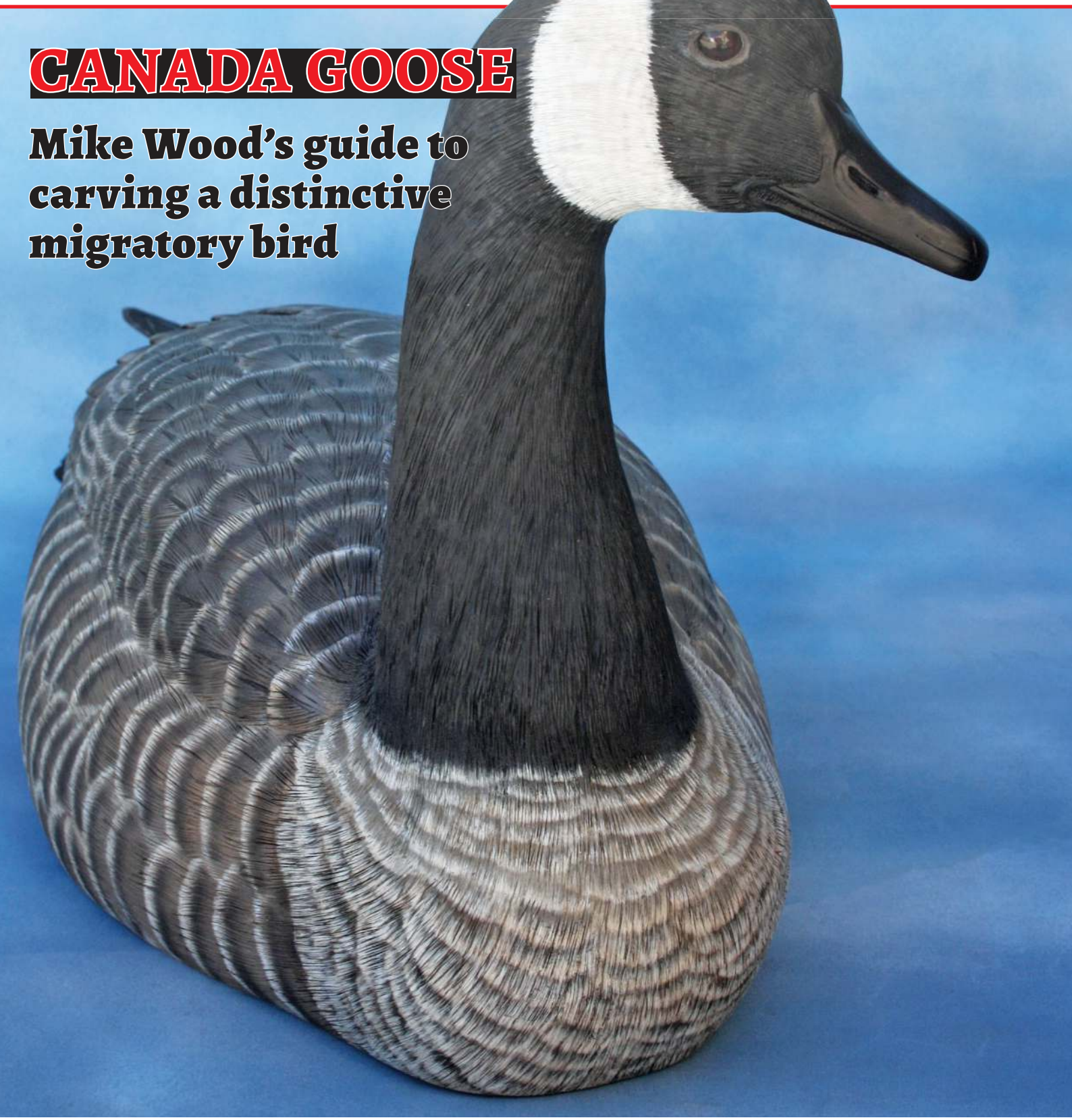
WOOD CARVING



CANADA GOOSE

Mike Wood's guide to carving a distinctive migratory bird

PROJECTS TO CARVE Christmas reindeer • Penguin • Beakhead corbel • Decorative tealight holder • Triceratops **TECHNICAL ADVICE** Sharpening gouges • Three period-style lovespoons • Carving commemorative panels

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Merry Christmas

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK BAKER

I know it's a little early, especially with magazine schedules being what they are, but the festive season is soon upon us, so let me wish you all the very best for Christmas. I always find it a strange time of year. The holiday period is either a welcome relief and a time to unwind, catch up with friends and loved ones, a time when it's all too easy to overeat, or it is a time of year that people do not enjoy and avoid as much as possible. I must admit I walk a tightrope between the two.

I want the hustle and bustle of catching up with friends and family on Christmas and Boxing days, but then I want it all over so I can do other things on the days I take off over the festive period. Going fishing and having workshop time spring to mind. I am sure I am not alone in this. I also want seasons to be seasons and winter, to me, should be cold and if possible snowy and icy on some of the days. I hate the wet and windy stuff. I know snow and ice can cause problems; the heating bills go up and finding money to pay for extras is always tricky, especially with the cost of Christmas items already taking a big chunk of any money available, but I love to see the white stuff. Maybe this is from my childhood. OK, don't snigger here, I know it was a while back – but I remember some cold winters and snow and one Christmas it certainly did snow and it was wonderful.

I was fortunate to be able to visit friends in Canada some years back over the Christmas break and I loved it. They live on the edge of Banff National Park and the image you see on this page was taken on a walk just outside their house. The frozen lakes and snow covering made me feel like the young child I was way back when. The wonder of it was breathtaking – seeing such mountainous wonders, lakes completely frozen over, ice fishing in -25°C... I loved it all. I also loved getting back to a log fire, a warm drink and spending time with my wife and friends. I saw lots of caribou; all I was missing was Santa. That said, I wouldn't want the same all year round. Everything has a season and I love the transitions from one season to another.

I think this is much like my hobbies. I love fishing, but would get fed up if I did it every day. I think the same about carving and my other woodworking. I want variety, I need to develop and I also need to have fun. Is the fun and expectation magnified by the anticipation of undertaking a hobby? When we get to carve or do whatever other hobby or pursuit we venture to do, does the reality of actually doing it match the expectation? I think the anticipation and excitement is, in the main, fully met when undertaking my hobbies. Yes, I can have disappointment, but the joy far surpasses the negatives.

My wife and friends say I am like a kid in a candy store. I remember as a child, when travelling to a place with family, I was told I would frequently ask: 'Are we there yet?' I don't think I have changed that much really. I am still in some ways that small child who loves winter, the transition of the seasons, the anticipation of holidays, workshop and fishing time and so much more. There is a wonder that has never left me.

I hope you have a great Christmas and will catch up with you all again soon.

Have fun, Mark

To get in touch, please email me:
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Festive penguin

Peter Benson shows how to have some seasonal fun with his step-by-step guide to making a rocking penguin

It's that time of year again. You can sharpen up all your fancy tools and pack them away until after Christmas, ready to start the New Year revived, refreshed and raring to go.

Now is the time for some relaxed and fun carving so that you have those little gifts for the children and members of the family. There is no pressure and you have only one tool to keep sharp. Well, maybe the odd small gouge as well, but generally you should only need your knife, strop and safety glove.

This year I have moved away a little from Santas and associated animals and have gone for something from the South Pole as opposed to the North. I don't really know what on earth penguins have to do with Christmas, but I have decided to start a new trend. This one has a small spring added to the bottom so it will move back and forth if disturbed in any way. Here goes.

If you want it to rock you will need a small compression spring around 50mm long and 7 or 8mm in diameter. If you cannot get the exact size it is easy to adjust the design to suit what you can get. I got 10 springs, 50mm x 7mm, through the internet for less than 50p each.

Before you start carving I recommend you drill a hole in the base, about 35mm in diameter and 25mm in depth. In the bottom of this drill another hole to take the end of the spring, about 7-8mm deep. This will house the spring and ensure that the penguin rocks from the middle instead of the bottom, when it would almost certainly fall over.

