

WOOD CARVING

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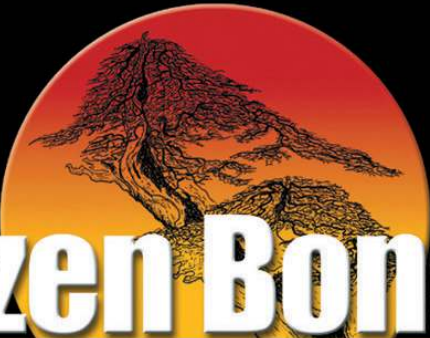
**Steve Bisco's step-by-step guide
to carving a gilded frame**



PROJECTS TO CARVE Halloween Jack-o'-Lantern • Carve a turtle • Decorative display mask • Ringed plover **TECHNICAL ADVICE** Sharpening small knives • Celtic knot pendant • Gilding a claw foot • Carving from a woman's perspective

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Work smart



PHOTOGRAPH BY ANTHONY BAILEY/MC PUBLICATIONS



I often encounter carvers who know what they want to carve but don't quite get round to it. Having written that comment, I don't mean that people cite running out of time, which we all know is the main reason

people don't get round to doing something, but instead, the original comment pertains to people saying they are not sure how to start or do some aspect of what they wish to make.

We all learn by mistakes and even seasoned carvers are not always satisfied or even pleased with what they have made. We all need to be analytical and critical, without getting caught up in the 'I can't do anything right' cycle.

Risk and reward

Many people will know what they want to make, have done a bit of research and might just go for it carving-wise with the knowledge they have. The risk is that some or all parts of the project chosen may be beyond the skills a person currently has. That said, with tentative adjustment of existing skills, they might be able to muddle through. The sense of achievement in this route is great, but so can be the frustration of spending all that time on something and not liking the end result.

We all learn by mistakes and even seasoned carvers are not always satisfied or even pleased with what they have made. We all need to be analytical and critical, without getting caught up in the 'I can't do anything right' cycle.

There is a risk in everything we do and as we learn more and tackle ever more complex things, we encounter different risks from the ones previously met and we build on skills.

Experiential learning

When I was learning skills back when I left school I learned by doing and making mistakes. OK, the foreman and work colleagues would show me how to do something, then allow me to tackle the same thing under supervision before doing so on my own. I was allowed to make some mistakes as I learned from there, but not the same mistakes over and over again. It was a building block-style learning process. You see, do and then practise it over and over again, introducing new elements and aspects that allow you to adapt the skills learned as you tackle new things.

Planning for success

I was always taught the following points to remember.

- 1** Know exactly what you need to do or make. This means you need to do some research and not just have a cursory glance at the reference material. Really understand it. If required, make sketches.
- 2** If you still are unsure about any aspect, ask someone who you trust who does know what is required and can offer good-quality guidance.
- 3** Never be afraid to ask for help. Nothing is simple if you have no idea what is wrong, what problems you are likely to encounter or how to go about something you have not tackled before.
- 4** Once ready to start, ask if you have the right tools for the right job or if something

that you already have can be used safely.

5 Once you have started and then get stuck on a technique or aspect of what you need to do etc., check your reference material and/or ask a friend for advice and practise what needs to be done on waste material before you commit to undertaking the necessary process on your live work.

6 Stop frequently and check your progress. It is often easier to alter things if you stop regularly and check, but not so easy if you get further into the project without dealing with a mistake that should have been dealt with earlier.

7 Learn from a process but do not be phased by it. If something goes wrong, you have learned how not to do something. This is a valuable lesson too.

8 Never give up, but do take a break if you get frustrated or tired and come back to it when you are refreshed. It is surprising what a difference a clear and refreshed mind does for creativity and thinking.

9 Once your project is carved, always test the finish you intend to use on waste wood to check it is what you want before committing to applying it to your carved work.

10 Finally, no matter what you are doing, try to have fun.

Let me know your top tips for tackling something new and let me know what you have been making.

Have fun, Mark

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



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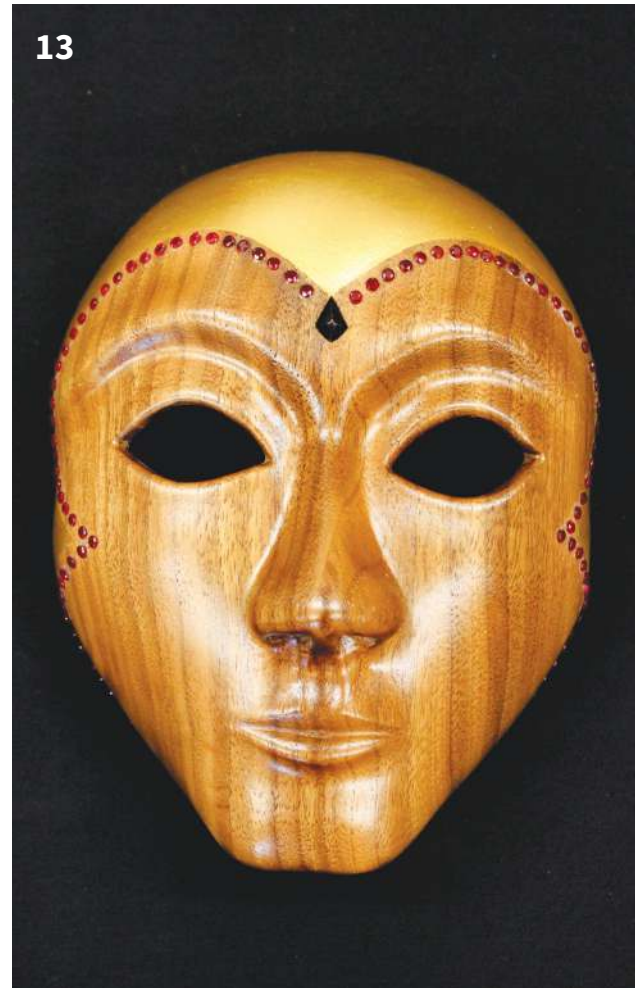
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Turtle on coral with cleaner fish

Chris Grace is inspired by an image of a turtle with cleaner fish



As a member of the Sussex Woodcraft Society in Burgess Hill I am often inspired by my fellow members and like to participate in their competitions. One of the competitions was to make something from a supplied block of cedar of Lebanon, about 175mm x 175mm x 90mm. I wanted to maximise use of the lovely wood, and preferably make something a little bigger than the original block. Inspiration struck when I saw an image of a turtle being followed by some cleaner fish. Unfortunately I didn't get time to finish it for the competition, and the wood proved unable to hold the fine detail required for the fish, so I changed to holly for the fish, and delved deep into my workshop looking for a suitable plinth. Nothing jumped out at me initially, but then I saw a raggedy piece of burr that had been presented to me by a friend – at the time I had no idea what I would ever do with it, but now was its day. It had suddenly transformed itself

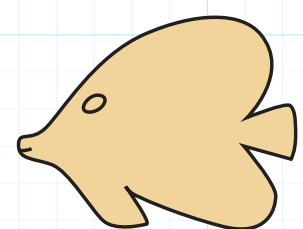
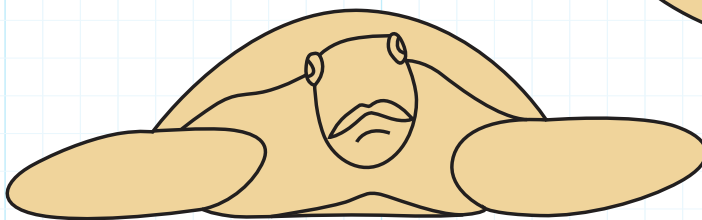
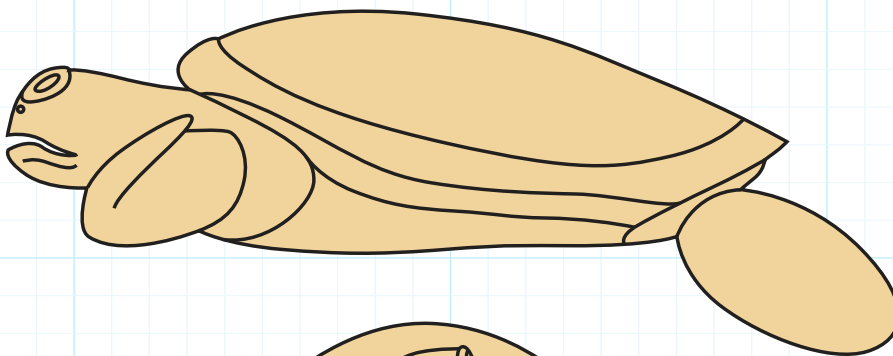
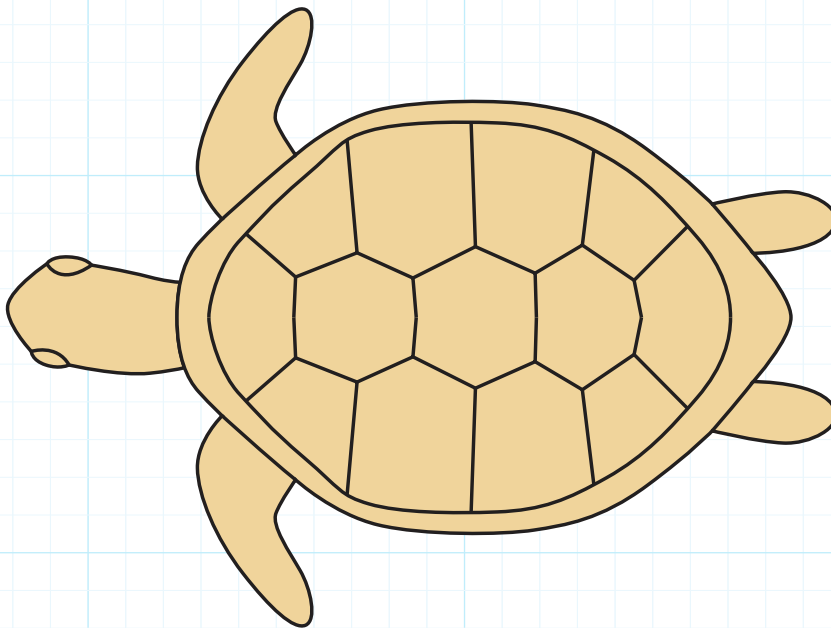
into the ideal piece of coral, enabling me to display Timmy perfectly with his friends. My approach was to use the body offcuts for the flippers and head, which required careful planning of the initial cuts, and to aim for something in between stylised and a fully detailed model. This meant I needed to choose what detail I incorporated so that it would clearly give the feeling of a turtle swimming. Angling the head and flippers slightly gave me a good start and I experimented from there with textures, primarily on the remaining scraps, though you can't always get a good idea of how it will turn out until you try a technique on your carving. I had what I thought would be a good idea to texture the area between his head/flippers and body but I wasn't happy with the result and had to cut it away before trying something else. Don't settle for second best – if you're not happy with something, change it until you are so you can be proud of your work.

Things you will need**Tools:**

- Personal and respiratory protective equipment (PPE & RPE)
- Bandsaw
- Selection of measuring tools
- Various carving gouges & knives
- Rotary carving unit
- Selection of structured carbide/rotary burrs
- Power sander
- Cut/slash-resistant glove

Materials:

- Block of cedar of Lebanon (*Cedrus libani*) 175 x 175 x 90mm
- Offcuts of holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)
- 6mm dowels
- PVA adhesives
- Abrasives P80-P800
- Sanding sealer
- Yellow spirit stain
- Black nail varnish
- Acrylic lacquer
- Microcrystalline wax



1 If you intend to make the biggest turtle from a single block, as I did, you will need to plan your cuts carefully to ensure your waste provides suitable-sized offcuts for flippers and a head. Draw the first view of the turtle body on your block of wood for cutting out on your bandsaw. My block was uneven, so I glued it to some flat scrap with a wedge under one corner to ensure stability. I used wide-notched push sticks to ensure even pressure to avoid tilting while bandsawing. I cut away the top waste only at this stage. There was little waste to remove from the bottom, which on a turtle is primarily flat-ish, so I retained it as a stable base.



1

2 Draw the next view on your block, the top in this case, and cut that out. The further you go, the trickier it is to hold safely. Here I have clamped the block to a large billet for stability while I cut away the front top of the shell.



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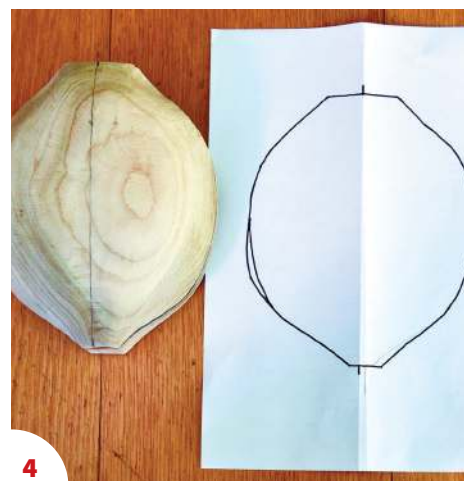
STAY SAFE: Ensure you have a stable tilt-resistant holding method for bandsawing keeping fingers clear of the blade particularly if you overshoot at the end of a cut.

3 Make sure you stop trying to use your bandsaw before you run out of safe and secure holding options. I find it much quicker and more efficient to saw away waste, so I clamped my partially shaped block in a carver's vice and used a coping saw. You could, of course, complete this stage with a gouge and mallet, which some people find satisfying.



3

4 Use the folded paper trick to draw one half of your shell and trace the other side symmetrically. This is a guide – don't worry too much as very little in nature is truly symmetrical. Draw in a centreline.



4

5 Continue to shape your shell with gouges as necessary before blending and smoothing it with a power sander and an 80 grit disc. I use an angle drill as I find it gives me greater control.



5

6 Plan ahead at this stage to ensure you have suitable mounting points for the head and flippers. I chose to use my sanding machine to create angled flats on to which the flippers could be located. They would be blended in later to create the shell undercuts.



6

7 Select suitable offcuts for the head and all of the flippers, aligning grain to best advantage. Cut one face of the flippers at a suitable angle, flatten the end, and offer them up to the shell to see how they will work. Bear in mind which way the grain needs to be oriented for strength. Mark which one is which.



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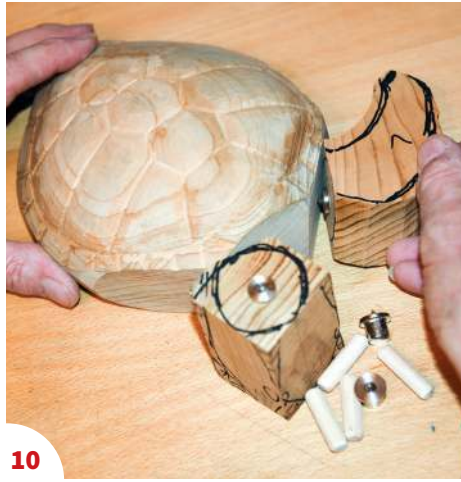
8 Draw on the shell lines and cut them using your preferred method. I used a scorp with a small radius as I like to hand-hold my blank so I can quickly and easily rotate it. Alternatively, hold it in a vice and use a small veiner or similar gouge. Work from both directions as necessary to cut with the grain.



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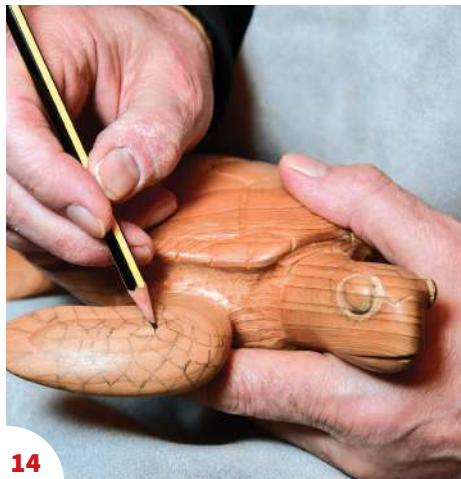
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9 Drill in perpendicular to the cut faces of the flippers so they can be attached with dowels to the body. Here I used an adjustable angle vice in my drill press. The digital bevel gauge ensures accuracy, which helps get a tight fit to the joint.

10 Offer the drilled flippers up to the body and use dowel centre pins to transfer your chosen flipper position to the body. You can then use the same method as above to drill a mating perpendicular hole for the dowel. Drill a little deeper than necessary to ensure you don't bottom out when assembling.

11 Shape the flippers so that they end up round-ish where they meet the body, and for the front pair cranked, tapering flatter towards the tip. Look carefully at as much reference material as you have available to determine their exact shape as the cross section changes dramatically. Remember to make these in opposing pairs.

12 As you progress, dry-fit the flippers and head to the body to see if you can evoke a sense of movement. Having Timmy turn a little as he swims adds tremendously to the feel of your carving. So that I could 'see' better, he was treated to a quick swim on a glass. Smooth with abrasives, taking care to not degrade detail or round over mating edges.

13 Apply glue to both sockets and one mating surface, I used cheap generic PVA, which dries almost clear. Clamp each part carefully so that the joint is aligned. Don't try to do them all at once as I did—you'll see why later.

14 Sand to almost your intended finish and add a coat of sanding sealer to make drawing and erasing easier. Draw on more detail from your research. Decide how much you want, I wanted the grain to be a feature, so I chose to limit the detail to main features and the most obvious head/flipper 'plates'. On the head, carve away around the eyes, which we will finish later, before drawing on head 'plates'.

15 Using a very small V-gouge, start outlining the 'plates'. Work with the grain wherever possible, which is made easier if you hold your carving by hand. I prefer not to use a glove unless my hand is too close to my blade, and Timmy's shape gave me plenty to hold on to away from my tools. If you're uncomfortable with this, use a cut-resistant glove.

TOP TIP: The smaller the gouge is the easier it is to see your lines and adjacent cuts when creating fine detail.

16 Timmy's head slipped when I clamped it on with everything else, resulting in a gap on one side. There was nothing for it but to show him how dangerous a bandsaw can be. A block kept his flippers from touching the table, holding him at the correct angle. The fence facilitated a clean straight cut with the blade's cut eliminating the unwanted glue gap.

17 To maximise the chance of a good head fit, ensure that both mating surfaces are completely flat and give the glue a good opportunity to do its job by providing a key with 80 grit abrasive held against a piece of flat MDF.

18 Due to my initial glue-up error, and the beheading session, keeping Timmy's head aligned while drilling was a challenge. Use whatever means you have to hold it securely, safely for you and without damaging him.

TOP TIP: Use a bubble level to align your blank, table or vice in both directions at the same time.

19 To align his head accurately where the head-to-body fit has already been partly carved, use a very thin blob of Blu Tack and some cling film to produce a witness mark of the head hole. Mark the centre of this with a centre punch before removing the Blu Tack and finally abrading away any residue.

20 Clamp the head on securely with a dowel and PVA, ensuring the clamp pressure is as closely aligned as possible, keeping the clamp pads parallel with the join. Ensure the head is set at the angle you desire.

TOP TIP: When clamping a glue-up, clean away any squeeze-out and inspect the join before leaving it to set.

21 I tried adding texture around his head and flipper joints with a coarse-structured carbide burr, but wasn't happy with the resulting striations. If an idea doesn't work out, remove it and try an alternative. Roll abrasives to gain access to undercut areas without catching parts that have already been finished to a finer degree.

22 Continue adding the level of detail you have chosen to include consistently all over your turtle. There is a trade-off here between carving flippers before they are attached when you have greater access, and afterwards when they are easier to hold as they are attached to his body. It's a judgement call.

23 While some asymmetry can imply movement, I like a degree of consistency regarding placement of things such as eyes, otherwise it can look like a mistake. A small pair of external callipers will enable a measure between his upper beak and the extremity of the eye. Shape the outside of the eyes, leaving sufficient material to carve in all the detail, including any wrinkles you intend. Err on the side of leaving material that can be removed later rather than take too much away in one go.

24 Look again at your research material for the shape of the eyes. Make sure you look at one species for your research, and you will still find significant differences. Just pick the most pleasing and the features they have in common. Draw them on both sides before carving. I can't draw very well, drawing on wood is harder, and a curved surface... well. Lines are just a guide.



17



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TOP TIP: Use a 2B pencil to mark wood more easily with less pressure.



25

TOP TIP: Learn from experienced carvers. A friend, Bernie Harris, recommended raising the grain and leaving it unsanded, creating a leather-like texture.



