is now time for the final touches to be made. First of all staining – I generally use spirit stains. Select your stain colour, taking into consideration the initial wood colour and the final colour you want to arrive at (teak brown suited my situation). Because we have a mixture of side as well as end grain, any staining is going to be uneven so for that reason I like to give a sealer coat first. This does make the stain dry slower, but also more evenly. After the seal coat, stain all unpainted parts of your pod, leave it to dry, then very lightly sand with about 320-400 grit. This will really highlight your texturing as only the high points are sanded back. To further emphasise the texturing, scrape or sand the top of the veins completely clean.

23 You are now almost finished. I generally use a thin coat of spray-on furniture lacquer for the finish coat as a wipe-on finish tends to fill up the texture crevasses. You will notice that if adequate care is taken, the stalk's joint is barely noticeable. A very simple base is easy to make, this one is made of 10mm MDF and was sprayed a matt black.

24 Well, there we have it. Most of us will know that it's possible to handle any seemingly 'impossible' and daunting task, providing it is broken up into manageable, digestible bites. I hope this stimulates you to create bigger and better things. ▶

WEBSITES FOR BUYING FRESHWATER CULTURED PEARLS

I typed in 'half drilled freshwater cultured pearls' on a search engine, but I would suggest you do your own search, depending on which country you live in

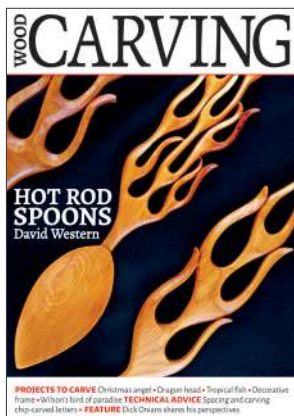
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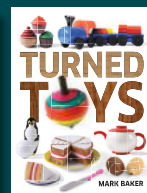
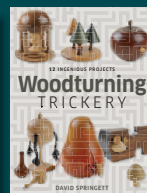
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The House of Scientists

We take a closer look at this magnificent oak staircase in Lviv, Ukraine



The House of Scientists, also known as Casino Gerhard, is a former aristocratic casino in central Lviv, western Ukraine. It was built in 1897–98 by the Austrian architects, Hermann Helmer and Ferdinand Fellner. They were inspired by European palatial architecture and designed the casino in a grand, neo-Baroque style with a striking entrance dominated by

two massive wooden doors. The doors are flanked by two statues of Atlas, which are holding up the second-floor balcony.

The interiors are equally striking, with one of the main features being the carved oak staircase in the lobby. This staircase, with its intricately carved railings, is said to have been commissioned as a wedding gift for one of the casino's club members.

The staircase is lit from above by natural light coming through a circular glass roof. The interiors have remained largely unchanged over the past 100 years and are richly decorated with mouldings, silk wallpapers and hanging chandeliers.

The building now belongs to Lviv's Regional Union of Education & Science and still regularly hosts formal dances as well as conferences and seminars.

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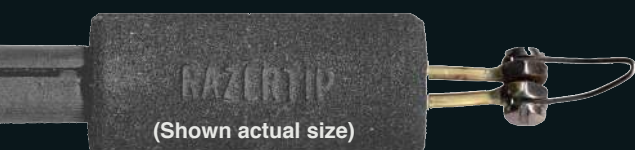
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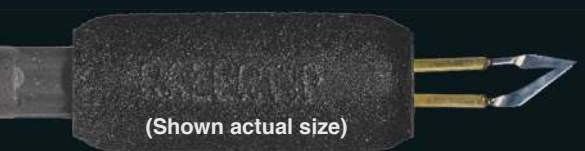


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