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY PETER BENSON

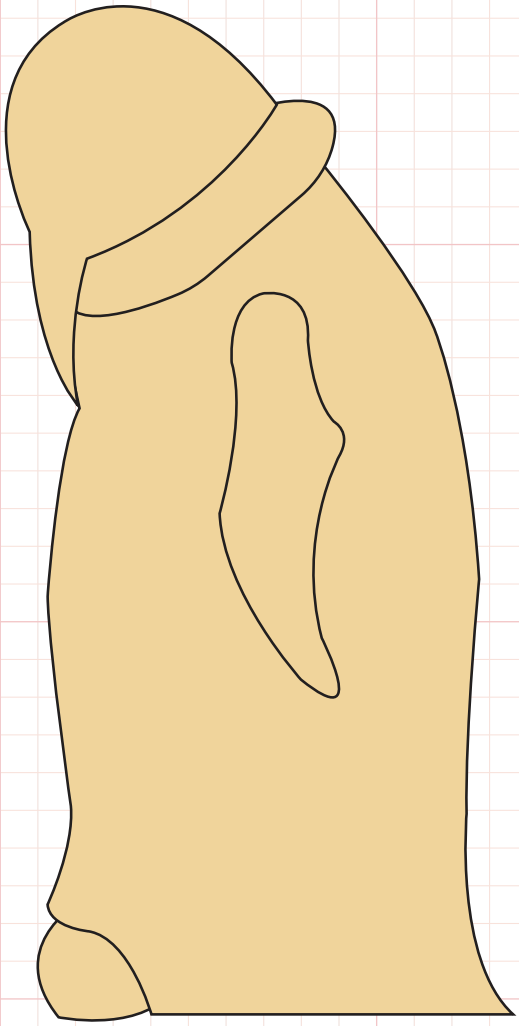
Things you will need

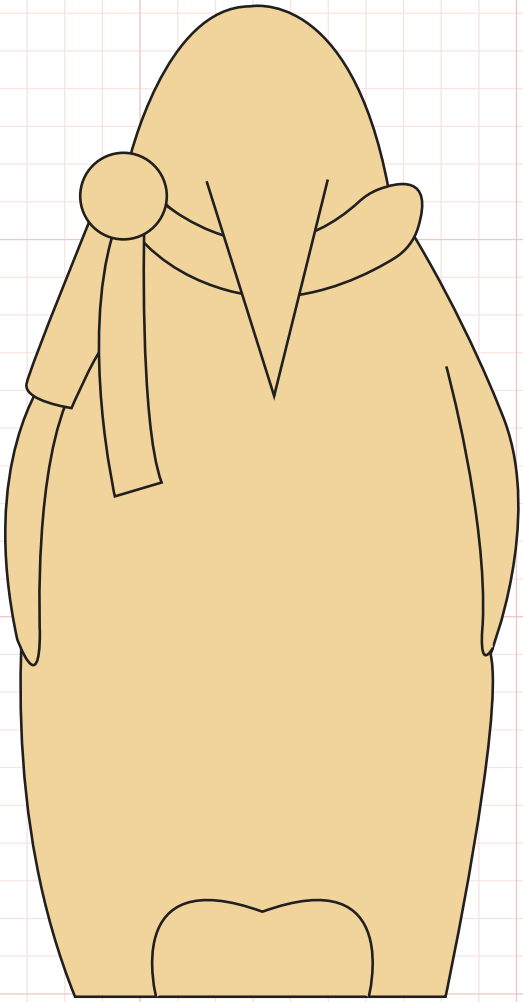
Tools:

- Anti stab and slash safety glove
- Carving knife
- Drill
- Drill bit & Forstner bit
- Adhesive

Materials:

- Lime (*Tilia* spp.) or jelutong (*Dyera costulata*) approximately 100mm long and 50mm x 50mm and one piece 50mm square and 6mm thick for the feet
- Paints of your choice. Acrylics work well
- Brushes
- Spring 50mm long x 7 or 8mm diameter





1 & 2 If you feel that you need both the patterns shown in order to get the right shape, draw these on the front and side and shape the block to fit. Don't worry about drawing any detail at this stage. I prefer to use the block diagonally to give more wood for the beak, flippers and tail – see picture 3. This does mean, however, that you can't transfer the patterns to the block and you will need to use them simply as a guide as you go along. The choice is yours and I am sure you will easily be able to follow the stages.

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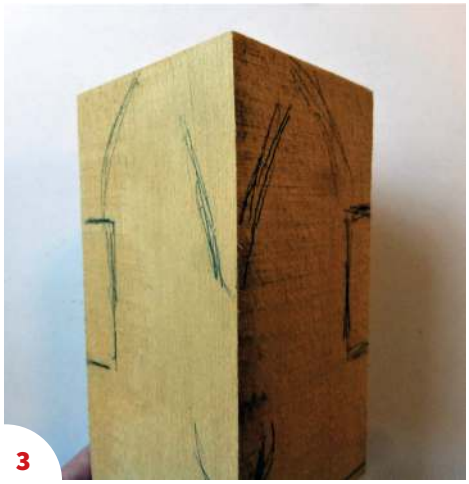

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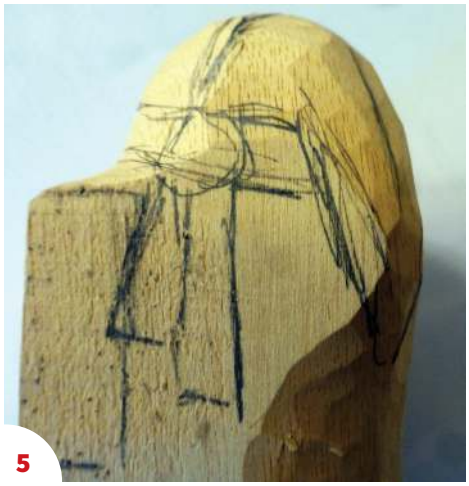
3 & 4 Mark in a rough position for the two flippers and the beak and start to shape your block. Make sure you leave wood for the tail and egg. The aim here is to lose the squareness of the original block to make the penguin as plump and rounded as possible.

5 I always like to start with the head in figures like this so I suggest you mark in the rough position of the scarf and beak ready to start shaping them.

6 Cut round the top and bottom of the scarf, slimming down the head and body as you do so. Don't forget to draw in the knot and leave wood for shaping later. Cut into the side of the beak.



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7 & 8 Chamfer down the top of the blocks you have left for the flippers into the bottom of the scarf.

9 You should now have a very plump penguin shape ready for slimming down and adding the detail. The biggest danger with a shape such as this is to make it too skinny to start with – you can always take off more wood but can't add it.

10, 11 & 12 Now, starting with the head and scarf, start to slim down your shape, making sure you keep the rounded shape with no flats or squareness. You will need to give the beak some shape at this stage. Outline the ends and knot of the scarf and slim the whole scarf down to sit around the neck. If you wish to add the egg, define the bottom of the body that surrounds it.

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13 Once you are satisfied with the head area draw in the two flippers.

14 Reduce the body to get the shape of the flippers and then go over the whole carving to refine the detail and overall shape. If you wish to give the penguin an egg, add this now. You don't have to show the whole egg, just try to show part of it peeping out from the bottom of the body.

15 Check the whole carving and refine any of the detail that needs attention. Give the whole piece a thorough sanding in preparation for painting. You can, of course, leave it unpainted if you prefer. Any good acrylic watercolour paint will be suitable.

16 & 17 Once you have painted the whole piece you can leave it without adding the feet and spring. If you wish to go ahead as shown, draw the pattern of the feet on to the thin piece of wood and cut out with a coping saw or bandsaw. Drill a suitable sized hole to take the spring you have – in this case it is 7mm. I suggest that you sand and paint the feet at this stage as it is difficult once assembled.

18 & 19 Place the penguin on the finished feet and adjust the length of the spring until it sits as you like. Test that it will balance and rock before gluing in place. You may take a while to get the position just right but be patient. The penguin should move freely with just a little clearance above the feet. If it won't stand up straight on the spring you can insert a short length of dowel down the inside of the spring, which should sort out the problem. Finally, once happy, glue the spring in place with epoxy or hot-melt glue. Give the whole piece a coat of acrylic varnish to protect the paintwork.

20 I have used the same principle with a rocking Santa – holding a glass of beer to add to the effect. The scope is endless and you will bring a smile to the faces of a lot of people, particularly children.


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News & events...

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

BDWCA NEWS

The deadline for copy for this issue unfortunately comes just before our Annual Show and Competition in Bakewell, Derbyshire, so news of that will have to wait until next time. However, I can tell you that a wide range of birds, including the long-tailed tits that are the subject of the Regional Group Competition this year, are eagerly awaiting the event as I write.