26

25 Use your finest knife to first carefully outline the inner area of the eyelid, taking care not to over cut. Work from both directions, rotating the carving as necessary. I prefer the feel of making delicate cuts with bare hands. If you choose to do this ensure your hands/fingers are always behind the blade as in the picture. If you're not comfortable doing this wear a cut-resistant glove.

26 My aborted attempt at texturing required an alternative strategy – fold lines flowing around where Timmy's extremities join his body. These areas were sanded using non-woven buffing wheels and then moistened to raise the grain.



27



28

27 Following sanding sealer, de-nib the carving (except the 'leather') with 800 grit. Spray light coats of acrylic lacquer, ensuring you get appropriate coverage in all areas, using a turntable. Once dry, repeat the other way up. De-nib between coats and build up the level of finish you desire. A final dab of black nail varnish provided a sparkle in his eye.

28 Referring back again to your research material, draw some fish on wood scraps. These can be cut out using whatever means are available to you. I decided they were far too small to be cut safely on a bandsaw, so I used my scrollsaw, though a coping or fretsaw would work just as well. Carving away all the waste with a carbide burr would work, but would take longer.



29



30

29 Using a pendant rotary tool and a structured carbide burr enables you to shape your carving largely independent of grain direction, which is very helpful when shaping smaller details. Here comes mistake three – the cedar of Lebanon I had carefully preserved at the initial bandsaw roughing stage wouldn't hold the fin detail created with a coarse-structured carbide burr without crumbling. So I switched to holly.

30 Mounting your carving for display is as important as the carving itself. To represent the environment I chose a piece of burr elm I had laying in my workshop that I was wondering how I would use. Once cleaned up it too got the sealer and acrylic lacquer treatment, only this time just a light dusting. I tend not to like things on stalks, so where there is effectively no alternative I try to minimise their impact. Use copper wire recovered from leftover house wiring. Strip it, straighten it, measure and cut it slightly over length. Using tape, mark hole locations and drill your turtle and 'coral' in discreet areas. Test assemble and adjust lengths. For final assembly slightly bend the tips of each wire and they will stay in their holes.



31



32

31 As the cleaner fish were yellow tang, I coloured mine with spirit stain. For the eye I used black nail varnish.

32 The finished piece. ▶

News & events...

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

BDWCA NEWS

This year, seven of our members made the trip to the 49th Annual World Championship Competition & Art Festival in Ocean City, Maryland, US – the pinnacle of bird carving competition held over three days at the end of April. As always the standard of the entries was incredible and inspirational, and the three days of the show seemed to pass in a flash. Apart from the competitions there were also classes and lectures with top carvers including Carve and Paint a Red-tailed Hawk Feather with Al Jordan, Paint a Redpoll Study Cast with Josh Guge, and Miniature Techniques – Legs & Feet with Jerry Painter, which various members of the group attended.

Special congratulations must go to BDWCA member Yvonne Langford. Two years ago Yvonne, at that time a non-carver, accompanied her husband, Mark, to the World Championships. She was so inspired that she started carving on her return. This year she

entered two pieces in the Interpretive Wood Sculpture category at Novice level and was placed 2nd and 3rd.

Our attention now turns to the UK and this year's annual BDWCA show, the Festival of Bird Art, which is held, as usual, in Bakewell, Derbyshire, on the second weekend of September, which this year is 14 and 15 September.

Carvers compete at Youth, Novice, Intermediate and Advanced levels in categories ranging from Fully Textured and Painted Waterfowl and Birds, Smooth Painted Waterfowl and Shorebirds, and Decorated Miniatures to Interpretive Wood Sculptures. There are also five Open classes – Working Decoys, Fish, Innovative Wildlife Sculpture, Carved Bird's Head, and Carved Bird's Head on a Stick – where all entries are judged according to the criteria and rules for the Advanced class.

Contact: www.bdwca.org.uk



Yvonne Langford with ribbons at World Championships



Barred Owl by Jennifer Felton, Best in Division, Advanced Decorative Lifesize Wildfowl



Ruddy Duck Pair by Leonard Rousseau, World Champion Floating Decorative Lifesize Waterfowl Pair



Phoebe by Larry Barth, World Champion Decorative Lifesize Wildfowl



Mallards by Pat Godin, World Champion Shootin' Rig

2019 Events

• Yandles Woodworking show

When: 6-7 September 2019

Where: Hurst Works, Hurst, Martock, Somerset, TA12 6JU

Web: www.yandles.co.uk

• Frampton Country Woodfair

When: 8 September 2019

Where: Frampton on Severn, Gloucestershire, GL2 7EP

Web: <https://framptoncountryfair.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

• Wiltshire Game and Country Show

When: 28-29 September 2019

Where: Boxwood House, Calne, SN11 0LZ

Web: www.wiltshiregameandcountryfair.co.uk

• The Festival of Wood and Country Crafts

When: 6th 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



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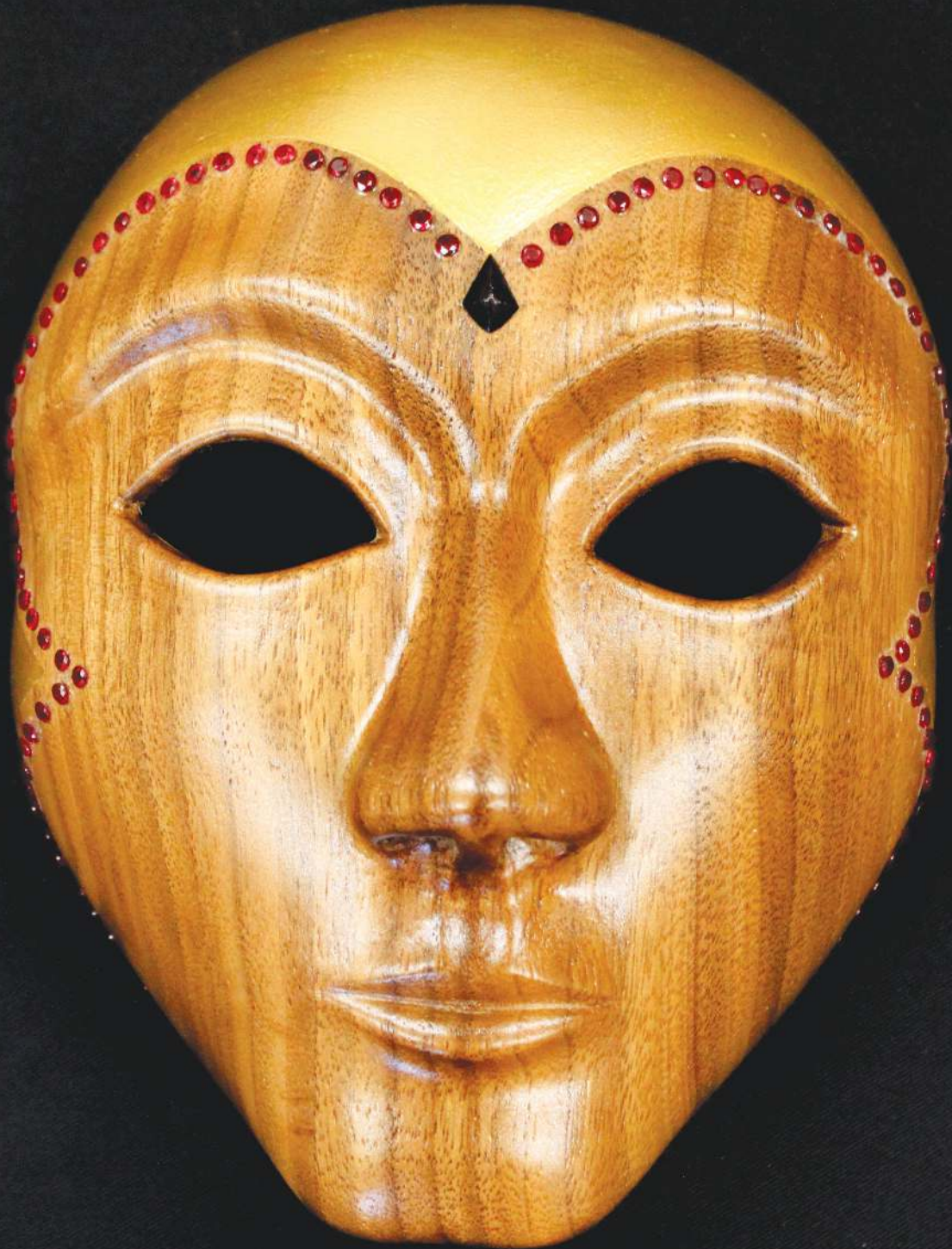
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Display mask

Mark Gough shows how to carve and decorate a display mask



Having decided on a mask for this carving project the decision was what type of mask to do. The list is endless – tribal, theatrical, carnival, grotesque, fantasy, horror and so on. In the end I settled on a simple female face and chose a piece of American black walnut with a nice grain pattern to show off the contours. I decided to add some decoration to the finished piece, but this is optional. In fact, this type of mask is readily available as a blank to decorate for carnivals and parties in the paper or plastic form. The thickness of the mask is around 10mm. I intended

to make it thinner but there was a knot in the blank which was unnoticed at the beginning. One of the main obstacles to overcome was how to hold the piece while carving out the waste from the back. I tried various wooden blocks and wedges then built a box and filled it with sand and leather, but nothing was satisfactory. In the end I made a mould of silicon rubber in a box which worked perfectly. You will not need a vast selection of tools for this project, just a few gouges and rasps. We all have a different selection of tools, so just use whatever you have to suit the purpose.

Things you will need

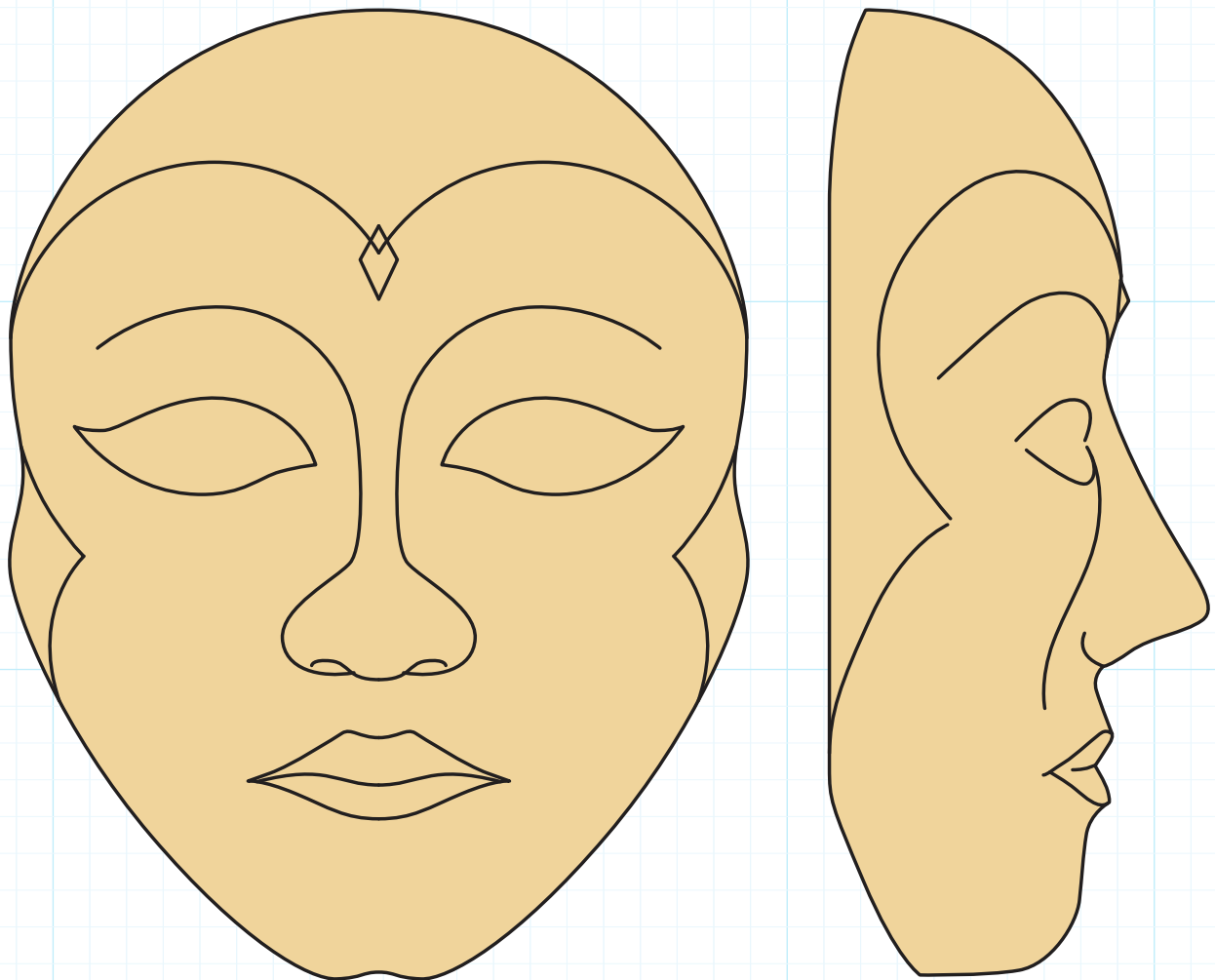
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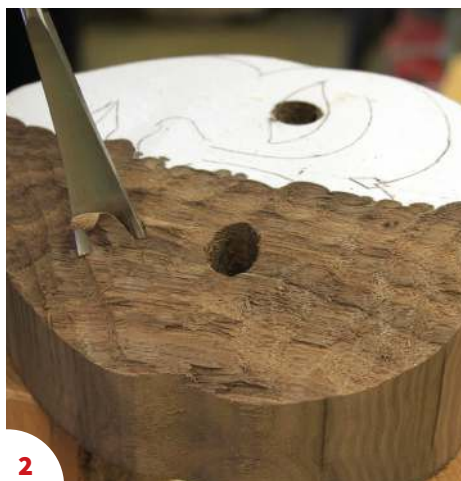
- Personal and respiratory protective equipment (PPE & RPE)
- No.6, 20mm
- 8mm shallow palm gouge
- Coarse wood rasp
- Rotary carving unit
- Rotary burrs: ball burr, bull-nose burr
- 16mm flat bit
- Rifler files

- Double-ended callipers

Materials:

- American black walnut (*Juglans nigra*), 200 x 150 x 75mm
- Silicone rubber moulding compound
- Abrasives down to 320 grit
- Cellulose sanding sealer
- Finish of your choice
- Hardware for hanging




1

2

Rough shaping

1 Make two copies of the pattern. Then, stick one to the blank and cut the outline out on a bandsaw. Using a drill press drill a 16mm hole through the centre of each eye. These will act as reference points throughout the carving process.

2 Fit a suitable clamping block to the underside of the blank and mount in a bench vice or fix directly to a carving vice. Draw a centreline from top of the head to the jaw through the bridge of the nose and start to remove waste from the tip of the nose towards the edges.

When viewed from above the human head is oval with the tip of the nose prominent, so this will be the highest point of the carving.


3

4

3 The tip of the nose is the highest point, from here taper down towards the top of the head. Refer to the pattern for the depth of cut and direct the taper out towards the sides of the head.

4 Start with an upright cut below the tip of the nose and pull the gouge back to remove waste towards the chin and sides of the lower jaw. Do not remove too much at this stage, just enough to reveal the shape of the nose.

5 Now smooth out the deep tool marks to get an easier surface to mark in the features. You can use a shallow gouge or, as pictured, a coarse rasp.


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Refining the form

6 You now need to use the second template. To use the template effectively cut out the eyes, nose and mouth shapes with a craft knife so that you can position the pattern over the carving and mark the features accurately. Once done, mark in the ridge of the nose and eyebrow line then, using suitable gouges and rotary burrs, hollow out the area below the brow line and each side of the nose to get the basic shape of the cheeks. When using a rotary tool wear suitable PPE and have adequate dust extraction in place at all times.

Just like carving with gouges it is important to pay attention to grain direction – if the direction of rotation is against the grain it will tear the fibres out and leave a much rougher finish. Try to cut with the rotation going in the same direction as the grain, although this is not always possible.

7 Use a combination of gouge and rotary carving burrs to reveal the full depth of the nose and eyes. A V-gouge is useful for shaping the tight angles of the nostrils or you can use the tip of a flame burr.

8 With a 20mm, No. 6 gouge or similar round over the forehead, referring to the pattern for the correct shape. Alternatively, use a coarse rasp if you prefer.


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9 Complete the shaping of the forehead by smoothing out the tool marks with a coarse rasp. Aim for a nice rounded dome shape. This is the area which will have some sort of decoration added later on so it needs to be symmetrical and even. It will be useful if the carving is overhanging the vice to access the whole area. If this is not possible raise the block slightly to get to the edge. Do not be too concerned about chipping the edges at this stage as these will be cut back and re-shaped later on.



10 To form the eyebrows cut a shallow channel just above each eye and join them up in the centre above the nose, reducing the depth of the channel at this point.



11 Now return to the shaping of the nose to complete the detail. Select a suitable tool similar to the one pictured, which is an 8mm shallow palm gouge, and refine the bridge of the nose, removing waste from each side evenly. The nose is straight and symmetrical with a gentle slope from the tip to the top. Cut slightly deeper in the corner of each eye where the cheek bone meets the top of the nose – this will make the eyes look more of a natural rounded shape instead of flat. Turn your attention to the nostrils and form a gentle flare each side with a small shallow gouge. The underside of the nose tapers down from the tip to the top of the upper lip where it meets, as shown in the pattern.



12 Now use a small medium rifler or 80 grit sandpaper to smooth out all the tool marks. You can make your own sanding sticks by sticking sandpaper to pre-shaped pieces of wood for this stage if you wish.

13 The area to each side of the nostrils below the cheeks needs to be reduced to form a sinuous flow down to the lower jaw and to reveal the contour of the cheeks. You can use a fine bull-nose burr and rifler to do this, working symmetrically. Take your time at this stage and make regular visual checks from each side. Any irregularities will show up when the finish has been applied and light reflects on the contours.



14 Round over the lower jaw with the rasp. Don't take too much off at this stage until the mouth has been shaped.

Finer detail

15 Using the template, mark out the mouth and reveal the shape with a bull-nose rotary burr or gouge. Go gently and use a speed on the rotary carving unit that is suitable for the burr used and also that affords you full control of the cutting action. At this stage, you can cut in the nostril positions too.



16 Use a knife to cut in the lips and define the shape then use a rifler file to finish the detail.





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17 Use a bull-nose and flame rotary burr to open out the eyes. A knife and/or chisel will work well too. Be careful in the corners to avoid the tool snagging and keep hands clear at all times.

18 You can now turn your attention to the final shaping of the face. Use a small shallow gouge to refine the lower cheeks and sand everything down with 80 grit paper to get rid of the tool marks.

19 Use a rotary burr or small fluted gouge to hollow out the nostrils.

Hollowing the back

20 Sand the whole face with 80, 120, 180 and 240 grit papers and apply a sealer then, once dry, cover in fine chalk or talc. By trial and error, the next step seems to work best. I made many prototypes before working out this version was the best for supporting the mask.

Make a four-sided box with a base and place the mask face up on to the base. Fix triangular fillets in each corner to fill out the voids then fill the box up to the top with silicone rubber moulding compound. When the compound has cured remove the base, flip the box over, screw the base on the opposite side and fix a clamping block. You are now ready to start hollowing out the back.

21 This will support the mask while the back is carved out and you will be able to remove and replace the mask easily whenever you need to check the thickness of the wall without compromising the support.

22 Use double-ended callipers to check the wall thickness, aim for around 10mm or thinner if you prefer and leave it slightly thicker to the side of each eye to fit hardware for mounting.

23 Lift the mask out of the mould slightly and clamp the sides to access the chin. Then, using a rasp file a smooth curve from the lower cheeks down to the chin. Do the same to the top of the head, only less of a curve. This will give a nice overall shape to the whole mask.

The back of the mask can be left as a tooled finish, or refined to a smooth finish if you wish, and the heavy tool marks have been sanded down to 120 grit then sealed with cellulose sanding sealer.

24 Here is the completed mask prior to adding some decoration which is, of course, optional. You can leave it plain as shown or decorate it whichever way you want.