We have just returned from exhibiting at the very muddy, but still enjoyable, three-day British Birdwatching Fair which was held, as always, at Rutland Water Nature Reserve where we have a large double stand, displaying a wide range of members' carvings, in the Art Marquee. One of our constitutional aims is to promote the interest of the art of bird carving both nationally and internationally and the fair, with more than 20,000 visitors over the three days, provides an ideal opportunity to further these aims.

Our old stand had been proving more and more difficult to assemble, so this year we trialled a new, simpler version, which we were glad to find was much easier to assemble and break down at the end of the show. Imagine our surprise, and pleasure, when on the Saturday afternoon we were presented with the award for Best Stand in Arts & Crafts!

As usual we had a bird to raffle. This year it was a bullfinch, with a small peach blossom moth on one of the leaves of the habitat, carved by BDWCA chairman David Askew, which was very popular. It was interesting to see that some people spotted the moth before the bird, at which point we would say 'if you win the raffle for the moth the bird comes free'.

Artist Bruce Pearson once again drew the winning ticket on the Sunday afternoon – number 415, which we knew by the number must have been bought on the Saturday, and which had the name 'Thomas' and a mobile phone number. When phoned a lady answered, and said she was Thomas' mother, then immediately asked: 'Has he won the raffle?' Excited cheering could be heard in the background. Four years ago his mother won our raffle, and they buy tickets every year. This year Thomas, who is nine years old, insisted on buying his own ticket – a very lucky family.

Each year the British Birdwatching Fair donates its proceeds to overseas conservation projects recommended and managed by Bird Life International, which this year is in the area of Western Siem Pang, Cambodia: a vast area of deciduous and semi-evergreen forests through which the Sekong River flows, which is home to five Critically Endangered species of bird.

At the Birdwatching Fair a large mural is painted by the artists, including our David Askew, which usually reflects the project, but this year the background and contents of the mural were different. In March this year the world famous Fair Isle Bird Observatory was sadly destroyed in a devastating fire, so this year's mural celebrated Fair Isle and its birds, and will go on permanent display in the new observatory when it is completed.

Contacts

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

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAM WILSON FOR BDWCA

Bullfinch with peach blossom moth

David Askew painting his bird on the mural

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAM WILSON FOR BDWCA

The new BDWCA stand

2019 Events

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

2020 events

- **Florida Winter National Wood art Expo & Competition**
  When: 10-11 January 2020
  Where: Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center, 75 Taylor Street, Punta Gorda, USA
  Web: https://flwoodartexpo.com

- **The 2020 IWCA Style Decoy Championship**
  When: 14-15 March 2020
  Where: Holiday Inn, Strongsville, Ohio, USA
  Web: http://ODCCA.net

- **The Midlands Woodworking Show**
  When: 27-28 March 2020
  Where: Newark Showground, Lincoln Rd, Winthorpe, Newark, NG24 2NY
  Web: www.nelton.co.uk

- **Carve in 4**
  Featuring Harley Refsal, world-class flat plane carver, author, teacher, vesterheim gold medalist. 10pm-4pm. Free admission, donations accepted. Carve, share, sell, buy and enjoy fellow carvers' discussions
  When: 25 April 2020
  Where: Bekkum Memorial Library 206 N. Main St, Westby, Wisconsin, US
  Email: Bekkum@wrlsweb.org

- **International Woodcarving Symposium Brienz**
  When: 30 June-4 July 2020
  Where: Verein, KUNA 3855, Brienz, Switzerland
  Web: www.symposium-brienz.ch

- **Carving on the Edge Festival**
  When: 8-20 September 2020
  Where: 368 Main St, Tofino, BC VOR 2Z0, Canada
  Web: www.carvingedgefestival.com

- **National Bird Carving Championships: The Festival of Bird Art**
  When: 12-13 September 2020
  Where: The Agricultural Business Centre, Bakewell, Derbyshire, DE45 1AH
  Contact: www.bdwca.org.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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Christmas reindeer

Terry Nokes shows how to carve this decorative festive creature

PHOTOGRAPHS BY TERRY NOKES

The reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus*), also called caribou in North America, is native to cold Arctic areas. Tame reindeer that people raise in herds are little smaller than the wild ones, and I thought they would make a great decorative ornament. Note that I say 'decorative ornament' rather than 'toy'. They are fragile in parts of this design, and they involve pipe cleaners, which have a wire running through them so making this project unsuitable for young children.

When researching reindeer for carving it proved quite interesting and there is a lot of information to be found online. I also learned that both the male and female caribou both grow antlers.

If you enjoy whittling with a knife, perhaps invest in some quality palm tools – these will greatly assist in carving awkward areas where the knife cannot reach. If you're new to palm tools take time to get familiar with safe handling and new carving techniques, especially if holding the workpiece at the same time. High-level cut and slash-resistant gloves are essential. And when carving, always assess every potential cut you need to make and think of the 'what if' scenario. When satisfied it is OK to proceed as safely as possible, make the carving cut. Carve the reindeer parts in any order you wish, but if new to carving leave fragile areas such as the ears till last – they can easily break.

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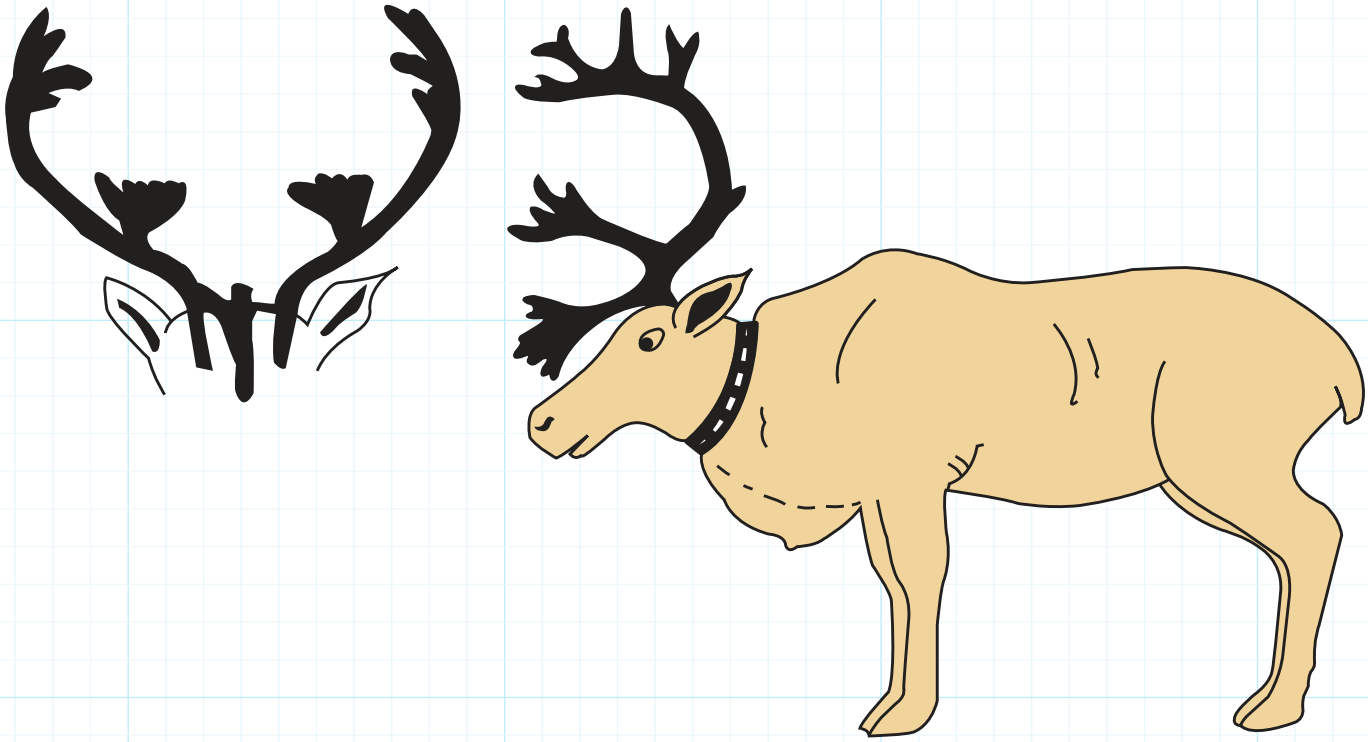
Things you will need

Tools:

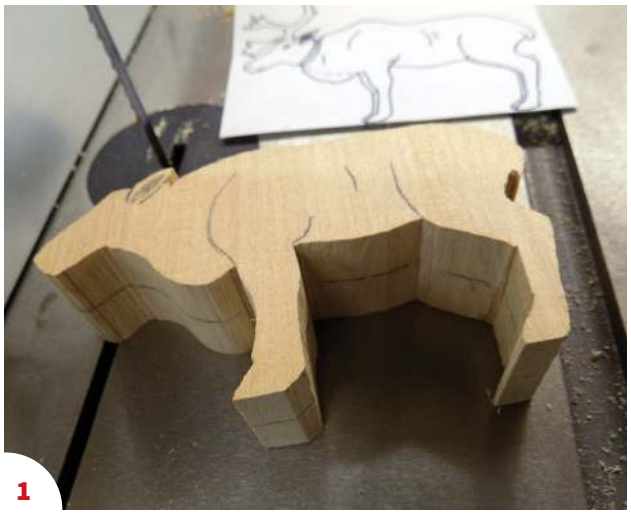
- Personal and respiratory protective equipment (PPE & RPE)
- Cut/slash-resistant gloves/thumb guard
- Disposable nitrile gloves
- Bandsaw
- Bench vice
- Coping saw
- Carving/whittling knife
- Pfeil palm gouge No.7/6
- Pfeil palm V-tool No.12/4
- Pointed bradawl

Materials:

- Reindeer 110mm long, 65mm high, 30mm deep
- Antlers 60mm wide, 50mm high
- 2x 3mm glass eyes (round ball-shaped)
- Rotary grinder
- 1.5mm drill bit
- 2.0mm drill bit
- 3mm rotary burr
- Strong glue
- Abrasives
- Boiled linseed oil
- Paintbrush
- Acrylic paints: black, white, burnt umber, burnt sienna
- Satin aerosol spray
- 4/6mm light brown pipe cleaners
- Hardware for hanging



1 This project was cut from a lime board 30mm deep. Size the reindeer length to 110mm and print off a paper template. Glue template to board and cut out carving blank with a bandsaw, or by hand with a jig/coping saw. Note my cutting is on the template outline and the wood grain runs vertically through the legs. Next draw a centreline all round the piece.



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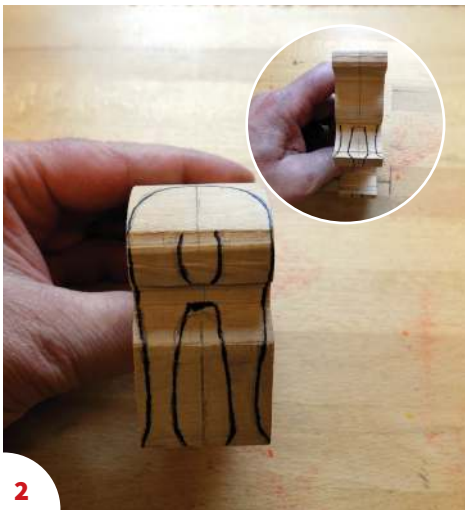
2 Draw in the back legs and tail as shown, followed by the front legs. Note the very top of the front legs/shoulders aren't as wide as the rear.



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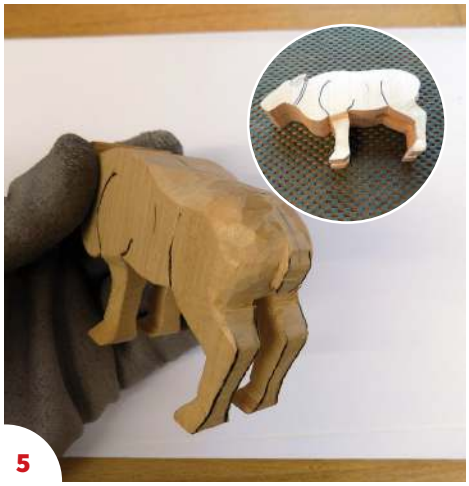
3 Carefully remove some of the waste between the front and rear legs using a coping saw. Ensure the blade is oriented to cut on the pull stroke.

4 Although this tutorial is basically a knife whittling project, a few palm-sized tools can greatly ease certain carving tasks where the knife cannot gain access. Here a small Pfeil No.7 gouge 6mm wide is cleaning up the end grain areas between the legs.

5 Draw the upper leg and shoulder positions on both sides, and carve away waste down the outside of all legs and then expose the reindeer's tail. Round off the rump area.

6 Make a stop cut on the upper leg outlines and round off the belly on each side to meet our drawn centreline. Note the indicated facet should look similar on the other side.



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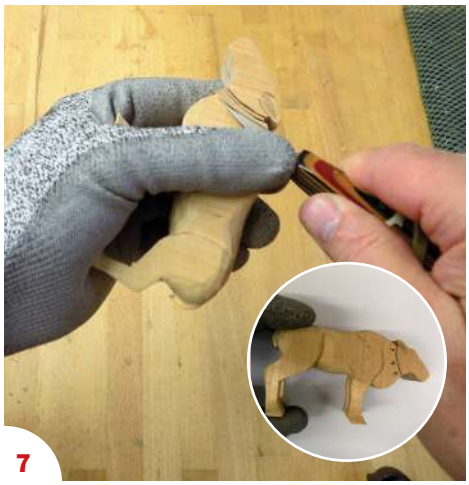
7 Next taper down the waste from the front shoulders to the neck collar. For this size of project it's approximately 7mm deep. Note finished cuts in circular picture below

8 Draw the shown two lines under the neck centre – this is material for the reindeer's long hair. The arrows show the direction to scoop away waste material with the small No.7 gouge. The tool grip is safe and controlled. As with all gouges, don't carve excessively deep – keep the cutting edge wings visible at all times.



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9 Progress so far.

10 Remember, in step 2, the reindeer's front shoulders are slightly thinner than the rear. Remove this hatched area.

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11 Make a stop cut and expose front shoulders.

12 Draw in the head shape.

13 Carve away the waste below the ear, but don't round off the head yet.

14 Remove waste between the ears and slightly scoop the front. Beware – these are getting thin and prone to splitting off along the grain. If new to carving, leave ears chunky for now or leave till later by skipping to step 16.

15 With a V-tool or knife, cut a central V-shaped groove for the inner ear, and sand the exterior.

16 Draw in the split hooves. In anatomy there are another two towards the back, but due to the project size these have been dismissed. Also note template for the front legs – they are very slightly staggered. Thin out the front of the nearest leg and the back of the far leg.

17 Continue to round off upper body with a knife. Next using the No.7 to create on the spine centreline a dip in between the front shoulder blades.

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18 Round off each leg and create on the sides a slight bulbous tummy. Tame reindeer are normally fatter than the wild ones.

19 Mark the first eye centre with a pointed bradawl and replicate this position on the other side. Take time on this and ensure accuracy as eyes tend to be the focal point on many finished carvings. Mark both by eye, or perhaps use of compasses may help. Next, with a 1.5mm drill bit spinning before wood contact, drill a small hole for the glass eye wire. Next slowly create an eye socket with a 3mm rotary burr, periodically checking its depth by offering up the glass eye. Normally this would be carried out by a cheap diamond-coated bit, but on this occasion I used a stone, flame-shaped bit, which more or less actually burnt out the hole, leaving it blackened intentionally for the black glass eye. Please note that through my experiences glass eyes bought on the wire are either mushroom or ball shaped. We need the ball shaped type for this carving. Through the eye manufacturing process the sizes are not exact, so ensure you select a matching pair.

20 Glue eyes in place when happy, then symmetrically carve away material at the front of the eyes, as if the reindeer can look straight ahead. Next carve a small groove on the forehead between ears with the No.7 gouge.

21 As you carve, keep checking the shape by looking square on.

22 With your knife, cut a mouth and nostrils.

23 Finally, check carving all over for any last cuts and, if preferred, gently sand too with abrasives. Drill two vertical 2mm holes for the antlers, approx. 8mm apart, then apply two thin coats of linseed oil. This seals the open pores of the wood to stop paint bleeding along its grain, allowing time for drying. Paint with acrylic paint then, while the reindeer are suspended with cocktail sticks in antler holes, spray on a universal clear matt finish.