As you can see from the main image at the start of the article, I used gold paint, costume jewels and cubic zirconia to add some decoration. I hope you have had fun with this project. I certainly have. I am wondering what it is like to carve an animal head mask, but that is a story for another day. 📌

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Jack-o'-Lantern

Terry Nokes carves a Halloween pumpkin

All Hallows' Eve is celebrated on 31 October in many countries, before the following All Saints' Day, and was originally a tradition from Ireland. Back then turnips and root vegetables were carved to mark the end of the summer harvest and also to ward off any bad spirits.

The wood selected for this project is American tulipwood (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) and, because it's hollow to house a LED tealight, the carving has been designed in two halves. For ease

of assembly, the carving blanks have been planed square all round, so all corners are at true 90° right angles.

SAFETY

This project is solely for use in conjunction with a battery operated low-energy LED tealight. The LED tealight is approximately 38mm in diameter, and most have an imitation flicker and are inexpensive to purchase. Under no circumstances use a real candle flame tealight.



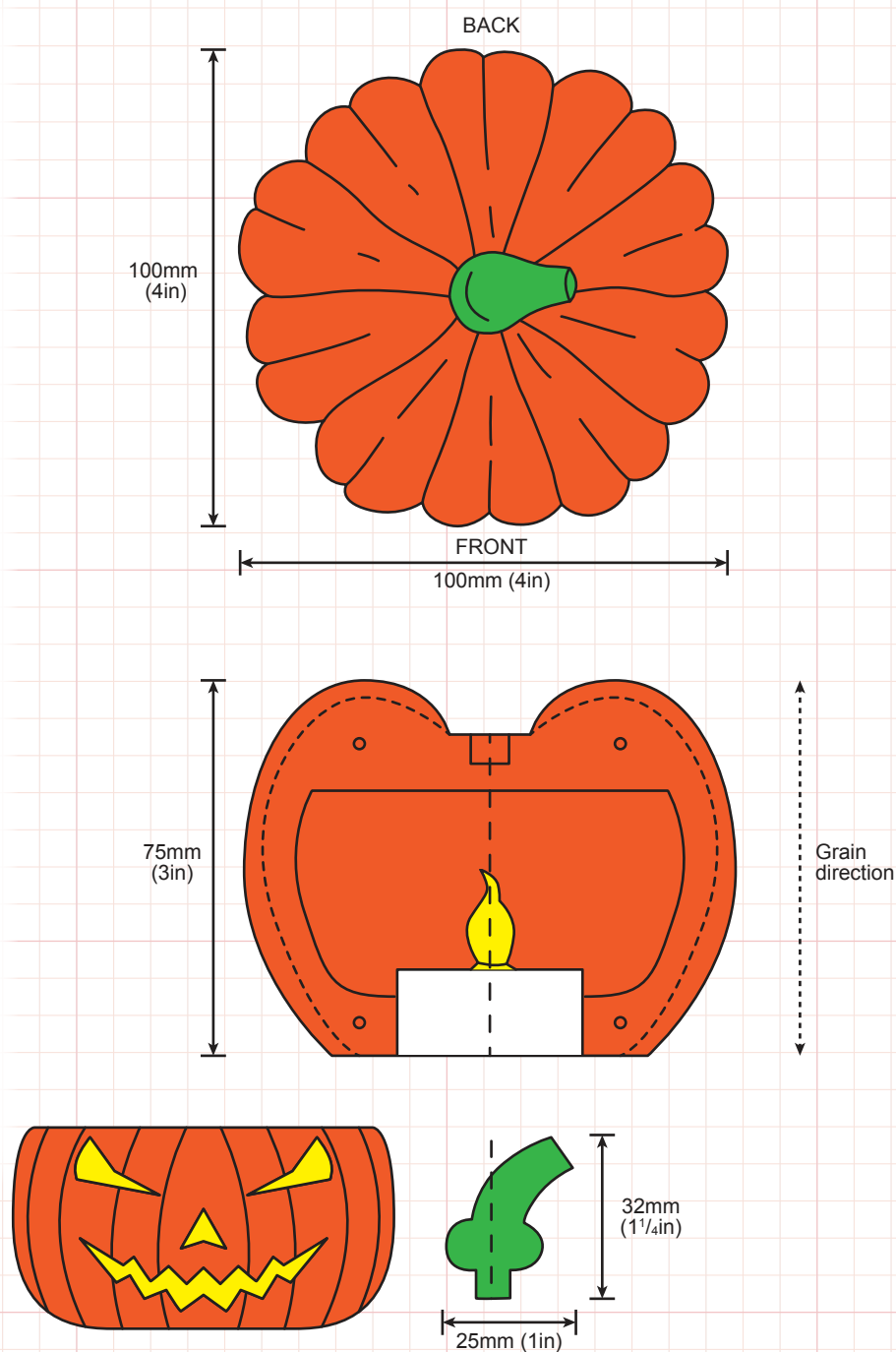
Things you will need

Tools:

- Personal and respiratory protective equipment (PPE & RPE)
- Cut-resistant gloves
- Bench vice
- Bandsaw/handsaw
- Pillar/electric drill
- Square & compasses
- Pointed bradawl
- 1.5mm and 3mm twist drill
- 7mm & 15mm Forstner bits
- Pfeil No.9, 7, 20 & 35mm
- Pfeil No. 3, 12mm fishtail gouge
- Pfeil No.5, 14mm fishtail gouge
- Pfeil No.12, 14mm V-tool 60°
- No.9, 18mm spoon gouge 18mm
- No. 2, 30mm shallow gouge
- Carving/whittling knife
- Piercing saw
- No.7 pin less blade 15tpi
- F-clamp

Materials:

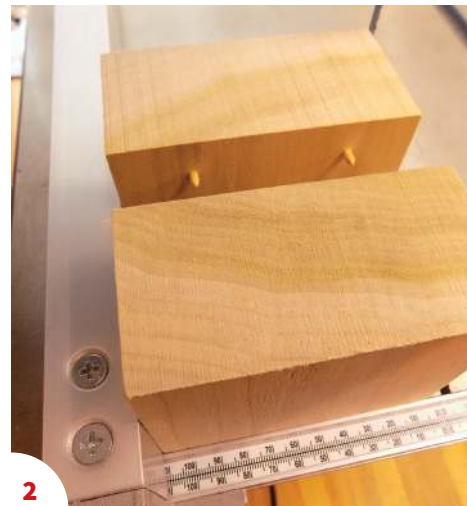
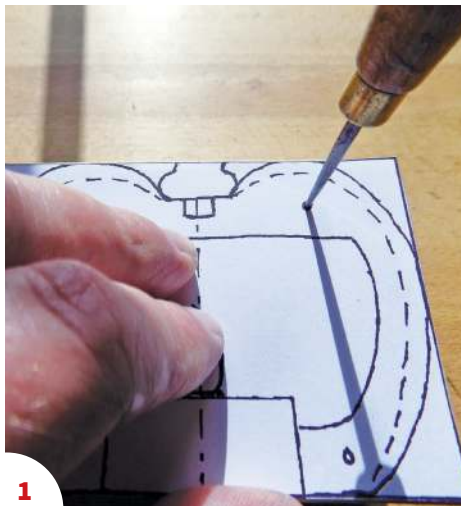
- 2x timber blanks 100 x 50 x 75mm long
- Battery LED tealight (approx. 38mm diameter)
- 3mm bamboo skewer
- PVA glue
- Carbon copying paper
- Abrasives grades down to 320 grit
- Boiled linseed oil
- Paintbrush
- Acrylic paints:
Interior – yellow ochre
Exterior – cadmium orange hue
Stem – sap green, white, yellow ochre
- Satin aerosol spray
- Disposable nitrile gloves

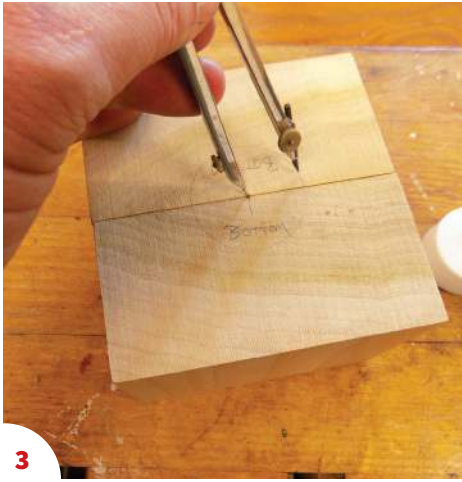


Preparation

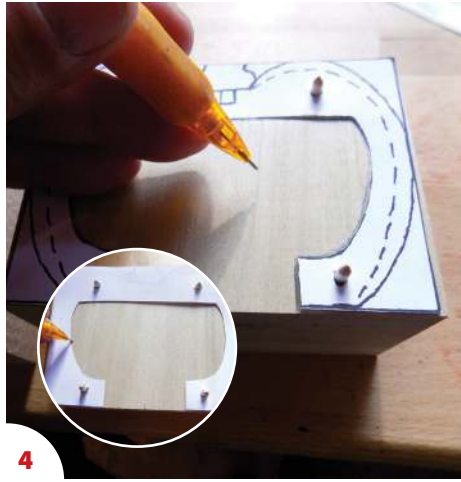
1 Prepare the required two carving blanks, each 100 x 50 x 75mm, and size and print out the supplied templates. Offer up the internal template unglued and, with a bradawl, mark the four hole centres as shown on one blank only. Once marked drill 3mm holes at a depth of 12mm on a pillar drill.

2 Next insert some homemade centre finders made from a bamboo skewer by cutting four lengths at 18mm, and with a carving knife create a centred point on each. Then, on a flat surface, using an alignment guide/fence, push the two blanks together. This will mark the four other joining holes on the other blanks – again return to the pillar drill to create more 3mm holes.





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3 Now joined together, draw a circle on the bottom the diameter of your LED tealight (approx. 38mm).

4 Split the two halves, reapply the template and mark out the interior void. Then reverse the template for the other side and again mark out the interior waste.

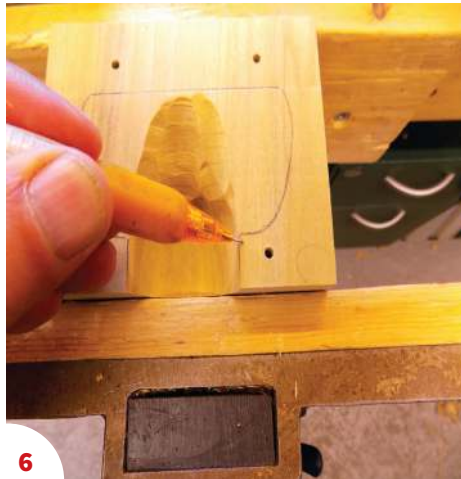
Carving the interior

5 With a deep gouge remove waste to suit your battery tealight. The tool shown is No.9, 35mm – its profile/sweep is exactly half circle on the Swiss-made tool pattern.

TOP TIP: Good practice – whenever possible use the largest tool and closest sweep for the given task.



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6 Beware – we are now going to carve across the grain. Take care near this corner as it's likely to split – make a stop cut if need be.

7 Choose which carving blank will be the front then, working from the outsides, remove waste towards the centre across the grain as deep as possible with large, straight gouges. To clean up, deepen and finish cut with a spoon-profile gouge. Not sure how deep to go? Look at the template – the widest part is approximately 78mm. Cut out a semi-circle as a guide (inset picture).

8 Progress so far. Now carve out the other blank for the project back – there is no need to carve too deep on this one. With the two halves pushed together fit the tealight. Using abrasive wrapped around a dowel might assist.



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9 Next, using the template as a depth guide, drill both a 15mm and 7mm hole with flat-bottomed Forstner bits as shown. This was carried out on a pillar drill with the two halves clamped together.

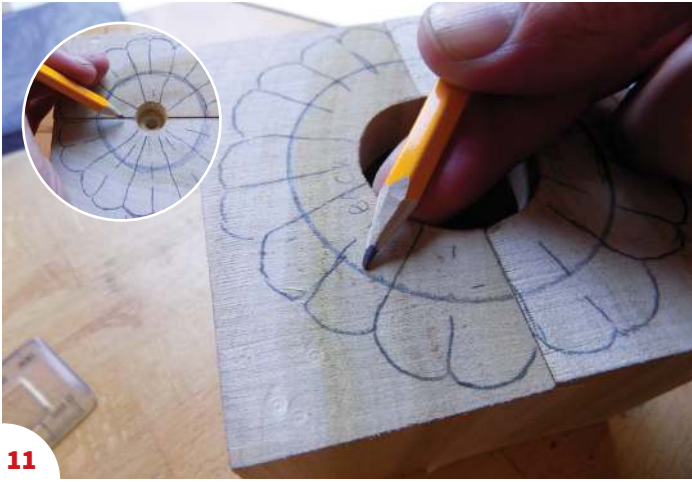
10 Put two halves together, use masking tape if required. Transfer the top elevation using the carbon copying paper to both the carving top and bottom. Also be sure to clearly mark which half is the project front and which is the back.



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11 On the bottom, using a pencil, draw a ring about 15mm away from the LED tealight hole. Grip the pencil and use your index finger as a guide. Draw the top ring (note inset picture).

Carving the exterior

12 Secure the project in a bench vice and, with a larger deep gouge, remove waste from all the sides. This is where cutting with the grain direction can really speed up the process, as large chips can easily split away.

13 This pumpkin design has ten main segments where the ribs go all the way to the top centre. Draw these down the sides.

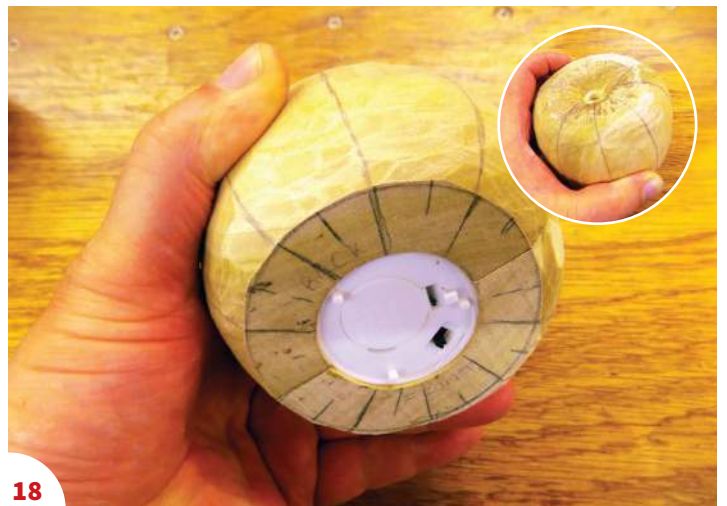
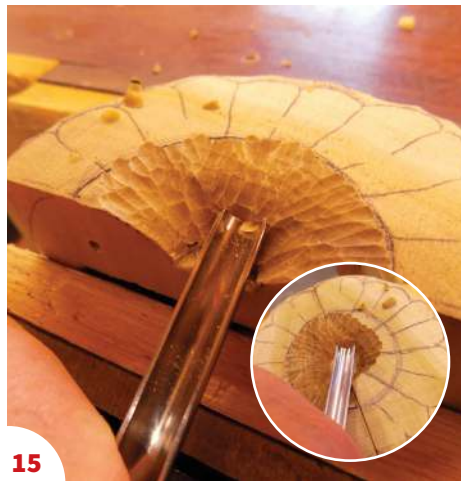
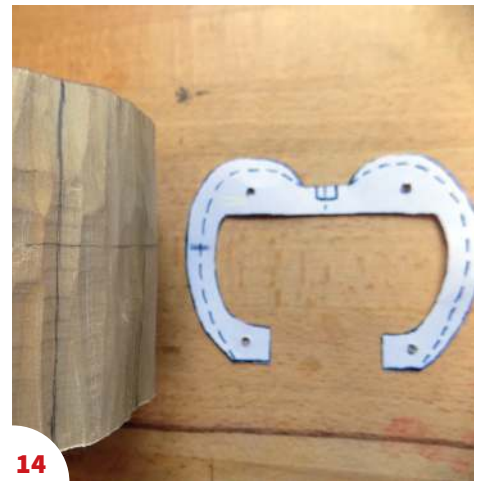
14 On the template, note the pumpkin's widest part and draw this line round the project too.

15 With a small deep gouge, hand carve in an upwards direction. The initial low tool contact will be more like, a free handed scrape action until the carving tool bevel makes full contact, then remove waste to the top pencilled ring. Repeat on the other blank, periodically re-joining the two halves together to check everything lines up.

16 From the line draw in step 14, remove waste towards the top to the pencilled ring.

17 Using an upturned shallow No.2 or No.3 gouge, smooth off the sides towards the top and bottom.

18 Next redraw the ten ribs.

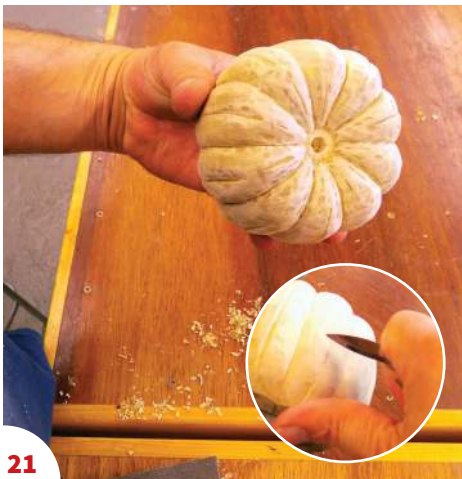




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19 Carve the ribs with a 60° V-tool and where the two halves join – gently squeeze the two halves together with a speed clamp. If you haven't a V Tool, try stop cutting with a knife and use the Fishtail gouges.

20 Next, with upturned No.3 and No.5 fishtail gouge, round over the ten ribs. Align the tool edge with ribs as shown. Then draw a line in between the ribs to create 20 ribs. Note: These secondary ribs are not very deep and randomly carved. They do not extend from the very bottom to the very top.

21 Plan was hand drawn with a protractor, then adjusted for a more natural look. Again distress the carving with a whittling knife – make odd/random slices then sand, leaving the imperfections visible.

22 The bandsawn stem was cut out and then shaped with just a carving knife. The end of the stem has five sides.

23 Note template example. Use the window area for your own scary face design, and draw it on to the project front. As my zigzag mouth design has a small opening, I opted to use a piercing saw with a No.7 pinless blade as its pilot hole is only 1.5mm. When cutting try to angle the saw cuts towards the very centre of carving and locate blade to cut on the pull stroke. If using a standard pinned coping saw, it will need a 4mm pilot hole to feed the blade through. Use diamond files or abrasives to clean up saw edges. Nail files and emery boards can be cut up to cheaply sand hard-to-reach areas.

Finishing

24 Apply two or three coats of boiled linseed oil inside and out to seal the carving (thin the first coat with white spirit) and try to avoid the glue areas. Allow to thoroughly dry. Paint the inside and the sawn face features with acrylic yellow ochre then glue your two halves together.

25 Paint the stem, held by a needle, with mixes of acrylic green and yellow. The white specks were dabbed on with a toothpick then finally spray with a satin finish aerosol can. If unsure, test can on a painted scrap.

26 Apply two or three coats of acrylic cadmium orange hue to the pumpkin, taking care around the facial features. Again allow to dry and then spray with the satin finish. Insert the LED tealight holder and the final step is to glue the stem in place with PVA. ▶



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Georgian-style mirror

Steve Bisco carves and gilds a mirror frame in the Georgian rococo style

Elaborate carved and gilded mirror frames have been a feature of interior decoration ever since mirror glass became easier to manufacture in the 17th century, a notable example being the Galerie des Glaces (Hall of Mirrors) at Versailles, dating from 1678. Enormous 'pier glasses' with fantastical rococo and chinoiserie frames, like those illustrated in *Chippendale's Director* (see *Woodcarving* 163) were also a feature of many Georgian grand houses in the mid-18th century.

I have designed this example in the rococo style (see box), but on a more modest scale to fit a 20cm-diameter circular mirror. Being circular, the pattern can be enlarged to fit any reasonable size of circular mirror without changing the proportions. The mirror opening, which has elements of the carved pattern extending over it, must overlap the edges of your mirror glass by about 6mm all round. A rebate is cut into the back of the panel to receive the mirror, and a thin hardboard panel is fixed over the back of it to secure the mirror in place.

The pattern is 'pierced' and cut out all round to create a light and lively frame. I have gilded it with imitation gold leaf, which is considerably cheaper and easier for an amateur to handle than real gold leaf. The imitation gold leaf is sealed with French polish (shellac) to give it an 'antique' look that is reasonably easy for an untrained amateur to achieve.

I would usually use limewood (*Tilia* spp.) for a carving such as this, but as I didn't have a piece the right size I decided to use tulipwood (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) – see box – which carves very well and proved to be a suitable and cheaper alternative to limewood for this type of work.

The combination of mirror glass and gilding creates reflective surfaces that will brighten any dark corner of a room, especially when reflecting the soft light of a nearby table lamp.

DID YOU KNOW?

Gilded mirrors were often fitted with projecting candle-holders to reflect all available light from the candles into the room. Called girandoles, these were especially popular in the 18th-century rococo style. The gilding on the convoluted carved surfaces would also reflect the candlelight in all directions, making the mirror frames sparkle like diamonds.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVE BISCO

Things you will need

Tools:

- Person and respiratory protective equipment (PPE & RPE)
- No.3, 10mm
- No.3,10 & 20mm fishtail
- No.4 6mm fishtail
- No.8, 8mm
- No.8, 8mm curved
- No.9, 3 & 20mm
- No.9, 16mm curved
- 10mm short-bent gouge
- 10mm L & R skewed spoon gouges
- 12mm back-bent gouge
- 2mm veiner
- 2 & 6mm V-tool
- 2, 3, 6.5 & 20mm chisel
- 5mm bent chisel
- 10mm skew chisel
- 16mm hooked skew chisel
- Jigsaw/bandsaw

Materials:

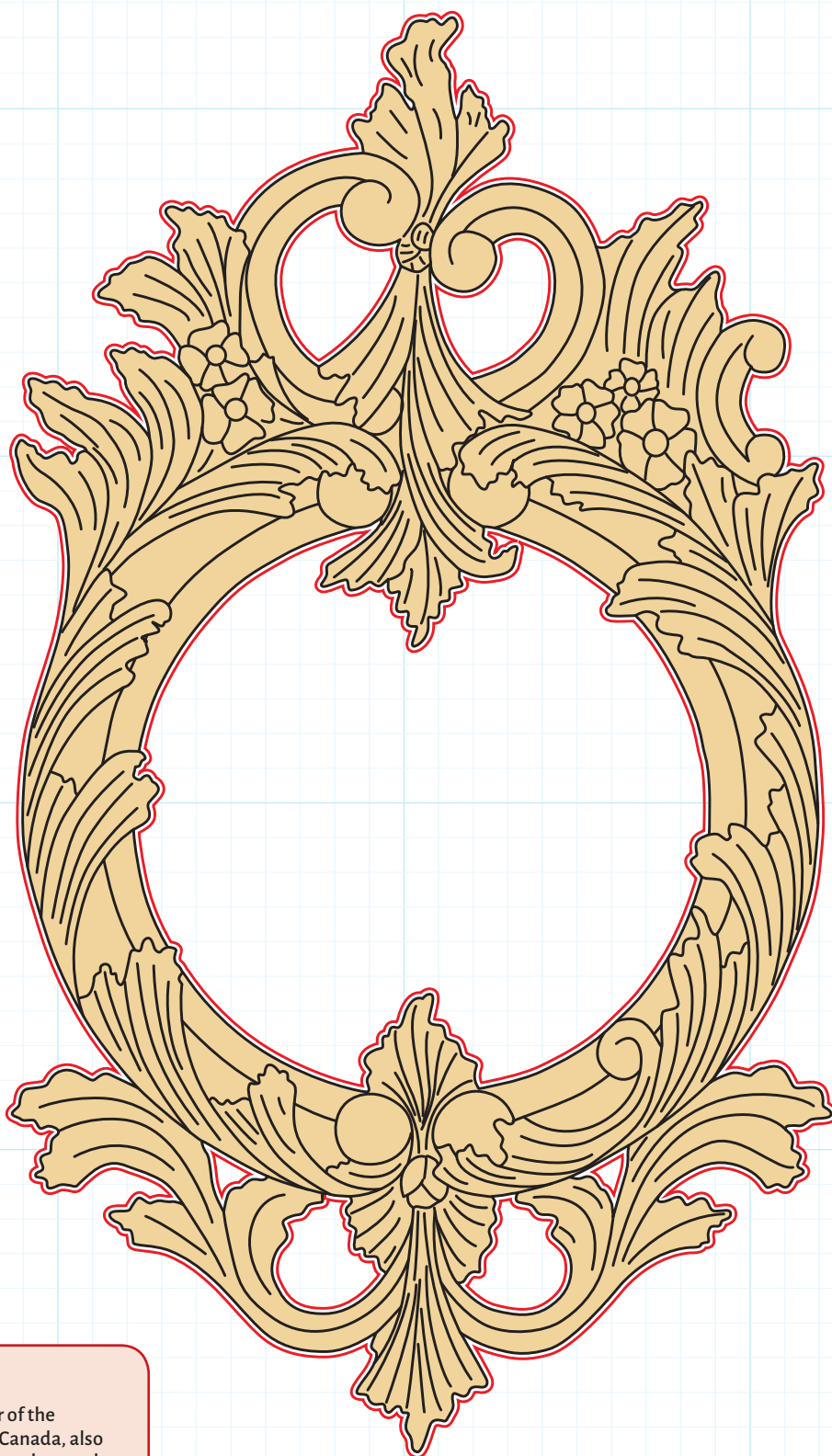
- Tulipwood (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) 480 x 270 x 35mm
- Brushes
- Sanding-sealer
- Gilding size
- Imitation gold leaf
- French polish

ROCOCO STYLE

Rococo, also known as Louis XV style, is the 'wild child' of the classically derived styles of the 18th century. It has the exuberant swirls of the Baroque and the gilded magnificence of Classicism, but with a chaotic lack of order and symmetry and a delicate lightness created by extensive 'piercing'. It typically combines C-scrolls and swirling acanthus leaves, often appearing to be dragged into a vortex, with a scattering of delicate naturalistic flowers and various ear-like features that defy description. It is seen most notably as spectacular carved and gilded mirror frames and delicate moulded plasterwork panels on walls and ceilings.

TULIPWOOD

Tulipwood (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) is a member of the magnolia family native to the eastern US and Canada, also known as American whitewood, white poplar, and several other names. It is a medium-weight, close-grained hardwood rated as easy to work with hand and machine tools and is used for furniture, joinery, carving and sculpture. It holds fine detail very well when carved and is an excellent alternative to limewood for this type of work. The wood is a pale creamy colour with a greenish tinge, but tends to become more green when exposed to light, so it is best with a painted, gilded or woodstain finish. A more detailed description can be found in Terry Porter's *Wood: Identification & Use* (GMC Publications).





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Preparations

1 Get a piece of tulipwood 480 x 270 x 35mm. Also get a 200mm-diameter mirror and cut a 220mm-diameter piece of 3mm ply or hardboard to fit behind it. Make a full-size copy of the drawing and check that the opening for the mirror will overlap its edges by 6mm all round. Trace the drawing on to the wood with carbon paper and mark your cutting lines in red.

2 Cut out the internal voids with a jigsaw. The blade will flex a little on the curves, so keep about 1mm away from the pattern lines and take care not to let it flex sideways into the mirror rim.

3 Now cut round the outside of the pattern. A bandsaw, if you have one, will avoid the flexing problem, but if you don't have one just continue with the jigsaw.

4 Cut the rebates for the mirror and back panel into the back of the board. The depth required for the mirror and the back panel together should be about 8-10mm if the back panel is flush with the board surface. The acanthus leaves that overlap the mirror surface must also be rebated to the same depth as the rim. The mirror rim should overlap the edge of the mirror by about 6mm.

Roughing out

5 Start the roughing out by rounding over the outside edge of the mirror circle into a doughnut shape. Re-draw the 'vortex' of the acanthus leaves as they curl outwards and downwards.

6 The inner edge of the mirror circle is more complex. Block out round the acanthus leaves then carve a rebate 10mm wide and 10mm deep around the inner edge, working between the leaves. Form the shallow convex surface between the leaves, curving down to the edge of the 10mm rebate. Mark a line around the mirror edge 5mm from the mirror face, then carve a 12mm cove from this baseline to the upper edge of the 10mm rebate. Curl the acanthus leaves over the 'doughnut' towards the mirror rim.

7 Now rough out the shape and level of the acanthus leaves and flowers at the top of the carving. The leaves need to flow from the outside edge of the mirror circle. Re-draw the flowers after you have lowered their level.

8 Shape the C-scrolls and lower their level towards the mirror ring. Make the acanthus 'ribbon' flow between the volutes of the C-scrolls and the mirror ring, but flicking up to its full thickness at the top end. The edges need to be thinner where they overhang the mirror glass.

9 Repeat the process of steps 7 & 8 on the acanthus leaves and 'ribbon' at the lower end of the carving. The leaves here are thinner and are separated by piercing.

Detail carving

10 Now for the detail carving, starting with the acanthus scrolls on the left of the mirror circle. Subdivide each block of leaves with long, curving veins that curl over the inner rim then flow outwards and downwards along the outer edge in a smooth and elegant vortex. Use various small gouges to carve shallow convex and concave surfaces along each leaf, and make some little downward twisting cuts with a No.8 gouge to create little 'flicks' at the ends.

11 The acanthus scrolls on the right of the circle are the same as those on the left, but in different positions. The leaf at the lower end starts from a volute and curls in the opposite direction in the form of a C-scroll. The mirror circle is the defining feature of the whole carving, and the facets you create in the curling leaves will sparkle when gilded.

TOP TIP: Elements that overlap the surface of a mirror need to be carved quite thinly at the edges because the reflection will make them appear twice as thick.

12 Finish the mirror circle by refining the inner edge and the 12mm cove that runs around the mirror. Carve a narrow fillet around the upper edge of the cove, then refine the shape of the smooth convex areas between the acanthus swirls. It must look as though the acanthus leaves are vegetation clasp on to the smooth surface of the mirror frame.

13 Refine the upper C-scrolls so they are smooth with a concave curve on the inside and a convex curve on the outside. They should lean forward slightly at the top when hung up.

14 The upper acanthus ribbon is a prominent feature of the carving. Create elegant curves swirling from the little knot between the upper volutes and flowing over the C-scrolls, through the top of the mirror circle, and on to the face of the mirror glass. Give plenty of definition to create 'movement' and give a sparkle to the faceted surfaces when gilded

15 On the upper left side there are several acanthus leaves and a couple of flowers. The acanthus must flow smoothly out and upwards from the mirror ring, and also slightly overlap the left C-scroll. Give the leaves plenty of swirl with strong vein lines, and make the upper edges curl over slightly. The small flowers must be natural and simple.

TOP TIP: To carve the fine veins that accentuate the curl of acanthus leaves, try using a hooked skew chisel. Run the curved blade down one side of the vein, leaning it at an angle, then repeat leaning to the other side.

16 The upper right side also has several acanthus leaves and flowers, with a small C-scroll on the right-hand edge.





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17 The acanthus ribbon at the bottom of the carving is similar to the one at the top but is a bit smaller. The upper end extends over the mirror glass, and it should hang outwards at the lower end.

18 The swirling acanthus leaves at the bottom are the only part of the carving that is fully symmetrical, so match them up both sides with their upper edges curling over. Carve long, flowing veins as with the other parts of the carving, but make their structure a bit more leaf-like.

19 To finish the carving we must undercut the edges of the acanthus leaves and C-scrolls from behind to make them look thinner. Place the carving face down on a cushioned surface and carefully slice away the underside until the edges are about 6-8mm thick.

TOP TIP: When carving a cove like the one around the mirror, you can refine the surface by scraping it smooth after the gouge work. Make a scraper by taking an old 13mm flat chisel and grinding the end into a half-round 'bullnose'. Use the scraper by pulling it along the cove at 90° to the surface to create fine shavings.



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20 Photo 20 shows the finished carving. Give it a coat of sander-sealer, front and back. Use fine abrasives to remove any loose fibres, and smooth the surfaces that should be smooth. Don't dull the details that should be sharp.



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Gilding

21 Prepare the carving for gilding by giving it a coat of a good-quality gold lacquer as an undercoat for the gold leaf. Put it on thinly so you don't clog the details, and leave it to dry thoroughly.

22 Get a pack of imitation gold leaf and some gilding size (available quite cheaply from most art stores). Apply some gilding size thinly with a brush to a section of the carving. Leave it for about 5-10 minutes until it is dry but slightly tacky to the touch. Take a sheet of gold leaf and cut it into pieces about 25 x 50mm. Fold a small piece of paper and use it to pick up a piece of leaf, then slowly and carefully place it on the sized area. Press it down gently with a soft brush, then brush away any loose pieces of leaf. Go over any gaps with more leaf.

23 Imitation gold leaf needs a sealer to stop it tarnishing. I use French polish (shellac) to 'antique' it and seal it at the same time. Apply the French polish thinly by brush. Work quickly as it dries fast, and avoid going over the same bit twice or you will build up a 'muddy' patch (if it all goes horribly wrong, wipe it off with methylated spirit and start again).



23



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24 Fit the mirror glass and its backing plate in place and the 'antique' Georgian mirror is complete. Hang it where the mirror and the gilded facets of the frame will reflect the soft light of a nearby lamp. ▶

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A woman's perspective

M Benson looks at carving from a woman's viewpoint



Afternoon class at Billericay Arts Centre. Nearly half the total woodcarving students are women

Chatting to one of the carvers the other day, he asked about how I was getting on with the polar bear carving and whether it was any different for me as a woman carving something that big. He wasn't being sexist, just curious about the problems I encountered and whether they were the same as his. These are just my thoughts on the subject.

Writing articles is not something I am used to. Pete Benson is the frontman in the family – he loves talking to people, learning and sharing the information. I am quite happy to stay in the background. At the workshop, and when we do shows, people often assume that the carvings on display are all Pete's, they are often surprised when I admit some are mine.

There are around a third of the BWA members who are women, as well as some established tutors such as Judith Nicoll, Zoe Gertner, Terry Brasher, Charley Phillips and others. In Western Australia there is a group called Women Working With Wood. They set up the group because they found that, in workshops, they often tended to be overlooked. Now they arrange their own classes, do displays and shows to promote women carvers, and show what they can do. Perhaps the world of hobbies hasn't quite caught up with the rest of the world yet. I have male friends who do beautiful embroidery and one who makes the most stunning patchwork quilts, but they all keep very quiet about it.

I can't do that

When I am at shows women will watch me carving and say: 'I couldn't do that.' My answer is usually: 'Why not? You probably spend more time with a knife in your hand than most men.' We don't appreciate how much time we spend 'carving', whether it is fruit and vegetables or helping the children with pumpkin carving. We may not be as strong as men but the dexterity learned in the kitchen certainly helps with technique. We just do it slightly differently.

Different approaches don't only apply to men and women. Pete and I have noticed previous jobs play a very large part in how people tackle and 'see' their carvings. The pinpoint accuracy and precision required by many professionals tend to spill over into their hobbies. You don't often see engineers carving without a Vernier gauge, ruler or callipers in their toolbox – everything is carefully measured. These are their comfort blankets and years of working that way probably speeds up the seeing process. On the other hand, one of Pete's students is an ex-cartoonist and his work is very free, always evoking a liveliness and reaction in the viewer.



Women Working With Wood display in Western Australia



I spent hours carving the War torn cross for a competition but was penalised because the judge thought I had used two old bits of timber

Different approaches

I have sat and watched a large number of classes over the years, both Pete's and other tutors. The main difference that seems to always crop up is that women tend to want to know 'why?'. They don't find it embarrassing, not understanding. Sometimes watching the classes you see the tutor explain some point or other: 'Do you understand?' 'Yes,' is the answer. Just looking at the face of the student you can see they are thinking: 'What are you talking about?' There is no shame in not understanding and there is no such thing as a stupid question. I admit that if I know the reason or logic behind a series of cuts I remember it better and I can replicate it again in the future.

Pete and I think very differently about carving. He has a good idea of how he wants it to look before he starts, a few lines to lay it out and he's off. I need a logical progression. The bear carving is an example of horrible angles and sometimes difficult foreshortening. In the maquette I had the mother's head too flat which left little wood for her shoulder. When he offers help or advice I want to know the thinking behind it. The dreaded phrase 'because it looks right' is no help, but all too often that is what it boils down to.

When I read that relief carvings should be carved from the back, it took me a long time to understand what this meant – until I looked at it as I would a painting. With a painting you would probably start with a horizon and any background, sky etc., so with my relief I needed to establish where my 'horizon' would be – that would be the part of the relief that is furthest back. In a picture the things that are furthest away are smaller so my thinking is that in a relief they are the bits that need the least wood. As I work forward, slightly more wood is allocated to the middle ground and most wood for the foreground. So on the polar bear carving the mother's back was the furthest back so that was where I needed to take off the most wood. The tucked-in baby was also quite far back so again that would need to be taken back.

Another of Pete's favourite sayings is 'form before detail'. I am guilty of wanting to put too much detail in before I have the form right. Back to the painting analogy, do I paint the windows then paint the house around them or paint the house then put in the windows? Obviously I need to do the latter so I draw the detail, such as eyes, because it shows me if the shape is right and if it looks right. Then there is not so much temptation to carve them. There is nothing worse than carving a beautiful eye only to have someone say: 'That's too far forward.'

Carving wood

One of the things that does differ between women and men is the ability to remove wood in great big lumps. So if you can't be strong, be smart. As I take the wood back I use it to try out angles and shapes. By the time I get where I need to be I have a good idea of what I am aiming for. Being unable to take out large chunks of wood is not confined to women – arthritis and other medical conditions can reduce strength for both sexes.

There is nothing wrong with taking off less – it is not supposed to be a competition, we are supposed to be enjoying it. Frequently some of our female students will look at their pile of chips at the end of the day and compare them to their male counterparts',

bemoaning how small their pile is. When you are going at a piece of wood with a large chisel and taking off huge chunks it is very easy to become a 'red mister'.

One of our dear friends, Ken Willoughby, who sadly died last year, was a 'red mister'. Pete would say: 'Take off wood here Ken so you can establish where the head will be.' Ken would get in there with his gouge and before you knew it he would be knee-deep in shavings and Pete would be saying: 'Ken. Not that much.' He would stand with an innocent look on his face while he and the rest of the class chuckled quietly as Pete tried to perform a rescue. We miss you Ken.

I have not been carving as long as Pete so do not feel embarrassed about picking

his brain. There is so much stuff in there, why let it go to waste? The problem is explaining it in a way we both can follow.

He will go into a long explanation of what he thinks I'm struggling with but, in actual fact, it is a totally different aspect. I spend quite a bit of time thinking: 'You don't understand what I don't understand.' Having someone like him around has one other drawback – presumed knowledge. 'I thought you knew how to do that.' Nope, never seen that done that way before. He has picked up all sorts of tips from all sorts of carvers over the years and he says he never stops learning. Unfortunately he doesn't always remember to whom he has passed on these little gems.



A new student, Hannah, with her first ever carving of a lettering plaque in English oak

Something different

The polar bear carving is something different for me. I carve a lot of polar bears but not usually on such a large scale. I tend to carve small so I can take it to various classes. It is a lot of fun getting a mallet and chisel and hammering away at a large piece of wood, but it seems to take so long to get anywhere. At least with the smaller carvings you seem to make faster progress, but I will persevere. Debra Garside's picture struck such a chord I really want to do it justice. So it's back to the workshop to start shifting more wood.

We are all different, we are all the same, and we are carvers. The end result may not always be as important as the fun and pleasure we have getting there – after all, it's just a piece of wood. ■



Two-seater Maple bench made by a student as part of their training on the 12 week woodworking course



Sharpening small knives

Nic Westermann explains the function of the different grinds found on smaller blades

While researching this article I became increasingly aware of the differences between green woodworking, which is my background, and knife carving, which is the type of carving most readers would identify with. A very useful conversation with Peter Benson gave me quite a shock; principles I have held and that are revered as gospel among green woodworkers were not, it seems, universally held.