24 Final touches are the red ribbon collars and antlers. The shown antlers were made in light-brown 4mm and 6mm chenille pipe cleaners. When using pipe cleaners, make sure the ends are bent over as they have a thin wire running through them that is sharp on exposed ends.

24

Extend your circle of friends

Mark Gough carves a LED tealight table decoration

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK GOUGH

Christmas is a time when family and friends get together to eat and drink, so here is a nice gift idea to give or use yourself throughout the festivities and beyond. There are many examples of friendship circle sculptures, some dating back many hundreds of years. An internet search shows the origin to be Mayan or Indian, but that's not conclusive.

The project is designed to be a stylised carving. You can create these as complex as possible, but I wanted to create a stylised look and make this for use with a LED tealight. LED tealights negate all the risks of using a standard naked flame tealight and, since there is no heat or fire risk from a LED tealight, it gives you far more design options than a naked-flame tealight.

For this carving some basic geometry is required – nothing difficult but accuracy is the main point. Starting with a perfectly round blank will be a bonus. This was made from a turning blank which was not perfectly round to begin with and was cut down on a bandsaw using a simple jig.

The carving gouges used are listed as shallow or deep, and not of any specific sweep I have done this to accommodate everyone's toolbox. We do not all own a comprehensive set of carving tools – this is the reserve of the professional woodcarver and the wish of many of us. If you do not own the tool used in the description, improvise with whatever you have and do not let the fact stop you from attempting the project. A lot of basic woodcarving can be done effectively with very few tools – a good rasp and carving knife are very versatile pieces of equipment.

I chose pear (*Pyrus communis*) wood as it is fairly easy to carve, holds detail if required and has very little discernible grain, which gives the shape of the carving more prominence and has a lovely red, clay-like colour when finished.

SAMPLE HEAD

Before you start shaping the face it may be wise to make a sample from a piece of scrap wood to get the shape right. The actual detail is very simple, in keeping with the overall design.

Things you will need

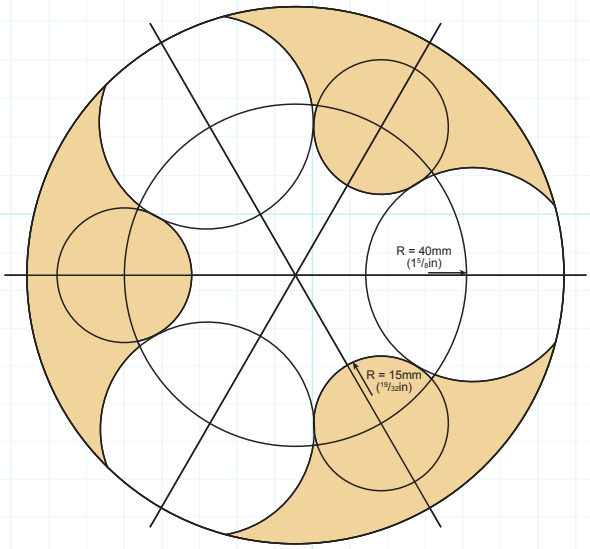
Tools:

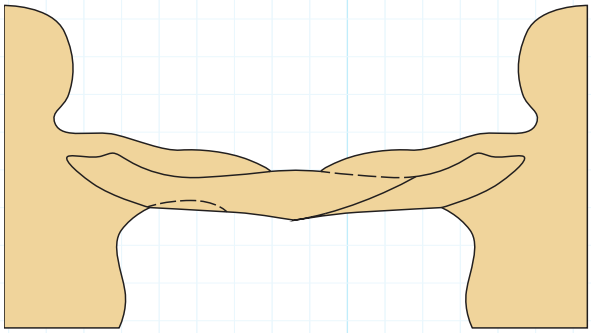
- Personal and respiratory protective equipment (PPE & RPE)
- Dust extraction
- Marking and measuring equipment
- Compass
- 40mm & 30mm Forstner drill bit
- 12mm flat drill bit
- V-gouge
- 20mm flat chisel
- 6, 16, 12 and 20mm shallow gouges
- 12mm spoon bent gouge medium sweep
- 13mm swan neck gouge medium sweep
- 6mm skew chisel
- Selection of rotary burrs
- Rasps and files
- Riffler files
- Palm gouges
- Carving knife
- Bandsaw
- Drill press
- Jigsaw or coping saw
- Rotary Unit and hand piece

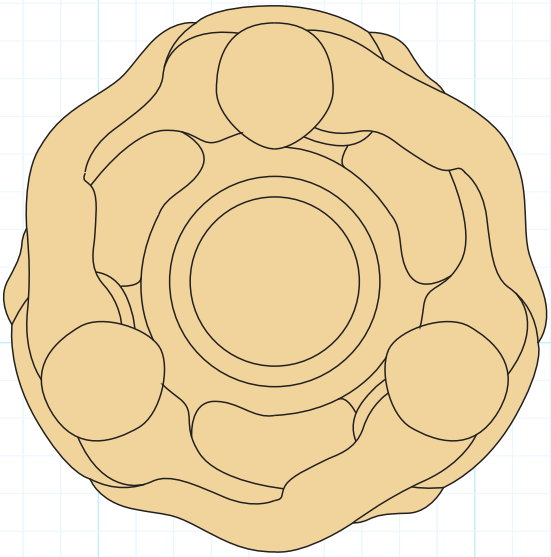
Materials:

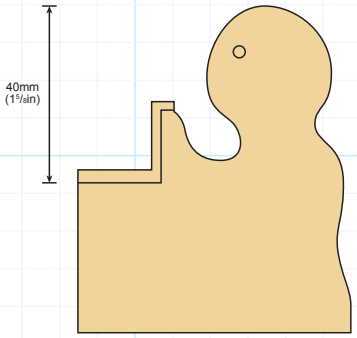
- Pear wood (*Pyrus communis*) 125 x 75mm round blank
- Abrasives down to 240 grit
- Finish of your choice

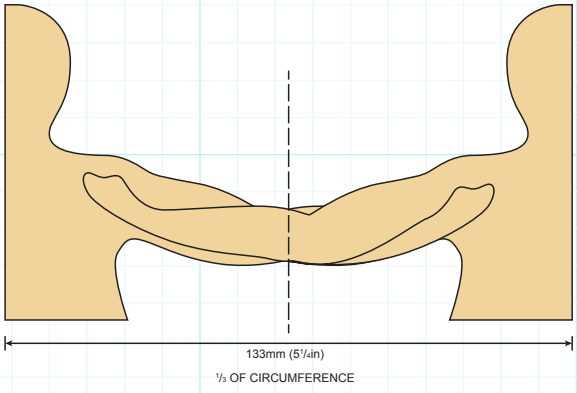
SAFETY This project is solely for use in conjunction with a battery-operated, low-energy LED tealight. LED tealights are approximately 38mm in diameter, and most have an imitation flicker and are very inexpensive to purchase. Under no circumstances use a real candle flame tealight for this project.

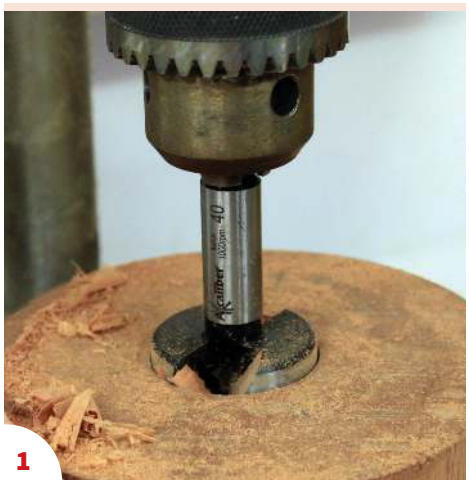








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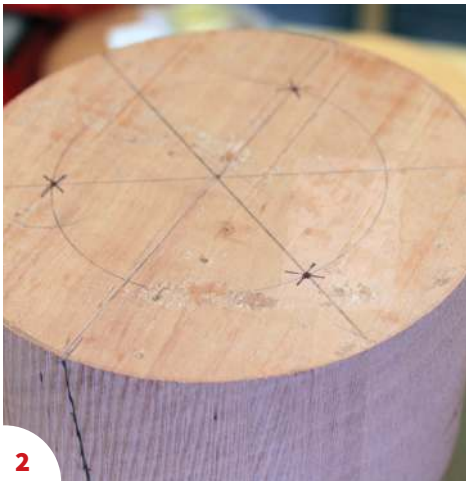
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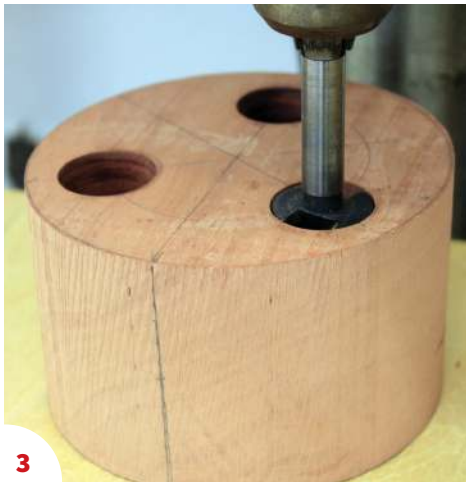
Preparation