Definitions and differences

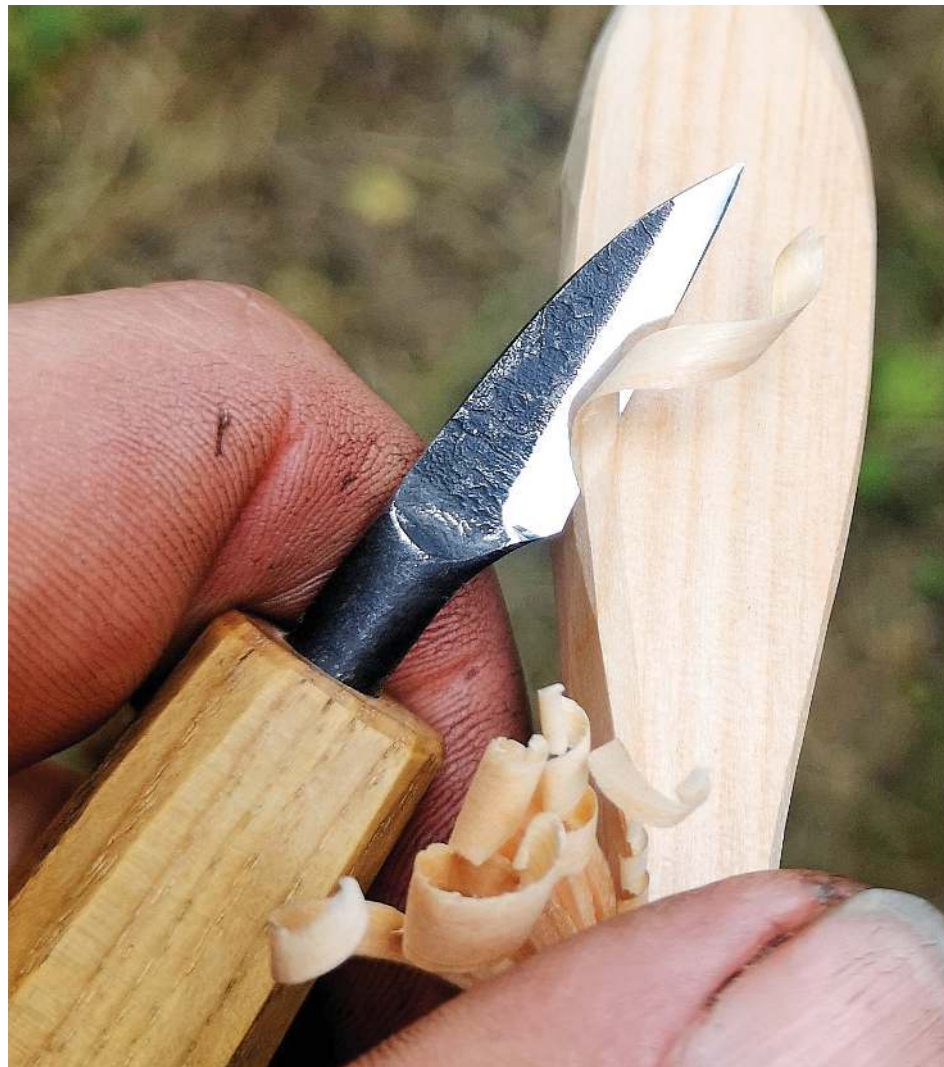
- **Green woodworking:** Is essentially working wood that isn't dry or seasoned – but it goes further than that. Often the starting point for a project will be a section of trunk or branch in the round with the bark on, sometimes even the whole tree will be felled. The range of items made is vast. Larger products such as gates and hurdles are produced in this manner, although in this article we will be assuming that treen such as spoons are being produced. Working with green wood is much easier on the hands as it is softer, but larger pieces may need careful drying to avoid checks. Often final finishing cuts are taken after drying. A green woodworker's kit may be quite diverse, encompassing axe, adze and froe, but for fine shaping knives are generally favoured over chisels and gouges. Commonly used woods include birch, alder or cherry.
- **Knife carving:** This is hopefully self-explanatory, but the assumption is that seasoned wood will be used. This will generally be harder but will take a finer finish. Commonly used woods include lime/basswood (*Tilia* spp.) and jelutong (*Dyera costulata*).

Bevels

The greatest difference between the knives used by these two branches of woodworking is the question of long, flat bevels. This is so ingrained among green woodworkers that years ago I was told a story about how, at a carving festival in Sweden, the Grandfather of sloyd, Wille Sundqvist, told someone that their knife's bevels weren't flat. This was relayed to me in hushed tones as it was such a serious insult!

Recently I attended a spoon-carving festival and wanting to share some of the ideas in this article. I put out some chip carvers with very shallow grind terminating in a tiny secondary bevel – but getting a spoon carver to even pick up, let alone use, a blade with a secondary bevel was hard work. The shock and realisation on their faces when they actually tried one will live with me for a long time, a true lightbulb moment for both of us.

Another marked difference is that it can be a point of honour for green woodworkers



PHOTOGRAPHS BY NIC WESTERMANN

to use the simplest and sparsest of tool kits. It is common to own only one of each tool, and for example a long knife is held short and somewhat dangerously for decorations such as chip carving. As this article will show, if only one knife is owned and used then the grind will not be optimum for all cuts.

Knife carvers, on the other hand, are happy and proud to have a large collection of blades and, as a toolmaker, I know which attitude I prefer.

Knife carvers, however, are quite comfortable with convex edges and secondary bevels, and I think this is partly to do with the forms they are producing – there are few long, flat, facets in most of their carvings. Sloyd, however, revels in these forms and so flat/Scandi bevels make more sense. Or are the forms we all carve influenced by the bevels on the blades we use?

Now this isn't to say knife carvers will not use flat bevelled blades, but if they do they are unlikely to use them exclusively. If they need to work inside a convex form

rather than try to force these blades to turn or spin in a cut they will use a gouge.



From top to bottom: convex, secondary and flat-ground bevels



Selection of carving blades all with single flat bevel



Three convex bevel knives with no second bevel

Convex vs flat grinds

In the last article we looked at sharpening sloyd knives, covering how blades such as these with wide, flat bevels could be used to guide and stabilise a cut. Convex bevels have the opposite effect as described earlier. However, while a flat bevel provides great support for a cut it is also very hard to come out of the cut for this same reason – the fulcrum for making this cut is on the back of the bevel.

Conversely, the instability of a convex or secondary bevel allows it great manoeuvrability as the fulcrum is at the edge. Understanding this trade-off between stability and manoeuvrability can really help to decide what bevel form will suit the type of carving you want to do.

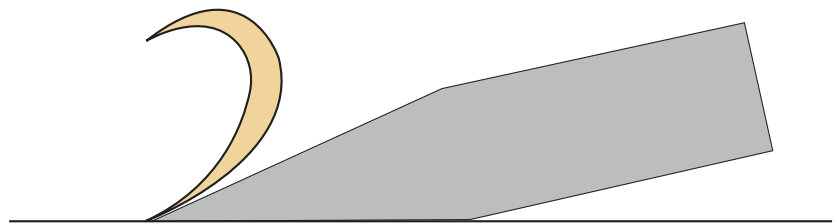
Edge geometry

The final edge angle on all tools cutting softer woods is pretty similar at 20–25°, so simple geometry dictates that the length of the bevel, if it is flat, is a simple function of the thickness.

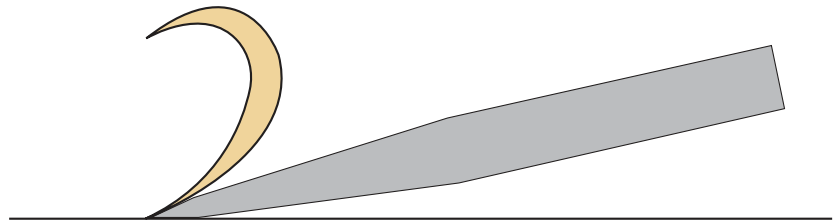
Certainly one option is to use thinner stock to reduce the thickness of the steel behind the bevel but at a certain point a blade will become too flexible to be controllable or safe to use without breaking.

This is where a different grind is often used. A primary grind reduces the thickness of the blade at the edge while still maintaining a thick enough spine to provide rigidity. However, if taken to an edge it will fail immediately, so a secondary bevel is put on, either flat or convex, the width of this depending on the application, bearing in mind the stresses put on the edge and the degree of support needed.

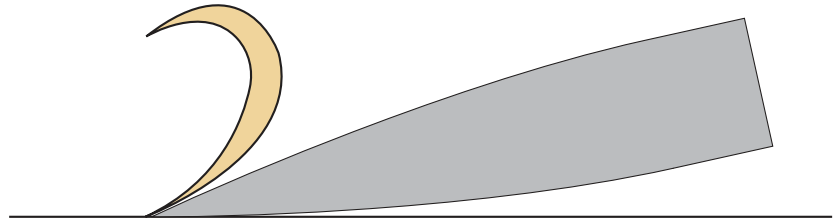
Doing this allows a short, manoeuvrable bevel to be used but also allows more thickness in the spine to provide rigidity.



Scandi/flat bevels – support and guide cut

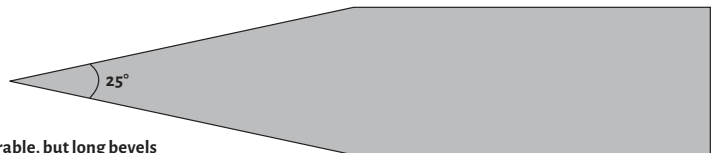


Short secondary bevel – little support



Convex bevel – very little support

Simple edge geometry



A 25° edge is durable, but long bevels produced may not be advantageous



A 10° primary grind edge will fail. The bevel length would make the blade unusable for most cuts



A 25° secondary bevel reinforces the fragile 10° primary grind and produces a short bevel

Plunge cutting

There is a separate case when a knife is not used to take a shaving but to plunge cut. With no shaving to deflect and allow clearance as the blade goes deeper, the wedging action from the bevels becomes an important factor. With a single bevel or Scandi blade this action increases proportionally to the depth of cut and at a certain point the blade can penetrate no further without splitting the wood.

This action is used in stab knives and the wood fibres are crushed to leave small, triangular impressions in the wood. A single flat-ground bevel is essential in this instance.

With chip carving similar cuts are made, but the aim is to slice into the wood and remove a chip, so easy penetration without crushing fibres is more important, hence the use of secondary bevels.

Green wood is more flexible and resistant to this splitting action which is, I think, why flat bevelled chip carvers are used with more success. However, even in the softest of green woods, a blade with a secondary bevel is much easier to use.

Kolrosing blades are used to score very narrow lines that are later filled with pigment. These are wide-angle flat bevel blades that use the wedging action to separate fibres and also to limit the depth of cut.

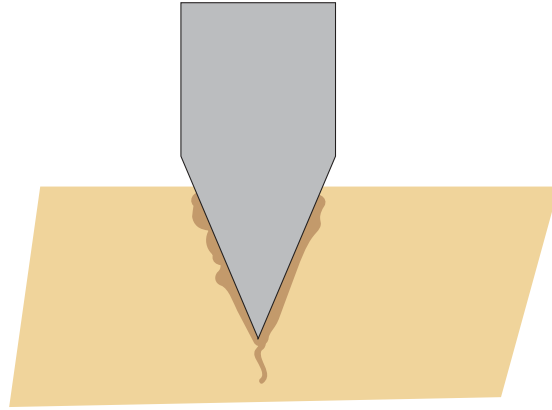
This article is meant to be on sharpening, not on grinding blades, so why the detail? Well, the two-stage system of sharpening that we are using starts first with understanding what bevel form is required and why. Although you can't easily replicate some grinds others are possible to modify surprisingly easily with just hand tools.

Resharpening

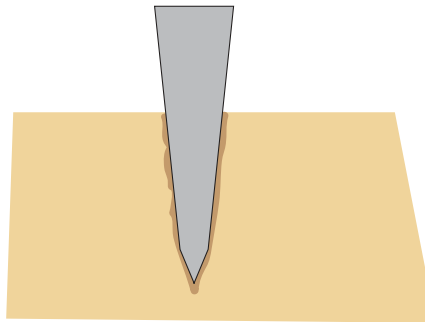
For example, in blades that are only going to be used for plunge cutting, such as chip carvers a very fine edge with a short secondary bevel is going to be helpful. The irony is that when you get a blade from the factory it may well be like this, but being fine means it is also prone to damage as you will be getting used to using it. Repeated sharpening on the secondary bevel will make the blade more robust but, sadly, less easy to use. However, at this point you should be acquainted with the blade enough to cope better with a more fragile version.

There is a similar paradox in that a convex edge is actually very hard to measure accurately but unless a carver is meticulous in their approach it is virtually guaranteed that, over time, the edge will become more obtuse, making it more robust but less efficient at cleanly cutting. This presents a dilemma for manufacturers – do you provide an edge that is a bit too fine, aware that after the owner sharpens it a few times it will end up about right, or do you sell a safe edge that will stand up to a bit of abuse, knowing that it will become markedly less effective over time? Conversely, a blade with flat bevels has a much higher chance of retaining its original grind angle over its lifetime, it is so much easier for beginners to maintain as the bevel acts as a guide during sharpening as well as cutting.

The issue is that, unless care is taken, a blade's edge geometry can radically change over a



Wedging action from 25° or greater bevels. The blade will compress the wood, possibly causing cracking. Lots of force needed

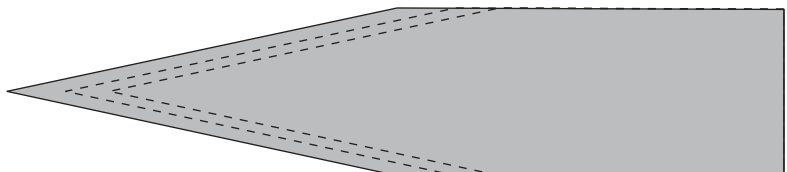


Wedging action greatly reduced by primary/secondary grind. Deeper cuts are easily made with less force

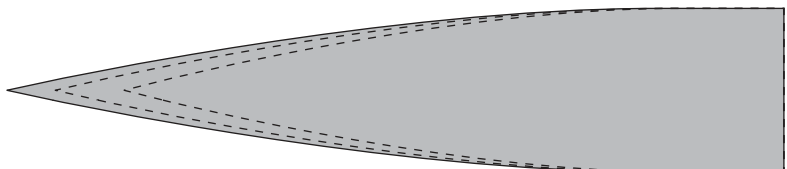
The action of repeated sharpenings on different bevel forms



Repeated sharpening of secondary bevel means it will lengthen over time



Bevel length of Scandi grind blades does not alter with repeated sharpenings



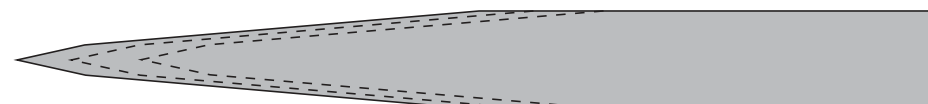
Bevel angle is likely to steepen with repeated sharpenings with a convex grind

series of sharpenings, altering how it will cut.

On a blade where you want to keep the secondary bevel short I would advise getting into the habit of performing a maintenance-sharpen on the flats periodically. This can be done on a coarse stone – the final finish on the flats on the primary grind is not that critical, the wedging action from the secondary bevel means that frictional forces on the flats tends not to be that great.

If you have a beginner or heavy-handed individual coming to your workshop handing them a more robust blade with a longer secondary bevel might be in order. If you haven't been keeping up with the 'maintenance sharpening' this will have happened naturally, but it is fairly easy to achieve with a coarse stone – going back the other way takes much longer as there is so much more steel that needs to be removed, so think it through before trying this modification. Another option when this may be necessary is if you are tackling a very hard wood. The irony here though is that, although the blade will now stand up to heavier use, you will need to apply even more force to get it through the wood.

Some detail blades will have a Scandinavian/flat grind as bevel support is helpful. Sharpening these is very similar to the



To maintain the short secondary bevel, maintenance grinds on the primary grind are needed,

methods shown in the last article, although as the bevels are very short, it is not normally worth going to the trouble of hollow grinding and then putting tramlines on – there would be too much going on in a narrow strip of steel.

Small blades

In some ways, sharpening small blades and therefore bevels is easier as there is less steel to remove. However, in carving the support of a wider bevel is often lost, so keeping everything dead flat is tricky. Marking the bevels of a blade with pen is a good way to check your progress, but a slightly convex bevel is less of an issue here as these blades are generally not reliant on the degree of support found in larger sloyd blades.

I have spent ages talking about this but the reality is that the actual sharpening process

is often very simple and easy as the amount of steel that is needed to be removed is so much less than larger blades – the difficulty comes in knowing where to take it from.



The longer bevel blade on the right was easier to sharpen due to feedback from the stone. On the two shorter bevelled blades the marker pen is very helpful

Refining the edge

Once you are happy that you have set your bevel angle with a coarse abrasive then the final stage is to work down through the grits, removing the scratches left by the previous ones. It is worth embracing the concept of just removing the scratches as there is no need to cut any deeper. It will be an increasingly tiny amount of steel as you progress as well. Going any further is not only a waste of time but risks altering the edge geometry that you have so carefully set. Marking with pen can be a good way to see you have got through these scratches.

It is hard to advise what grit sequences to use. The bevels are short as we are only talking about small knives, but may also be very narrow

– this means the amount of steel removed working through the grits can be minuscule. If this is the case then making larger jumps in grit is quite viable. It is possible to go straight to a 3-5,000 grit on a blade with a secondary bevel and then strop – each successive grit you use is a chance to mess up the geometry so in this instance fewer sequences really can be more. There is no point having a perfectly polished bevel if it is no longer the correct shape. In the last article on sloyd blades I suggested caution with final stropping on suede or leather as this can easily round an otherwise flat bevel. However, if you have a blade with a convex edge or micro/secondary bevel this is not much of an issue, so stropping can be a very effective way of touching up these blades almost indefinitely.

Blade	Bevel form	Edge angle	Notes
Kolorosing	Flat	30-40°	Only tip is ever used
Stab	Flat	60°	Never needs sharpening
Flat plane	Flat with microbevel	20-25°	Strop only
Chip	Flat with very short secondary	20-25°	Only first half of edge is used
General detail	Flat or convex	20-25°	
Bird carving/ caricature	Flat or convex	20-25°	
GW/W	Flat	20-25°	Flat, only flat



When refining a very narrow bevel such as this, presenting the blade at the correct angle with each new grit is hard to do. Using fewer grits in your sequence will often yield better results



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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 kuxsa carver; and Adrian Lloyd, a UK-based full-time craftsman, teacher and toolmaker.

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Paul Wilson

Meet a true master carver and gilder

For some reason I enjoy any trip to East Anglia. Once you get past the horrors of the motorways, it has a character very much of its own, a calm placid landscape with many fine views. So it was that I found Paul Wilson's cream-painted and half-timbered residence in the middle of the agricultural flatlands of Norfolk. He made me welcome and with little bidding began telling me his fascinating life history.

Currently, Paul isn't working due to sport and work-related injuries which mean he cannot do any kind of work task for very long. However, he is due to have a couple of operations, which he hopes will allow him to get back in the saddle, so to speak.

A brief history

Having started out as a BA art student in the 1970s, during the summer holidays he saw an advert for Griss & Butlers, Hertfordshire, a woodcarving business seeking an apprentice. It was either that or trying to be a standalone artist, which is fairly impossible to make a living at, or to become an art teacher which really wasn't Paul's forte. So it was that he was apprenticed for five years. He learned well from Barry Griss, but they eventually parted company. He wanted to try his hand at gilding after working for a short while with Mike Fiskin, although Paul is, in fact, a largely self-taught gilder, something he does with proficiency. He set up his own workshop and studio in the 1980s, specialising in restoration, conservation and bespoke projects for interior designers. Being a self-employed woodcarver was never going to be easy in a rather specialised market for hand-carved work and the events of the 9/11 terrorist attacks meant designers and wealthy clients suddenly cancelled work or stopped ordering. So Paul decided to start a building company because there were so many fine properties dotted around rural Norfolk which needed serious amounts of work done on them. His own home is indeed testament to his very professional building skills. Also a little known fact is that he has been a pop band manager. Currently his recording studio is, however, a repository for various carving moulds and associated paraphernalia.

Restorative pastime

The day I visited, Paul was busy lining out his vintage boat, which sits underneath a vast, enclosed scaffolding canopy. He can no longer stand at the carving bench for very long but he has to be occupied, so even though he is not working at the moment, rebuilding his pride and joy a bit at a time is a way to stay busy. Next year he reckons it will finally hit the water off the Norfolk coast and realise his latest nautical ambition of being an active sailor.

A music stand to commemorate Thomas Chippendale's 300 centenary



In the workshop

Paul's workshop isn't the tidiest but I think most of us would admit the same. There was a pile of TG&V boards which he had machined on his spindle moulder the previous day, ready to fit to the exterior of his boat.

He agreed to demonstrate his typical carving technique, roughing out a parakeet wing. He went at the block of lime with a vengeance, whether heel-of-hand or mallet, thumping the gouge into the wood.

It occurred to me that Paul is a risk taker – in a good way. He aims for results, and superb results at that, but it's the bit in the middle that has to be got out of the way.

After that I wanted to see his gilding technique. I had already seen the photos of various amazing projects both 'bright' gilded and 'distressed' gilding.

Gilding technique

I wanted to see a master at work. He was happy to demonstrate how he does it. So thoroughly, in fact, that we have turned it into a separate

technique article which anyone keen to give it a try, can learn from.

Mouldy work

Paul states: 'Adams was a great one for moulds. He would carve a piece and make rubber moulds so he could then make the reverse carving and create a 'family' of different designs by taking a mould.'

'He was melting an early form of rubber for the original moulds. The National Gallery has examples, carved in a block in relief, of plaster-waxed moulds.'

'Any "undertow" (the underside of the carving) would snap off, that was the problem. He used gum resin, sap, he more or less invented the lost wax process by pouring wax over carvings to create the moulds. I'm doing something similar today but using modern silicone rubber which is much more flexible. In past they have all experimented. Chippendale, for example, made really light chair designs, which often snapped until he found the most successful ones that looked elegant but maintained their strength.'

Key carving projects

Paul has considerable experience of 18th-century carving and gilding having extensively restored Grinling Gibbons carvings at Hampton Court and St Paul's Cathedral. He has also been involved with projects at Chatsworth House, Sandringham, Balmoral Castle, Windsor Castle, 10 Downing St, Uppark House and the Fitzwilliam Museum. In addition, he has designed commissions for many private clients including the Sultan of Brunei and various celebrities including a marble-topped table for Madonna.

In 2017 he designed and carved the parakeets and Prince of Wales feathers on the Paradise Fountain Chandelier at the Champagne bar at Decorex 2017.

I spent a fascinating morning seeing how effortless carving and gilding can be in the hands of someone as creative and skilful as Paul Wilson. He is very down to earth and able to recount fascinating examples of the commissions he has undertaken. I've interviewed a number of carvers and he certainly ranks among the best for sure.



Parakeet crown for a chandelier



Roughing out a parakeet wing



A fantasy light with a hand carved gilt dragon reaching for a resin cast tree and a 'shed' cornsnake skin shade sitting on burr walnut



Sharpening a chisel taking care to use all this 30-year-old stone, so it doesn't become grooved I move from straight strokes to figure of eight. He often breaks up and regrinds stones to suit particular tools.

Question and answers

When and how did you start carving and why?

As I said before, it was either try to make it as an artist or as an art teacher, which really isn't me, so the apprenticeship at Griss & Butlers seemed ideal.

What was the very first complete piece you made?

During my apprenticeship I had to make 100 carved patrae for my training. They were the size of a 2p and I had to carve, gesso and cut up and vein them ready to gild.

What are your influences in your work?

Grinling Gibbons, who came from Holland bringing his own unique style of carving. He was a favourite of Charles II. Barry Griss, who I worked with, Thomas Chippendale, Mackintosh's overall design themes, Henry Holland.

Barry Griss taught me the importance of the 'fourth dimension' – the reverse of a piece, not just the front and the sides. It stretched both of us. I attended Barry's funeral recently. He had taught me a hell of a lot.

What are your biggest mistakes workshop/woodcarving wise?

You don't make mistakes. Something might snap a bit off – glue it back on. If it's a bad day just burn it.

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

I'm trying to renew a dying trade by bringing forward using resins and mouldings. The accuracy of both my carving and my moulding work is so similar that my carvings have sometimes been assumed to be moulded, which is very annoying indeed.

What has been your oddest experience in carving?

Carving a lead crown, followed by restoring an ivory crucifix which was stolen just three days later.

What has been your most memorable experience carving wise?

Working on Hampton Court, Windsor Castle and Uppark House.

What's the best bit of carving advice you've ever received?

'Attitude' – Barry Griss said don't bother being 'arty farty', come into the workshop, 'turn that switch' and just work, when you finish, lock up, turn off and go home.

Have you ever given up on a project?

Short answer – no.

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

Not as much work around, no mirrors and chairs and no 'strip and redo'.

What is your favourite piece of equipment?

My scrollsaw, necessary for cutting out prior to carving.

What would you like to happen in the future?

Loads of work to come in and a workshop full of restoration pieces – I'm not expecting that, to be honest. I couldn't handle site work now, I'm just not fit enough. I prefer the workshop environment anyway. I have friends in Hamburg and Bavaria where traditional skills still count. They say come to Germany you can be very rich. Also the Czech Republic, but I don't want to move from this country.

What are your likes and dislikes regarding the world of carving?

The influx of cheap pattern-carved pieces. The Chinese use laser carvers, likewise Italians with their Madonna and child carvings – you would be pushed to tell the difference between one started on a machine and then finished by a carver, rather than being properly hand-carved from start to finish. Those carvings are for effect, not for heritage.

What helpful advice do you have for other carvers?

Don't be 'arty farty' and be professional.

I'm judging this year's competition at the London Art School; six people are graduating but there is no work there in wood, but there is work in stone carving. Nick Robinson had five commissions at Chelsea flower show this year.

Top tip/hint for fellow carvers?

For restoration carving, use a piece of Perspex and a chinagraph pencil then, looking into a mirror, do straight cuts, then design the replacement piece with the chinagraph pencil. Use greaseproof or tracing paper to draw out the cut line in the right place, which will be 90% right on the Perspex, and then add flow and detail. Tweak it and then you will have an accurate result. ▶



Now I suppose I'd better get on and fit that T&G!

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Gilding technique

Expert gilder Paul Wilson, the subject of our carving feature, shows you how to gild an awkward claw foot



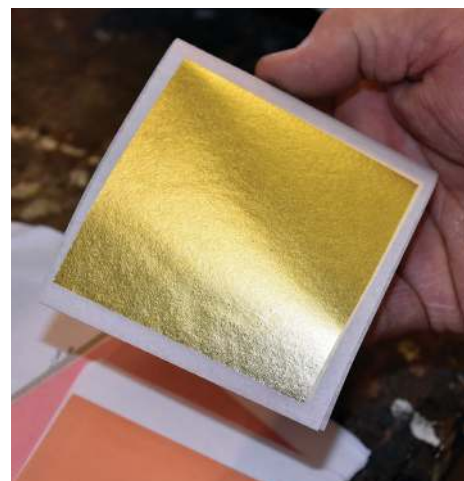
Paul Wilson freely admits he is largely a self-taught gilder, but his work is exceptional. He manages to make a difficult and intricate job look remarkably easy. First, he picked an old screw-topped jar from a selection on a dusty shelf: 'I think that's the one, it doesn't smell that bad.' You could have fooled me, it smelt pretty revolting. 'Skins, some years old, the older the better for what I want.' He meant rabbit skin size, very watery, less pungent when brushed on to the gessoed, yellow painted 'bottoms' then 'bowl' (red) on the 'tops'. After that, holding a gilder's cushion with its draught shield at the back, transferring a leaf of gold and gently brushing it flattish and ready to go. Then, using a knife, Paul sliced the leaf, again and again, cutting it into smaller pieces to suit the awkward internal shapes in a scroll foot. I always thought having a head of hair was essential for creating static with a gilder's tip, but apparently not. A few flicks, then pick up a piece, carry it gently to the work, brush it down and repeat endlessly, until having to select a new leaf and starting all over again. It was somehow mesmeric watching a skilled craftsman lifting each piece into the correct overlapping position until good coverage was achieved, ready for the agate burnisher to smooth and shine the whole surface. 'I leave it to dry overnight before burnishing it,' he says. I'm impressed even now, but rubbing back the gold to reveal glimpses of the red base underneath is an art in itself. Being able to create this effect is very attractive to some clients but is also good for blending in sympathetic repairs. 'A German company makes a special stick-on gold leaf. It's a bit bright, but it is an alternative to the traditional sort. They said it couldn't possibly be used for burnished work – I proved them wrong of course.' I agreed it was a bit bling in appearance but he had managed to somehow break through the surface convincingly to give a good distressed finish.



The aim is to produce a worn distressed effect like this leaf form



Gold leaf is, of course, extremely thin and is tricky to manipulate. The shield at the back prevents draughts disturbing the very thin leaf



Here is a more modern, German-made alternative that doesn't need rabbit skin glue. A bit brighter than normal, note the textured surface



The rabbit skin size is gently heated with water to produce the working solution which consists of collagen from rabbit bones



This is the disgusting-smelling cold mixture, now some 35 plus years old which apparently gives the best result



The surface is burnished all over with a brush to to break through the size layer as part of the pre-distressing process



Using the size water to pre-distress the surface of the 'bowl'



The flat edge knife used for cutting the leaf, is given a quick sharpen for clean cutting and avoiding tears in the leaf



The gilders tip is prepared by combing it so it is silky smooth for a good 'pick up and put down' on the job



The book or pad is opened and a leaf gently blown on to the tray. Two leaves should be sufficient for one side of the claw foot



Pick-up with the knife to help the leaf lie flat. Each leaf needs to be spread out before attempting to cut it into pieces



The very gentlest of breaths is needed to persuade the leaf to flatten out fully. Note the soft surface underneath for cutting on



The surface has the size applied to it, ready for gilding



The leaf is cut in half, then again. If awkward areas are to be gilded then ever smaller pieces are used



The static trick, a gentle brush and the fine squirrel hairs have enough power to lift a piece of gold leaf



A section of leaf is now carefully captured, ready to press down on the job



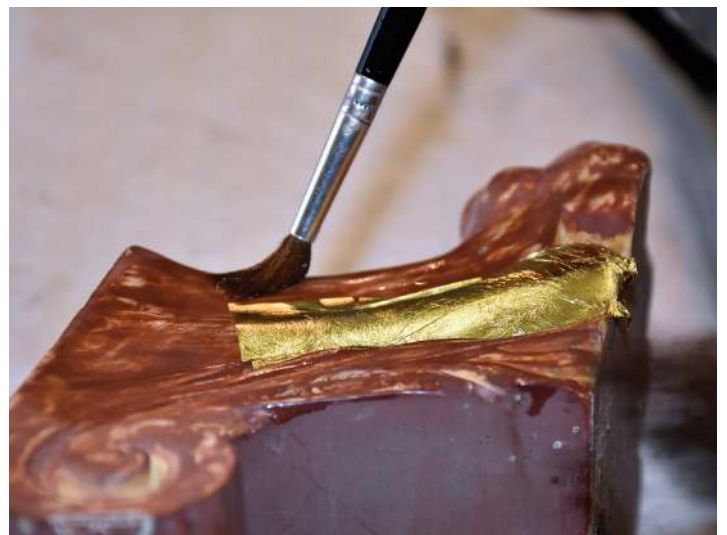
Pressed down, like so, roughly following the direction of the carved swirl



The 'dabber' is touched to the lips to check it is dry, no wet size which would result in the gold leaf becoming stained



The gold leaf is dabbed into place. The size has previously dried enough to avoid contaminating the brush



More size is applied to an adjoining area. Each piece of leaf slightly overlaps the last, although you can build up density as well if you need to



Gently laying down a smaller piece. Gilding is a time-consuming process although it gets quicker with practice



The 'bottoms', the deep ravines are already painted yellow where there may be any 'misses' in the gilding, filling in missing areas with gold leaf is known as 'faulting'



Dabbing down the latest additions, pushing them gently into place



Gradually the surface gets covered in gold leaf. Any missed areas are easily filled in with smaller pieces



Laying another section. The visual effect is rapidly becoming apparent



Applying the old size water to tone the gold and then while wet, distress the gold



Cleaning off the old size residue from the gold with methylene chloride i.e wax-less stripper, this also tones the gold



Using an agate tipped burnisher to give the foot is burnished finish

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Celtic jewel

Dave Western shows how to carve a Celtic knot pendant



I love Celtic knotwork and I also love to hoard little bits of wood that I just can't make myself throw away. Occasionally, I come up with an idea that uses one or two of these little timber gems... and this is one of those ideas.

Over the years, I've seen lots and lots of metal knotwork jewellery, but I rarely see much carved from wood. That which is carved of wood tends to be small and not particularly eye-catching and I suspect much of it is CNC or laser carved.

For this project, I wanted to design a piece which is obviously hand carved and is to be worn fairly high on the body. I also wanted it to be very noticeable, so designed it to sit a little bit above midway on the breastbone. It is, indeed, large and impressive, but I don't believe it is too heavy or obtrusive. The pendant also curves slightly to follow the gentle curve of the breastbone and not stick out at the ends.

I carved mine from a lovely piece of yew

(*Taxus baccata*), which is both beautifully coloured and is a nice link back to the ancient Celts and Druids who revered it.

The original block was just over 150mm long by 75mm wide and 13mm deep. I made the knot to fit it almost exactly, but you can easily reduce or enlarge it to suit. I think the six-inch width gives it some serious visual appeal without it becoming overwhelming on the body.

The pendant will give you plenty of opportunity to practise your carving as the knots travel in all directions across the grain. If you persevere, you'll be rewarded with a wonderful item of jewellery that is sure to solicit many complimentary comments!

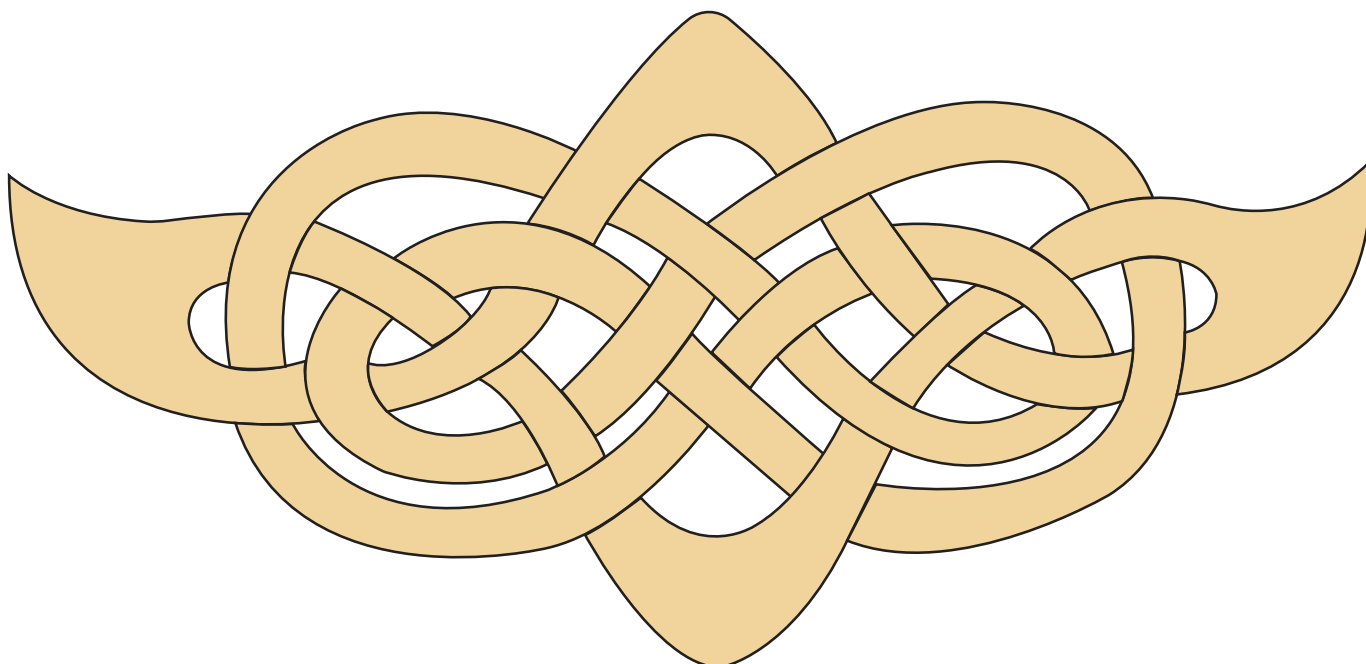
Rough-shaping the pendant

I started off by creating a drawing of what I would like to carve. If you're keen, you can

design your own pendant, but the easiest thing is just to photocopy the one in this article.

I curved the front face of the block by running it through the bandsaw and then cleaning it up with a block plane and a bit of abrasive paper. If you lack a bandsaw, you can achieve the same result using planes, a stout chisel an axe or even a sander. However you go at it, aim for a nice, fair curve leaving about 6mm of wood thickness at the ends and the full 13mm in the middle. Once it was shaped I glued the drawing straight to the workpiece.

Because Celtic knotwork is fairly tricky and precise, and because I want to keep the cut edges fairly close to 90° to the face, I opt to cut with a scrollsaw whenever possible. If you lack a scrollsaw, you can drill holes with a standard drill or press and then cut each section with a knife, but be prepared for the journey to be a bit slower.



The partially shaped yew blank



The pattern affixed to the timber



A scrollsaw is ideal for cutting the project to shape and piercing

Over and under pattern

With the knotwork all cut out, the next step is to start creating the 'over and under' effect. This is the most critical phase of the carving and you have to be certain everything is in order before you get too committed. If the over/under sequence gets off course the results are disappointing and, frankly, a bit infuriating. Hopefully, your drawing is correct (you can blame me if this one is out of whack) but it is worth going over the whole drawing using a straight knife to cut $\frac{1}{16}$ in deep lines at each intersection. As you do this operation,

you are both insuring your knotwork is in order and that you get a nice, clean clearance when you start removing wood.

With the intersections all scribed, I recommend clearing just a small amount of material to begin with. Dig down about 1.5mm and start around 6mm from the intersection. This will let you mark each intersection clearly but, should there be a mistake somewhere, you won't have removed so much material you can't salvage it.

This is your last opportunity to ensure all the knotwork is going to flow as it should, so it is

worth taking your time and doing it carefully.

Often, carvers leave their knotwork at this stage, but I find the flat planes between intersections make the knotwork appear a bit static. I prefer to gently curve each section between intersections as it gives the knot a softer and more touchable look. I take a small bit of material off with each pass, moving slowly toward the centre of the section. Be very conscious of grain direction and don't take too much material with each cut – it is very easy to split off more than you bargained for at this stage.



Use a knife to incise the lines that dip under other knot strands



Use a straight chisel to remove some waste to define the strands that go under others



Define the over and under strands more fully.

Chamfering and cleaning up

Once all the overs and unders are attended to and I am happy with each section, I take a gentle chamfer off the front edges. This softens the knot and makes it look less mechanical. Be careful not to take too much though as this can make the knot look a bit too soft and string-like. I find about 1.5mm top and side makes a perfect chamfer.

At this stage you should have consistent levels throughout the carving with each upper section being nicely fair as it curves over the lower sections. There should be no jaggy bits or noticeable chips anywhere along the carving and you should ensure that each intersection is as tidy as possible. The more cleanup work you can do with your knife now the less sanding and filing you have to do later on.

I like to give my edge chamfers a gentle sanding with some worn 150 grit cloth-backed abrasive. I find this smooths out any variations and makes the knot appear to be nice and soft. As with the chamfering, be careful not to get too carried away or the strands will get rounded over by your abrasive and will look like shoelaces. Just sand enough to fair the edges along the length of each run.

Although I prefer the bright finish that comes from knife work to the duller look of sandpapered work, I often find that a light sanding with very fine abrasive (220 and



Using a knife to chamfer the edges



Here are the completed chamfers



Sand the edges



Now sand the other areas nice and smooth

higher) tidies up the face planes and matches them a bit better to the sanded edges. Its not a must-do thing and I am sure there are many

out there with surer knife hands than mine who will be quite happy with an off-the-tool finish. Either way, if you opt to sand, now is the time.

The rear face

With the front face all finished, cut the curve for the back face. I must admit that I created a support cradle and rough-shaped the back on a bandsaw. But you can achieve the same result with chisels, gouges, bent knives, spokeshaves, scrapers and a host of other time-intensive tools. If you are using aggressive methods, just remember the carving is pretty fragile and the front face needs to be protected from scrape damage at all times.

Aim for a consistent and fair curve across the entire carving. I tried to maintain about 6mm of thickness for the entire curve and was constantly on the lookout for one side becoming fatter or thinner than the other. Be cautious as you remove stock and frequently sight along the curve to make

certain you are comfortable with how it is shaping up.

Once the back curve is as you want it, you'll have to pencil in all your under and over lines. Remember that they need to be the opposite of those on the front face, so take your time laying them out. Repeat the previous carving stages to mimic your carving of the front face and be extra cautious not to apply too much pressure as you cut. The carving is getting pretty thin in places and will start becoming unforgiving.