1 Mark the centre on one face side and drill a 40mm hole to receive the insert. Drill the hole to a depth of 40mm. This is to accept a decorative metal heat shield. These are used to hold actual flame tealights, but this project is not designed for such things and they are not to be used. Instead this will act as a decorative element to house the LED tealight.

2 Turn the blank over and divide the circle into six equal sections by setting a compass to the radius measurement and marking points off around the circumference. If this done correctly you will end up where you started. Connect the opposite points with a straight line which should intersect at the centre. Draw another circle set to a radius of 40mm then select one of the six outer points and transfer a line across the edge to the opposite face with the previously drilled hole. Follow the line back to the inner 40mm radius circle and select the points that intersect either side of this line. Mark these with a cross as shown and make another cross on the opposite intersecting point on this line.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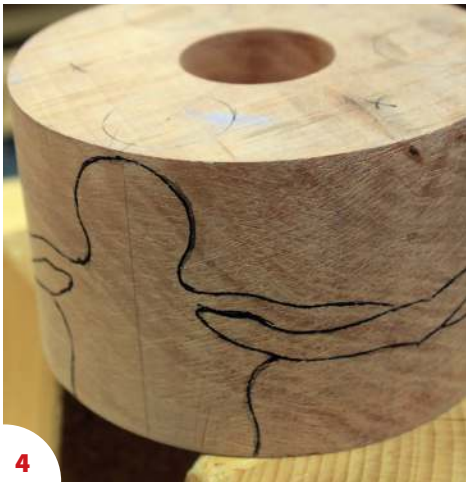
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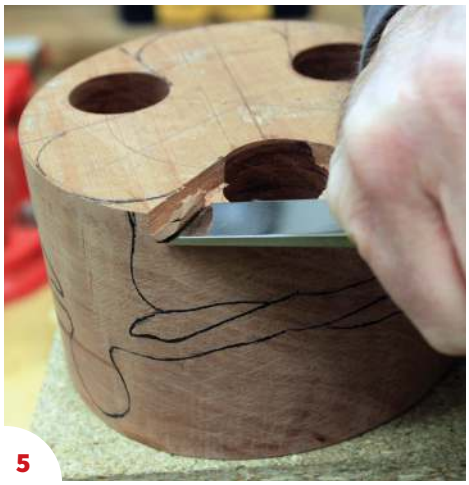
3 Using a 30mm Forstner drill bit in a drill press, drill holes to a depth of 25mm where you have marked the crosses.

4 Using the pattern, trace the outline on to the edge of the blank. The first figure should be positioned centrally over the line marked on the side. Now draw a 28mm circle adjacent to each figure on the top face. The circles should sit a few millimetres in from the edge.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Rough shaping

5 Fix the blank to a baseboard or carving vice, screw into the waste areas between the heads on the top face. Now start by chopping out the waste with a straight chisel, stop a few millimetres from the lines then use a shallow gouge to remove the remainder.

6 Use a V-gouge to cut in round the hands then use a 20mm shallow gouge to cut out underneath the arms


7

7 Use the same tool to round over the sides of the lower back.


8

8 When you have finished removing all the waste from the underside, go over it with 80 grit abrasive then remove from the base board, place upright on a small piece of scrap wood and draw round the base. Now cut the shape out of the scrap wood to make a holding jig and screw this to the baseboard. The carving can be held secure with a clamp.

→

9 Use a bent gouge to hollow out between the heads. A spoon bent gouge and a skew chisel are also useful for getting into the corners.

10 The back of a No.5, 16mm gouge will chop out the outside of the tea light holder nicely – it will be refined later so keep 2-3 mm away from the line. If you do not have this size gouge, use a flat chisel and pare off small cuts around the curve.

11 Clamp the piece or, as I did, use a few blobs of hot-melt adhesive to secure and stabilise the piece on a sacrificial board and drill through the waste areas between the figures with a suitable flat bit. The point of the flat bit will prevent it from skidding across the uneven surface.

12 The hole can be opened out with a rotary tool and suitable burr. Dust extraction is essential, as is your PPE and RPE. Use a suitably sized burr, smaller than the hole to prevent snagging, and start with a low speed setting.

13 Cut the waste back to the outline of the head and down to the top of the shoulders with a 20mm shallow gouge.

14 Pare down the top tealight holder to match the depth of the insert, around 15mm. You may need to open it out a little to allow for expansion and can do this with a small drum sanding attachment on a rotary unit. Mark centre reference lines on each head to give some guidelines for rounding them over.

Refinement

15 Pare down opposite sides of the top of the head to a rounded profile then do the same on opposite sides. Finally, pare off the remaining corners and file smooth with a rasp. You can do the whole procedure with a rasp if you prefer, which may be easier if the grain is interlocking.

16 To shape the lower half of the head use a round file or rasp to cut a groove to the back of the neck, then carve out the rest with a small, shallow palm gouge or carving knife. Finish with a round file or rotary burr.


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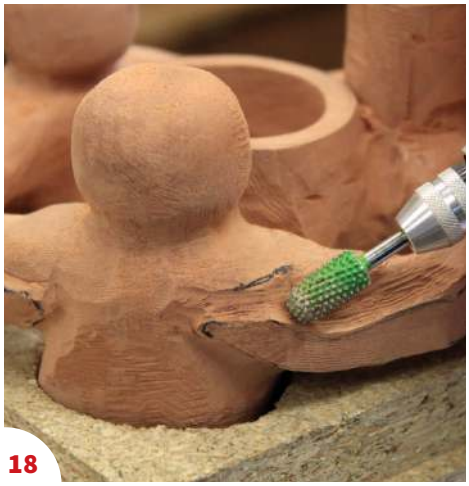
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17 Use a small, deep gouge or palm gouge to hollow out the area between the figures and the tealight holder. Smooth down with rotary burrs, small files and sandpaper. Be very careful with the rotary burrs to avoid snagging in tight areas – make sure the burr is smaller than the space you use it in.

18 To separate the arms, use a bull-nose burr to roughly define the shapes, then further cut in with a flame burr before fine-tuning with small rasps and sandpaper to define the basic shape.

19 Cut a V-groove in all the areas where the arms cross and around the hands – the work can be held on its side in a vice to do this. File and sand the grooves to smooth them into the arms to make them look natural.

The finishing touches


19


20

20 Round over the bottom edge of the carving with a small rasp to obtain a gentle, shallow curve all around the bottom of the figures.

21 Using a suitable tool such as a flat riffler or small, flat file, round over the edge of the tealight holder. This will give it a more pleasing shape and has the added bonus of hiding any small discrepancies in the wall thickness which may have occurred when opening out the inside in step 12.


21


22

22 Draw a pencil line down the centre of the face and file a flat from each side towards the line, then smooth over the edges all round. If you tilt the top edge of the file inwards this will give the impression of the figures looking up into the flame of the light. Initially these small sculptures represented the gathering of friends around a fire in some sort of celebration.

23 To complete the carving, cut in some eyes in with a small diamond burr. You may wish to carve some simple detail to the hands too. I opted to cut a small V-groove to separate the thumb from the hand. I have kept the detail simple, but you can add as much detail as you like. The whole carving can now be sanded down to 180g – this is a bit fiddly around the inside of each figure. Small homemade sanding sticks and foam contour sanding pads cut into strips are useful for this.


23


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24 Finish with a few coats of the finish of your choice. I have used satin polyurethane varnish for a soft sheen. The finished piece.

Norman 'beakhead' corbel in oak

Steve Bisco carves a Norman Romanesque corbel with an 11th-century figure

PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVE BISCO

When William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy, invaded England in 1066 he set out to impose his Norman rule by building great stone castles and cathedrals that would leave the Saxons in no doubt as to who was in charge now. The Normans built in the Romanesque style, which featured solid, round columns and semi-circular arches decorated with chevrons and other angular features that were less subtle than the more naturalistic Gothic forms of the next century.

One such building was Lincoln Cathedral, consecrated in 1092. Much of it was destroyed by an earthquake in 1185 and rebuilt in the Gothic style, but the Romanesque west front survived. The mouldings around the west doors give us some magnificent examples of Norman Romanesque stone carving, and it is a creature called a 'beakhead' from one of these mouldings that gives us the basis for this project. Beakheads are devilish creatures whose evil-looking heads have projecting beaks, claws or tongues, and they inhabit the stonework around the doorway to 'put the fear of God' into the congregation as they enter the church. At a time when the peasants could neither read nor write, nor understand the spoken Latin mass, these images of devils reminded them of the hell that awaited them if they led an immoral life.

I have taken one of these Lincoln beakhead figures and installed it on to an oak corbel. As the stone original is laid across the door mouldings, I've reflected this in the carving by including two coves and two bowtells in the structure of the corbel (see box 'Corbels, coves and bowtells'). I have also given the corbel flat sides, in the manner of a stone block that would be carved using templates to fit seamlessly into a string of blocks to create a continuous moulding.

As usual with 'ancient' oak carvings, I've darkened the oak by fuming with ammonia. If you don't fancy that you can use woodstains, but be aware that the stain may be absorbed unevenly by the end grain and side grain areas of the carving, whereas fuming gives you an even colour all over.

CORBELS, COVES AND BOWTELLS

A corbel is an architectural feature that projects from a wall to support a beam, arch or shelf. In a grand building it is usually decorated with carvings.

A cove is a linear moulding that is concave and usually has a profile of a quarter of a circle. It is commonly found in wood and stonework in all architectural styles. It is called a cavetto in the Classical style.

A bowtell is a linear moulding found mainly in Gothic work that is basically an extended cylinder projecting along the front of the stone or wood.

→

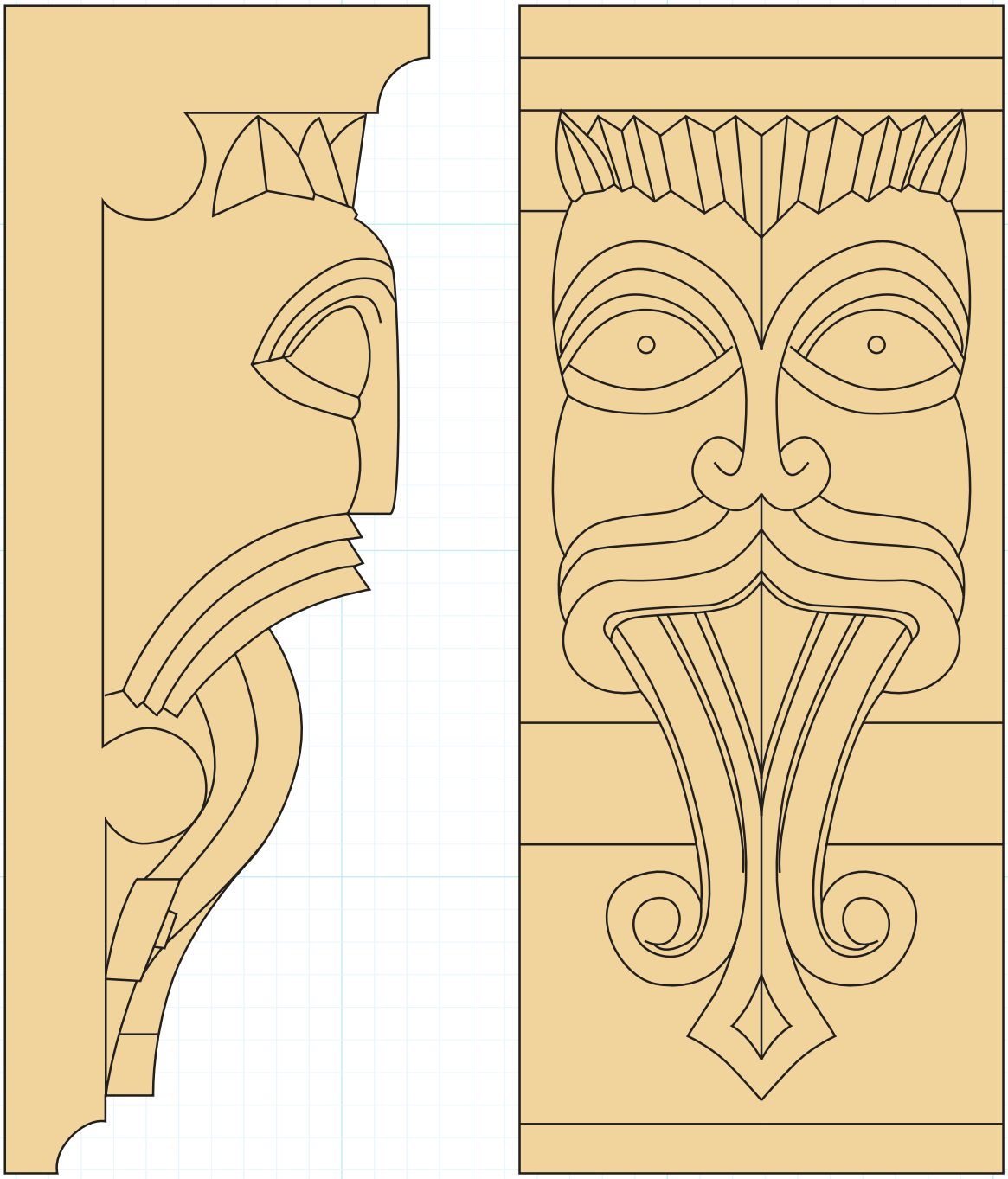
Things you will need

Tools:

- Personal and respiratory protective equipment (PPE & RPE)
- No.3, 10mm
- No.3, 10 & 18mm fishtail
- No.5, 5, 7mm &13mm curved
- No.8, 8mm
- No.9, 3 & 20mm
- V-tool – 2 & 6mm
- 2, 3, 6.5,10 & 20mm flat chisels
- 5mm bent chisel
- 10mm skew chisel
- Rebate plane
- 18mm cove moulding plane
- Various saws

Materials:

- Oak (*Quercus robur*) 140 x 125 x 340mm
- Household ammonia



NORMAN STYLE

The Normans famously conquered England in 1066 and brought with them the Romanesque style of architecture from France, building great cathedrals with semi-circular 'Roman' arches and solid circular columns, decorated with chevrons, dog's-tooth dentils and other angular mouldings with straight sharp edges. They also had a style of decorative art most famously represented in the Bayeux Tapestry, featuring stylised figures of soldiers, horses and ships that are simply and sharply delineated. The 'beakhead' creature in this project reflects these key features of the Norman style with its bold stark lines and sharp edges.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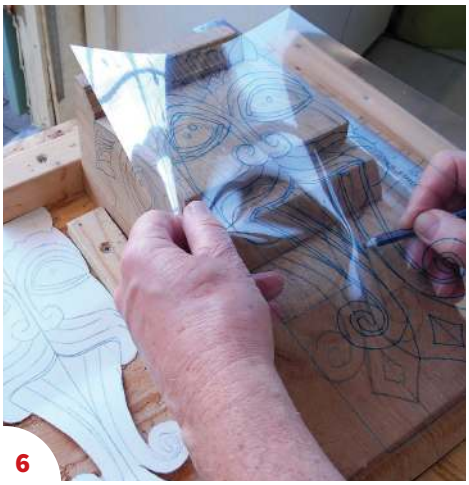
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Preparations

1 Get a piece of oak 140 x 125 x 340mm, and make sure the top end is cut flat and square to the sides. Make a full-size copy of the drawing and trace the front and side patterns on to the wood using carbon paper and making sure they all line up. Also, trace the front and side patterns on to printer transparency film to help you redraw the patterns as you carve. Make a template of the front head pattern by tracing it on to card and cutting it out.