If you've cut out this pattern on a bandsaw or scrollsaw, you'll notice that the edges might be a bit 'fluffy'. Take some time to carve them smooth and to get that nice, shiny, off-the-tool look. The crisper you can make these edge cuts, the nicer your finish will look at the end of the project.



Creating a gently curved back



Here is the curve I wanted



Mark the over and under sections



Carefully refine the outer form

Finishing touches



Mark the position for the pins at each end to hold the neck strap



Drill a hole for the pin



Glue the pin in place

Because this piece will be worn as jewellery, it is necessary to insert a small eye pin or eye screw (I used something called a fish hook eye pin which is available at craft shops or jeweller supply shops). I carefully drew out lines on both ends of the piece which would guide me in placing the pin. Try to keep the lines as even to one another as possible.

Drilling for the pin is a hair-raising and potentially troublesome business. Make sure the bit (1.5mm is the smallest I have) is centred and following your line and that it is not going to burst out of the front or back faces of the carving. Proceed slowly



Apply a finish of your choice to the carved work

and very cautiously and make sure not to drill too far.

Because the hole I drilled was slightly larger than the diameter of the pin, I used some cyanoacrylate glue to fasten the pin firmly in place. Align the pin eye as in the photo, so that when you place a jump ring through it, the jump ring sits vertically and not horizontally.

Apply a few coats of an oil finish and your pendant is almost complete. I would recommend an oil finish over a surface finish such as varnish as it won't clog up in the intersections and spoil the nice, crisp look of your carving. The finish I used was a store-bought Danish oil preparation that seemed to work just fine for this project. ▶



The front view



The back view



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PHOTOGRAPH BY PETER BENSON

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Dave Western shows how to design and carve three anniversary spoons



Decorative panels

Murray Taylor looks at decorative panels, their design and carving methods

There is a very interesting book called *Manual of Traditional Woodcarving*, which was first published by Cassell & Co. London in 1911 and was republished by Dover Press, New York in 1977. Dover Press has very kindly given me permission to reproduce illustrations from this book in my article.

I have long been interested in decorative panels and the diverse carving methods that can be employed to produce them. They can be incised, pierced, relief or chip carved, for example. Each of these techniques is quite different from the another, producing visually interesting results but each having its own characteristics.

I have encountered a certain amount of confusion with regard to the differences between the various styles of and techniques employed in the making of decorative panels, so let's take a closer look and try to get a better understanding. Each of the different styles can stand alone or be used in conjunction with another.



A panel using both relief and pierced carving

TYPES OF CARVING

Incised carving

Incised carving is used when a deep undulation in the surface is neither desirable nor practical. It is achieved by delineating the pattern with a V-tool or a knife and then performing some surface modelling on the design. It is often found on stools, tabletops and trays, for example.



Modelling an incised panel. Note that I am using a modified version of the main project panel. It is not always possible to change over in this way but it provides a useful exercise and interesting variations

Pierced carving

Pierced carving produces a very light and decorative form with many applications. It can be used for decorative screens, wall plaques and to augment name plaques and house numbers. Very early examples can be found in churches in the form of rood screens.

The carving of a pierced panel requires quite a lot more work but can be achieved in various ways, as we will see later in this article.



An Art Nouveau plaque depicting daffodils

Some carvers' definitions:

1. **Delineating:** Defining a line drawing using a V-tool, knife or other method. Creating a clear separation from one area and another.
2. **Setting:** Cutting a line down to a lower level using gouges or a knife.
3. **Wasting:** The removal of wood to a desired level leaving the raised pattern to be modelled.
4. **Modelling:** The shaping of the raised design.

Relief carving

This is when a pattern is made to stand out by setting in, wasting away and modelling.



Modelling a relief-carved panel

Chip carving

I have covered basic chip carving techniques in past articles, but in this example I have adapted a drawing for a pierced panel to allow it to be chip carved. The panel I have used is the one from the project and if you look carefully you will see where I have altered the drawing so that the chips are more manageable.



Carving the amended drawing

Carving of a pierced panel

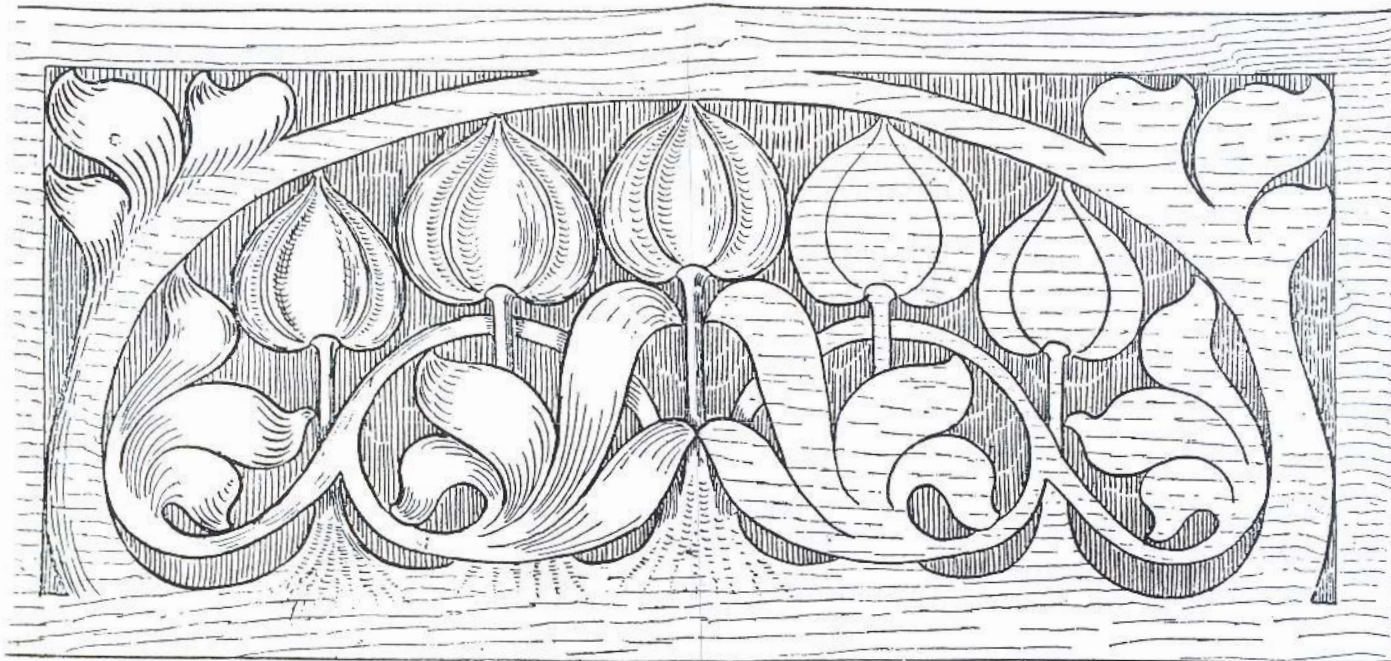
I am now going to look in detail at the carving of a pierced panel in an Art Nouveau design. This design, first published in 1911, still looks good as an example of this type of carving today. For this exercise I have chosen a piece of lime approximately 400 x 200 x 17mm.

Trace the drawing using black carbon or graphite paper – blue carbon paper leaves nasty smudge marks which are hard to remove. Don't press too hard through the drawing as this can leave indentations in the wood. If you find that you need to press harder to make a mark it is time to use a new piece of carbon paper. When the tracing

is complete check to make sure you have not missed any lines – this can lead to no end of trouble with a pierced carving. Now go over the entire drawing with a soft pencil. I use a 0.7mm 2B lead for this job and you should end up with something like the one in the photograph.

NB: It is best to trace free-hand, but it can be very helpful to use French curves when going over the tracing with a soft pencil.

At this stage it is worth taking a little time to look at the drawing and be sure you know which areas are to be removed. When you are sure, you should mark them as shown. I use a soft red pencil.



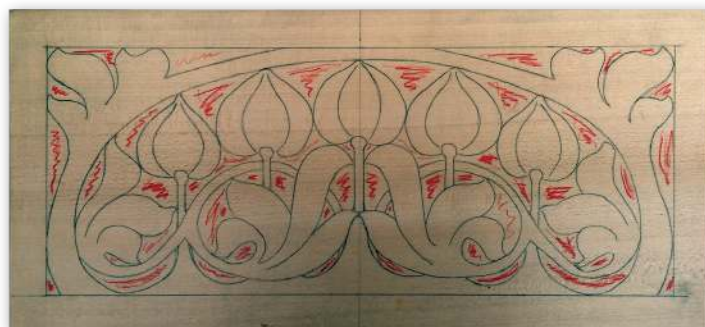
An artist's impression of a design for a pierced panel

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Tracing the design on to the wood. Note that the drawing is securely held with masking tape

CARVER'S NOTE: Before starting to pierce you could slightly countersink each hole on the reverse side of the plaque. This will help when trying to thread the saw blade through.



Marking the areas to be pierced

Drilling, piercing and holding the panel

Now it is necessary to drill a small hole in every red section. You could use a small pillar drill, a cordless hand drill or a good old-fashioned wheel brace as I am using here. If you have a small tool box or limited working space, you could use either of the two Archimedes-type drills shown in the photograph. The small wheel brace in the picture is about 80 years ago. It was retailed by Woolworths before World War II for one shilling and sixpence in old money but as they sold nothing for more than 6d (old pence) in those days it was sold in three separate parts. My father gave me this when I was about eight years old and it is still in use today.



Drilling a hole for piercing



A wheel brace and two examples of Archimedes drills

The text from 1911 talks about piercing with a bow or keyhole saw and then using a wood file to smooth off the cuts. It also suggests that a treadle fretsaw would be very useful as this would give a smooth, perpendicular cut. I don't suppose many of you have a treadle fretsaw these days but here is a



Piercing with a Hobbies A1 treadle fretsaw circa 1937

photograph of one that may interest you.

The obvious weapon of choice these days would be a scrollsaw, but you could of course use a good old-fashioned hand fretsaw – a little long winded perhaps but it will do the job. I still use one for demonstrations. It is, in fact, the same



Piercing the plaque on a modern scrollsaw

age as the wheel brace and was given to me at the same time.

At this point you should secure your workpiece by whatever means you find suitable. I like to work on a benchtop sloping stand, the top section of which rotates, and the work is held by pegs and wedges.



The pierced panel held and ready to work on

Carving the panel

Now we look at the cross-sectional drawings and compare them to the artist's impression of the carving. I do not think that they match exactly but this is only my impression. You will need to decide for yourself exactly how you intend to interpret the drawings. For example, the cross-section of the leaf (drawing No.1) is shown as having a high centre with concave sides. However, I have carved the leaves as being concave on the inner curves and convex on the outer. It is, of course, a matter of personal

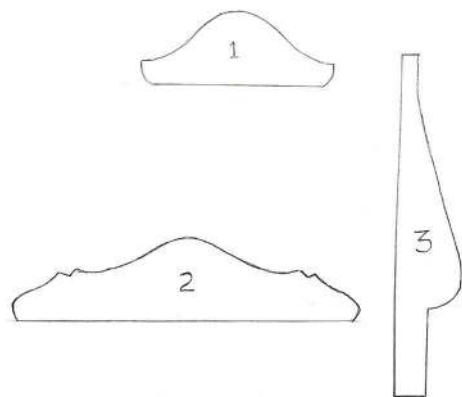
interpretation but be sure you have an overall picture in your mind before you start carving.

You can use whichever carving tools you feel comfortable with – gouges of suitable sweeps, knives and skew chisels – however, at this point I want to introduce a tool which I now use on a much more regular basis. I refer to the hook knife.

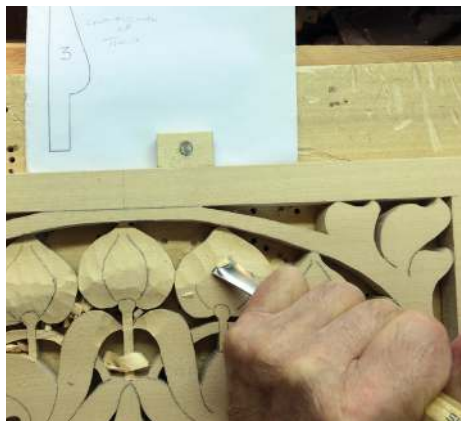
There are several models available. I have the Gonzalez hook by Ashley Iles and the Detailmesser, or detail knife by Pfeil. The

Pfeil knife differs from the Gonzalez hook in that it has a secondary concave cutting edge.

Although this panel is from a book published in 1911, I think that good design is always good design. Obviously, you will need to interpret the surface modelling to suit your skill level, but I have seen versions of this plaque carved in a much simpler way and still looking very decorative. I have chosen to leave tool marks on this piece and think that it is in keeping with the spirit of the design.



The sections of the carving. 1. Section through the leaves. 2. Section through the tulip. 3. Vertical section through the tulip



Start by carving the vertical profiles. Note the drawing above the workpiece



Left is a Gonzalez hook, right is the Pfeil detail knife



Modelling a tulip using the Gonzalez hook



Getting into a tight corner



Defining the tulip shape using the hook



Working the concave surfaces of a leaf using the hook



Texturing the stems using a No.9 bent gouge



The completed panel finished with clear wax

Diane Bennett

I was first introduced to the curved knife by a lady called Diane Bennett, who does some remarkable carving on turning almost exclusively using the hook knife. It has taken me some time to get used to this tool, but I now find it indispensable and use it for a lot of modelling and general carving techniques.

If you are going to try a hook knife for the first time I suggest that you practise on some scrap pieces before you work on the panel. It does take a little getting used to, but it is well worth the effort.

Remember, don't carve when you are tired, work in good light, stop regularly and practise, practise, practise. ▀



Bee Ball with mother of pearl wings (40mm dia.)



Inlaid Bulbs (40mm dia.)



Leaf Ball in Beech (50mm dia.)

NEXT MONTH In the next article I will be looking at the planning, layout and carving of a commemorative panel.

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From the community

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

Bear

Hi Mark

I am the publicity officer for the Cleveland Carving club and tasked with raising our club's profile and putting our members' work out there.

One of our very keen members is Ray Smith. He carves over the winter and rides his Harley-Davidson all summer (not a bad life). He joined our club two years ago when he went to The North of England Woodworking & Power Tool Show and has worked hard on the pieces he has created. The first project was a leaf, the second was a dragon and this was followed by a cat sculpture which sits on his mantelpiece.

His latest piece, a bear, was all his own work – no templates, no advice, just an adaptation of a picture he had seen and liked. One day Ray came in with a big hunk of lime and stated he was going to carve this bear cub resting on a log. It took him all winter to complete, but it is all his own work.

The members in the club think it's wonderful. The problem is Ray doesn't think it is and the members of the club



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF ANDY KING CLEVELAND WOODCARVING CLUB

would like to prove to him it's worthy of publication and showing off to other carvers. For further information about Cleveland

Woodcarving club email: cleveland@britishwoodcarversassociation.co.uk

Many thanks, Andy King

Waterside Woodcarvers

Waterside Woodcarvers are based on the eastern edge of the New Forest. The group grew out of evening classes some 35 years ago and has waxed and waned over the years. We have a small committee of about 8 members who divide up the club tasks between them and meet once a month before a carving workshop.

We are working hard to raise the profile of the club through a range of media and activities. Here is a list of some of the things we are doing to improve membership numbers and promote carving to a wider audience:

- A website displays information about the club and our programme of events.
- We hold workshops every other Thursday during term time in a local college.
- Beginners are given a pre-cut block to turn into a dolphin, leaf dish or penguin with supervision and coaching from experienced club members. Tools are provided if needed.
- We have monthly socials, some with guest speakers, fun indoor events and occasional outings during the year.
- For a month each year we have a small display of carved items in the local library.
- We submit news items in local community magazines.
- A combination of a display of carved items and the opportunity to talk to carvers or watch them at work seems to be the most effective at engaging people.
- We used to hold 'carve-ins' where club

members got together for a morning and the public were invited to visit and see what we do. This had limited uptake so we now focus on attendance at a number of local events with a display of carvings and members' carving where possible. These events reach a wide audience and often generate a new member or two. They include an annual wood fair, a local tractor club show and a local horticultural show. The latter included a competition for a small piece of woodwork. There have been so many carvings submitted in the past two years that the show organisers now have a woodcarving category.

- We hold an annual exhibition on August bank holiday Saturday in Lymington. This is our 'big one', with around 200 carvings on display, promoted with posters, magazine articles, fliers and social media. We invite three other local clubs to join us with their carvings, organise refreshments and offer small carved items for sale. All carvings known in advance are numbered and listed in a printed catalogue with the carver's name and type of wood also shown. Visitors can vote for their favourite: there is no prize, but it is fun to see what gets the votes each year.

We also have a Woodblock Challenge. Members contribute to a list of topics for carving, a vote is taken and a topic chosen for the year. Members can buy a block of lime – they're all the same size – and bring along their creation at the Christmas

party for a communal vote on the best/funniest. Recent topics have ranged from Something I Had as a Child to It Flies.

This year the members felt the need for an identity, so we chose clothing, a colour scheme and updated the club logo. There was a real sense of pride and belonging at a recent outing.

We are aware that people join for many reasons and one of those is to meet like-minded people. There is a genuine feeling of support and friendship in the club. As a result, turnout for socials, shows and outings is high – usually at least half the members. Over the past few years the group has grown from about 17 carvers to 30, so we must be doing something right.

Web: www.watersidewoodcarvers.co.uk

Di Smith



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF DI SMITH WATERSIDE WOODCARVERS

Lonely carvers

Mark,
I'm a first time reader of your magazine,
I love it. It's much meatier than the
magazines I subscribed to.

I thought your comments on Lonely Carvers
were interesting. I belong to a carving club
in Parkersburg, WV, US called Geppetto.
We meet once a month but several of us
wanted more group carving time so we
meet in our local woodcraft store every
Thursday afternoon. The store manager
sets up tables for us in the store display
area. We entertain customers and give
advice to those looking for carving tools.
It is a mutually beneficial arrangement.

Since this is done outside the usual club
proceedings, anyone and everyone is welcome.
We draw people from as far as 50 miles
away. One suggestion I would make to lonely
carvers is: don't feel like you have to form a
club. Our Thursday carving is probably more
social than carving and requires almost no
effort. Really all you need is a place out of
the weather and a few interested carvers.

We also do demonstrations in the local art
centre and at other community functions
in an effort to draw new members and
promote woodcarving in general. That may
open doors for getting a group together.



Our club is struggling with getting new
members. We're all a little long in the tooth
and would like to draw in some younger
folks. We've done demos at local schools
and, as I mentioned, at the art centre and
at community get-togethers but it's hard to



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF FRED ESKER

get a commitment from people to join our
group even though they express interest.

Happy carving to you. I'm enjoying the
magazine and I will promote it in our group.

*Fred Esker, Geppetto Woodcarvers,
Parkersburg WV, US*

Love the magazine

Hi Mark,
I just love your magazine and the articles
that are in it. I have, in digital format, all
but the ones that are no longer in print. The
things I enjoy most are the bird carvings –
the ones in the round mostly. One thing I
have noticed is that most of the birds, and
I think, all the animals are of the adult size.
Do you think it would be possible to have
an article on carving some of the babies of,
say, the duck or even the robin families?

I think it would be interesting to see the
processes for carving a baby duckling.
I really do enjoy this magazine and
have learned a lot from reading it and
following the lessons you provide.

It just a small thought from someone in

the US who just loves to carve and likes
to learn, and to be honest to see how
some of your experts would go about
getting down on a baby duckling.

*Keep up the great information you pass along,
Jerry Poirier, Lakeland Florida, US*



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF JERRY POIRIER

Tribute

Hi Mark

I thought you might like to see my recent
woodcarving I donated to Fort Widley
Museum in Portsmouth in memory of the
Pompey Pals soldiers of the 14th & 15th
Battalions Hampshire Regiment 1914-1918.

Richard Goodall

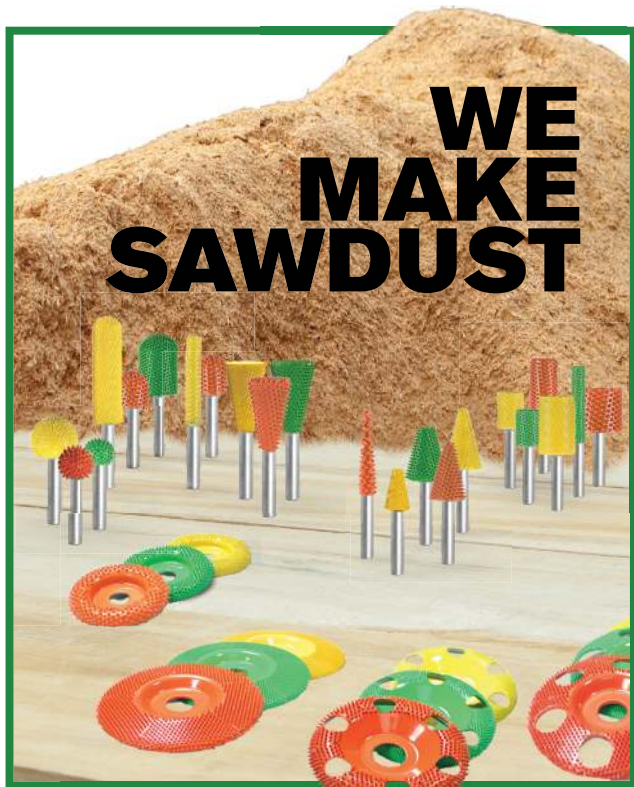


PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF RICHARD GOODALL

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

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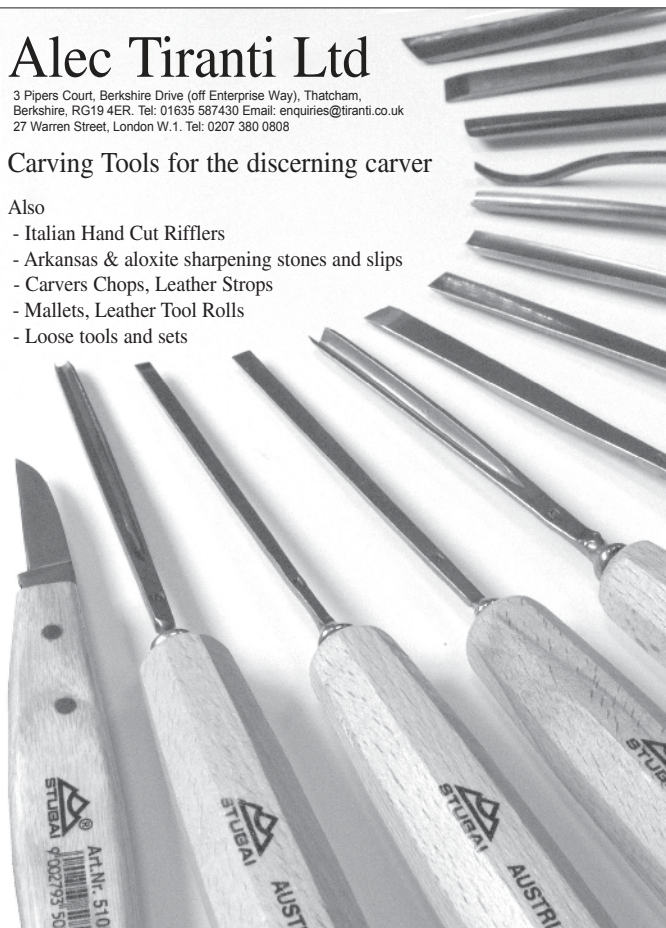
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Ringed plover

Mike Wood shows how to carve and paint a realistic-looking bird

The ringed plover, also known as the common ringed plover, is a small wading bird that makes its habitat around coasts, flooded gravel pits and reservoirs.

Its Latin name is *Charadrius hiaticula*, which is derived from the Latin word for a yellowish bird (*Charadrius*) and the ancient Greek word *kharadrios*, meaning a bird found in ravines and river valleys. *Hiaticula* derives from the Latin terms *hiatus* and *cola*, meaning 'dweller'.

The birds have brownish-grey plumage on their backs and wings and white feathers on their bellies. They have brown caps on their heads, black neckbands and black masks around the eyes. They are similar in appearance to the little ringed plover, but ringed plovers are slightly larger and have orange bills and legs.

Ringed plovers are a resident species in the UK and northern France and can be seen on beaches throughout the year. In the winter, they are joined by European plovers. Ringed plovers in other countries migrate to West Africa in the winter.

The birds build their nests on the ground in open areas. They mainly choose beaches for their breeding grounds but in recent times they have also moved inland to breed in sand and gravel pits.

They feed on flies, spiders, marine worms, crustaceans and molluscs. In order to tempt worms to the surface, the ringed plover taps its feet on the ground to imitate raindrops.

The ringed plover is on the Red List in the UK, which is the highest conservation priority and the species is protected by the Wildlife & Countryside Act.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MIKE WOOD



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

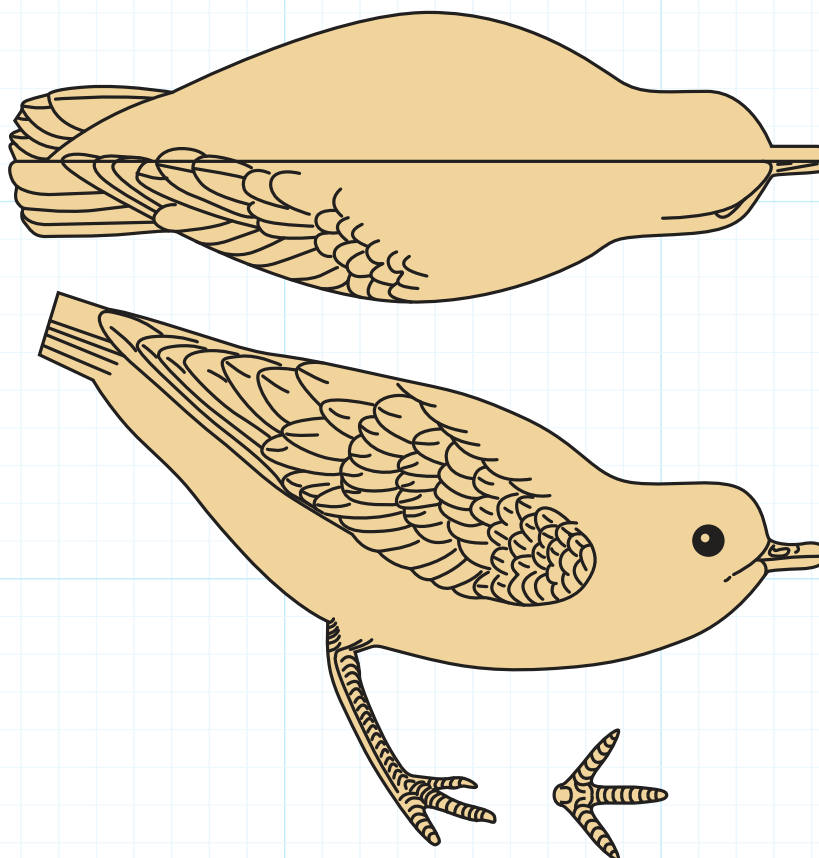
- Bullnose stone burr
- Round-nose burr
- Fine ruby taper burr
- Drill and drill bit for the feet
- Sanding drum
- Pyrography unit with scalpel-edge nib

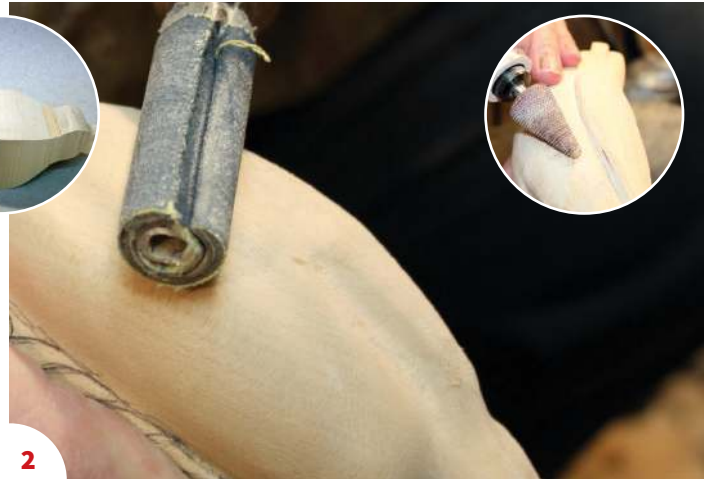
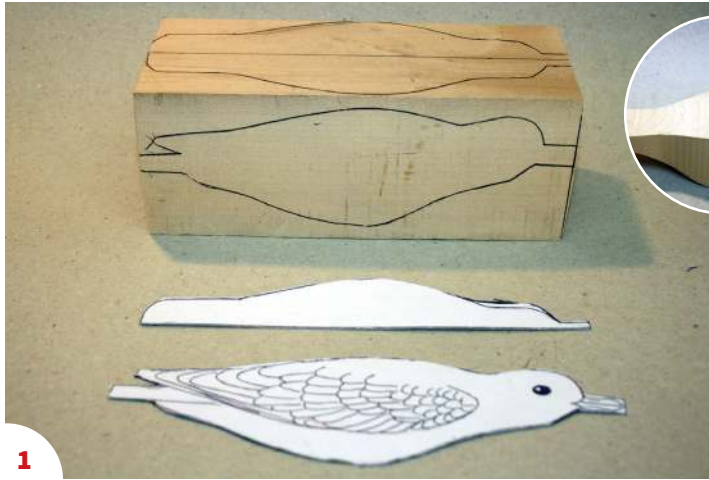
Materials:

- Lime (*Tilia x Europea*) 190mm long

x 60mm high x 70mm wide

- Eyes & feet
- PVA adhesive
- Dry sand
- Eyes or material for the eyes
- Plastic wood
- Paint brushes/airbrush
- Abrasives 120-240 grit
- Acrylic colours as per the colour palette





Shaping and main detail

1-2 Once you have your timber blank, use the pattern supplied to cut it out to the required shape.

Once rough-sawn, rough-shape your bird with hand tools or, as I do, with a rotary carving unit and a rough burr. A coarse tapered burr is ideal for rough shaping. This can be quickly followed by using a drum sander to smooth over the bird. Remember, do not sand away the main profiles. Make sure all of the main breast, back, head, wing and tail forms are right. When shaping using rotary carving techniques always wear eye/face and lung/respiratory protection. Even if you only hand sand, always wear an appropriately rated respiratory protection. Wood dust is harmful.

3 Now draw in the wing, back neck, tail and head feathers. Also mark the eye and bill detail. Now, using a fine-grit ruby, or diamond-point or tapered burr, carve in the wing feathers. I find it easier to start with these and then move on to the other areas.

4 Carve in the tail feathers, paying particular attention to your reference material when doing so and note the sizes, positions and angles of the feathers. That applies to each bird you carve. The feather shape and detail helps define the type of bird you are making.

5 & 6 Once you have carved in the feather detail soften the harshness by hand sanding with fine abrasive or, as I do, using a fine flame or bullnose-type fine-grade ruby or blue stone burr in a rotary unit. If using a rotary carving unit, be gentle – you only want to soften the detail carved, not remove it. You want a soft, light, pillowy-type appearance.

7 While working on softening the harshness of the carved detail, use a ball-end burr to cut eye sockets.

Eyes, legs & stand

8 Set the eyes in the sockets already cut with plastic wood and shape the squeeze-out to create the right look for the eye surround.

You can make eyes – buffalo horn, blackwood, black resin/acrylic works well – alternatively, you can buy eyes for specific birds of the right size, shape and colour for the bird being carved from specialist retailers.



9 Once the eyes are set, drill holes in the right position for the legs. I wanted to have the bird tilted down, so did this at this stage, but you can adjust legs later on instead. Make a base/support for the bird. I chose just a simple sandbank-looking plinth. Once the plinth is made, work out where you wish the bird to be and drill two holes for the feet. Note, there are no toes on these feet yet. I make my own feet to suit each bird and once I have the position right on the plinth, and I make and attach the toes later. You can buy feet from specialist retailers.

10 Once the base is shaped as required, apply PVA adhesive and some fine, dry sand to create the sandbank look. Note the two nails in the holes to prevent the holes being filled in.



Pyrography

11-13 Now, without the feet in position, burn in the feather detail with a pyrography unit fitted with a scalpel-edged tip. Start with the main heavy detail then work on the finer detail. Once done, fit the legs in position with plastic wood and shape the squeeze-out.

Adding colour

15-16 Mix some white gesso with a small amount of raw umber and undercoat the back and wings. The rest of the bird needs to be coated with white gesso. Now paint the feet and bill with deep yellow. Also, paint in the black areas. Note: I have placed the bird back on the plinth and added some rock and stones to the plinth..



**17****18****19****20****21**

17 Add some white to the back colour and undercoat the belly of the bird. Using a rigger and white gesso paint the edge detail of the feathers.

18 Using white gesso and the same rigger, edge all the feathers on the back. This is delicate work and requires an almost dry-brush technique. If you load the brush with too much white and it is wet and runny, you will not get the effect you are after.

Load the tips of the brush with white, then brush the loaded tips against dry cardboard or paper to remove excess white so you end up with a drier amount of white on the brush. Gently brush this on the feathers as required. You need only the merest hint of white to create the effect.

19 Now, with a fine rigger, paint in all the feather shafts using raw umber. Again, go gently and aim for straight lines.

20 The tail and primary feathers need to be painted with a mix of black and burnt umber.

21-22 Now give the bird's back a very light wash of burnt umber. Finally, the tip of the bill needs to be painted with black. I use an airbrush for this but a brush will work too.

23 Now fix the bird on the base and you should have a wonderful finished bird. ▶

**22****23**

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Flexcut carving knives

Flexcut has an extensive range of carving tools and it also has within its products steadily increased the range of knives. Flexcut has 25 different knives to choose from currently to cover a wide range of applications, from larger knife-carved work with sloyd-type knives down to detail knives. The steel is designed to hold a fine edge and the handle designed to afford the user optimal control.

Prices from: £27.76

Contact: Brimarc Tools & Machinery

Web: www.brimarc.com

Woodland Whittling

by Peter Benson

When the stresses of modern life get too much, what could be better than gathering a few simple tools, heading into the woods and literally whittling away a few hours? The gentle art of whittling is a relaxing and absorbing hobby that can be enjoyed almost anywhere, from round the campfire to in a cosy armchair at home. All you need is a good pocket knife, a piece of wood and your imagination. Projects can range from the delightfully simple to impressively intricate – it's up to you.

This delightful 144-page hardback book guides you through the basics, explaining what equipment you need, how to hold the knife, and what timber to use. The 20 fun projects are then all described in detail with clear step-by-step photographs. Projects include: letter opener, thumb stick, ring tree and egg cup.



Price: £9.99

Contact: GMC Publications

Web: www.thegmcgroup.com



Decorative carving punches

Henry Taylor Tools offers a range of 41 carving punches which can be used on carved and turned work. The patterns include pointed frosting patterns which are pointed dots, flower shapes of various kinds, stars, hatched patterns, crosses, acorns, thistles and many more to choose from. Each punch is created from a 6mm square bar and can, depending on the material being used, be pressed into the work by hand or tapped with a hammer to transfer the pattern on the punch into the work.

Price: £8.92

For stockist details contact: Henry Taylor Tools

Web: www.henrytaylortools.co.uk

Carve a Marionette – A Step-by-Step guide

by John Roberts

John Roberts is renowned as a skilled maker of finely crafted puppets, with a particular interest in carved string puppets. John has spent the past year photographing his making process and writing a detailed guide to making wooden marionettes.

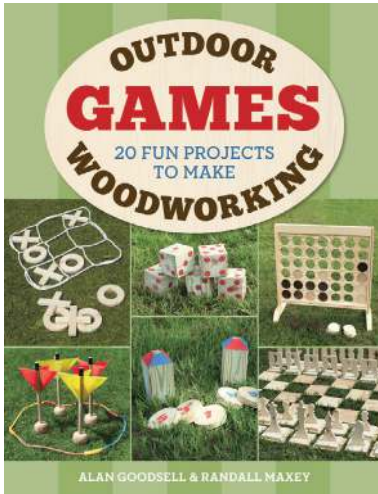
This self-published book is designed to be used in the workshop and features 180 pages with 670 black and white photos, 14 colour photos and 78 drawings. It covers:

- Principles of designing a wooden marionette.
- What tools and materials are needed.
- How to use chisels safely and get them super-sharp.
- What woods to use.
- How to refine and paint the puppet, put it on strings and bring it to life.
- Ideas on costume, hair and eyes.

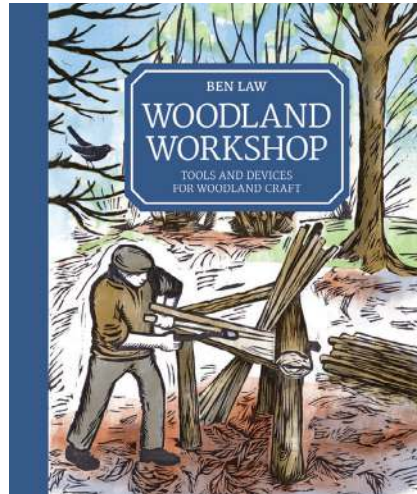


Price: £40 **Contact:** John Roberts **Web:** www.puppetcraft.co.uk

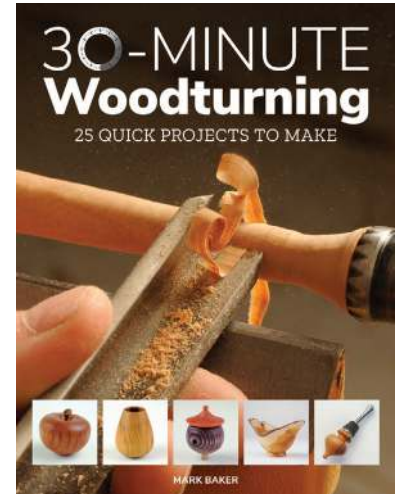
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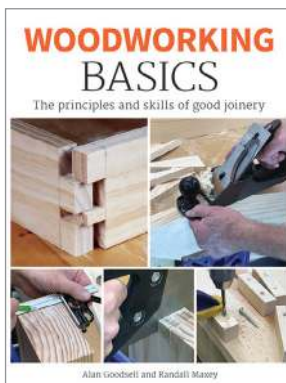
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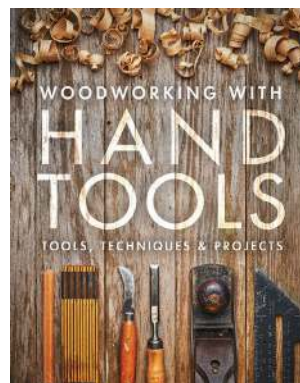
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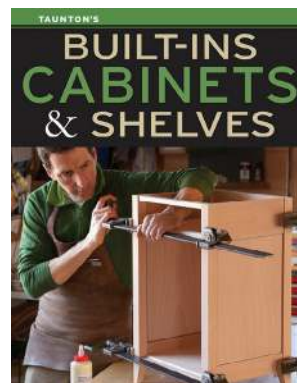
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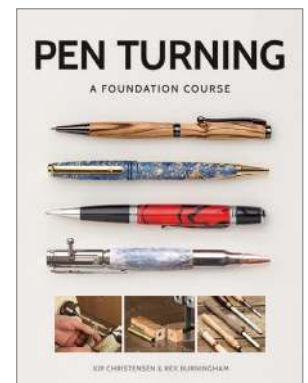
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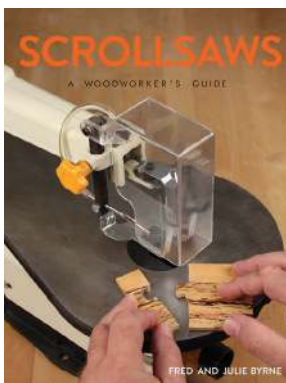
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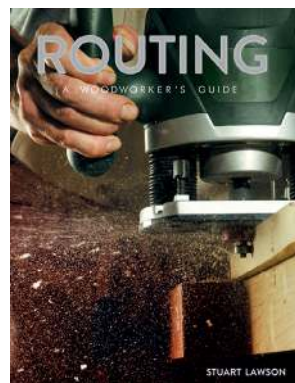
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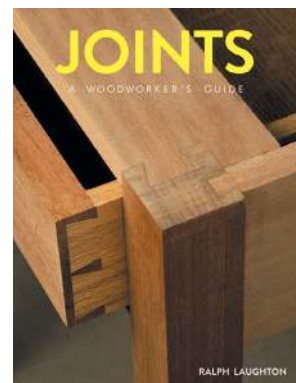
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