Roughing out

2 Chiselling away large amounts of solid oak is hard work, so remove as much of the surplus wood as you can with saws, starting with the big wedge in front of the beast's tongue. I used a circular power saw, but if you have a bandsaw with a deep enough cut that will make steps 2-4 easier.

3 Set up the job on your bench and fix blocks to hold it still while you work. Use a tenon saw to cut away other surplus wood below the nose and mouth, and around the coves at both ends. Be sure not to saw too deep.

4 Shape the front surface down to just above the pattern lines on the side profiles using a flat chisel and a rebate plane. Make sure the surface is flat and level from side to side.

TOP TIP: Carving solid oak requires a lot of mallet work, so to avoid overworking your joints and muscles learn to swing the mallet with a steady, controlled rhythm. Hold the top of the handle for gentle taps, and the lower end of the handle for heavier hits, letting the momentum of the mallet head inflict the blow and take the shock rather than your wrist. Take plenty of rest breaks to avoid repetitive strain.

5 Now is a good time to fix your wall mountings on the back of the corbel so you can hang it up frequently to check how it looks at the normal viewing height. I used slotted mirror plates rebated into the oak.

6 Redraw the front pattern on the convoluted surface using the card template and the transparency. Make sure it is accurately centred, and look through the transparency to draw below it.

7 Cut away the surplus wood at each side of the head. On the upper part this is best done with the corbel on its side, but the areas beside the tongue are best done with it on its back. Make sure the sides are square to the front and back so the front profile is transferred accurately down to the base level and the bowtells.

8 Cut away the part of the mouth inside the lips down to the level of the tongue. Reduce the level of the two outer strips of the tongue and the volutes that swirl around at the end of them.

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9 Now it gets more three-dimensional as we rough out around the nose and cheeks to shape the mouth. Check against the finished photos to gauge the contours.

10 Roughing out around the eyes and forehead is one of the more difficult and critical parts of the carving. Eyes have a tendency to creep down the face while being carved, so keep checking the position against the transparency. Also, make sure the eyes are cut in deep enough and wrap around to the sides of the head.

TOP TIP: When carving eyes it is very important to measure and set them out accurately as a matching pair. Take a centreline from the nose and make sure the corners of the eyes, the pupils, and the highest and lowest points on the eyelids and eyebrows are the same distance from the centre on each side. Also, use the ruler to check that each of these features is at the same level on each side – you don't want a boss-eyed beakhead. Make sure the eyeballs are set back deep enough in the head or they will look flat.

11 Complete the roughing out by shaping around the ears and hairline. Smooth the underside of the top 'shelf' of the corbel.

Detail carving

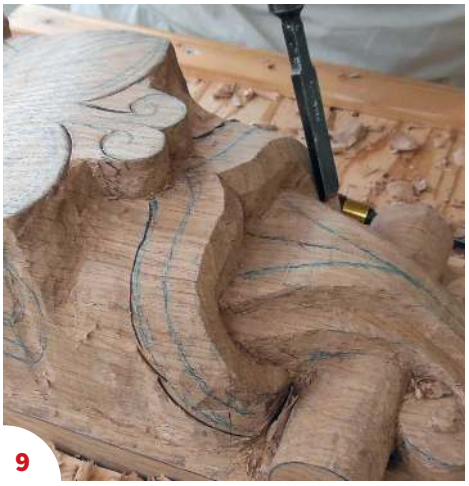
12 Start on the detail by shaping the coves in the top and bottom of the corbel. This is best done with a cove moulding plane, 13-18mm wide, if you have one, but if not you can do it by careful use of gouges. Be sure to keep the edges crisp.

13 Undercut inside the mouth a little to expose the whole of the tongue and cut a deep V in the centre. Use a 2mm V-tool to cut narrow V-channels down both sides of the tongue to give it definition, and undercut the underside of the tongue between the mouth and the bowtell.

14 Finish the lower end of the tongue by continuing the V-channels and cutting the incised 'diamond' in the end. Carve the curled volutes on each side, and finish by slightly undercutting the tongue where it meets the bowtell and the background surface of the corbel.

15 Refine the shape of the mouth and carve the three moustache-like bands that surround it. It is best to use a skew chisel with its angled cutting edge to slice along the ridges very carefully, as they run across the grain and will easily crumble if pushed too hard.

16 The beakhead's nose is dead flat at the front. It has two pronounced curls at the nostril end, and the top end merges into the eyes and eyebrows.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17 Shape the eyes and eyebrows very carefully as they are a key feature of the carving. Use a No.3, 18mm fishtail gouge to shape the dome of each eyeball, sliding it sideways to get smooth cuts. Use the skew chisel on the eyebrows as the ridges run across the grain. Measure very carefully to get the pupils in the same place on each eye.

18 Now finish the detailed features by shaping the forehead, then carving the small pointy ears and the very spiky hair. Use the skew chisel to undercut the 'shelf' of the corbel where the hair and ears meet it.

19 Refine the shape of the cheeks and undercut around the back of the head to make it look slightly detached from the corbel.

20 To finish off the carving, level off the background surface of the corbel by shaving away any surplus wood, then scraping it smooth with a flat chisel held in an upright position. Check that the bowtell mouldings are perfectly cylindrical and follow through in line and level from one side of the tongue and head to the other. Use slicing cuts from a broad, flat chisel to make their surface smooth and round.

21 The three photos show the finished carving from the side, front, and at an angle. Use these for reference when carving. If you want to leave it in its new oak colour just give it a coat of wax polish, but if you want to make it look ancient don't polish it yet – get ready to start fuming.

Finishing

22 To darken the oak by fuming, get a plastic tub and put in about 50-80ml of household ammonia in a shallow dish. Follow the manufacturer's safety instructions, work in a well-ventilated place, wear face, hand/arm and breathing protection and stand back at arm's length. Place the carving on wooden supports above the dish and seal the tub. Leave it until the oak turns a dark brown or the shade of brown you require. When you open the tub, stand back and let the fumes clear before taking the carving out.

FUMING OAK

New oak is pale, but darkens to a deep brown after centuries of exposure to air. Placing new oak in ammonia fumes replicates the ageing process at the rate of about a century an hour. The ammonia acts on the tannins found in the heartwood – but sapwood has no tannins and will stay pale, so make sure your oak is all heartwood. Use 'household' ammonia (obtainable from hardware stores) as it is much safer than industrial ammonia. Always wear personal and respiratory protective equipment when handling and working with ammonia.

23 Give the carving a coat of a dark wax polish, and buff it up to a soft sheen. The finished carving now looks like a 900-year-old relic from Norman times. Fix it just above eye level to get the best view of the grotesque creature.

Canada goose

Mike Wood provides a step-by-step guide to carving this distinctive large bird

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MIKE WOOD

Introduced into the UK from North America, the Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*) is widespread across the country, with some 62,000 breeding pairs and around 190,00 UK wintering birds.

With its distinctive black an white head and black, brown, cream, grey and white feather colours this large bird is easily identifiable and well-known for the V-formation in which flocks fly. They are thought to be able to travel more than 1000 miles per day during migration, usually at an altitude of around 3000 feet.

Because of its ubiquity it is considered a nuisance in some areas where it gathers in large numbers. It is often seen in parks and around lakes and gravel pits all year round. The birds mostly eat a diet of aquatic plants, plant material, berries, seeds, and worms.

Canada geese – in common with many pother bird species – mate for life, beginning their search for a partner at the age of two or three. When the nesting season arrives they see an ideal spot for a nest on slightly elevated ground near water from where they can easily spot predators.

The architect of the nest is the female, who gathers weeds, moss, grass and sticks and lines it with down feathers. The pairs produce one brood a year of anything from two to eight eggs. The young goslings can usually walk, swim, dive and feed after around 24 hours, although it takes twoto three months for them to learn how to fly.

Like other geese, the Canada variety can be an extremely noisy bird, particularly if it feels threatened, when it extends its neck and honks loudly, possibly throwing in some hissing and spitting for good measure.

In other fun facts, Canada geese generally moult once a year, in warmer weather and around the time of breeding – which usually runs from March until May. Once this is done it won't be able to fly again for another six weeks or so.

Canada geese are thought to be caring birds, looking after their elderly and sick and raising their young communally, with both males and females playing their part.

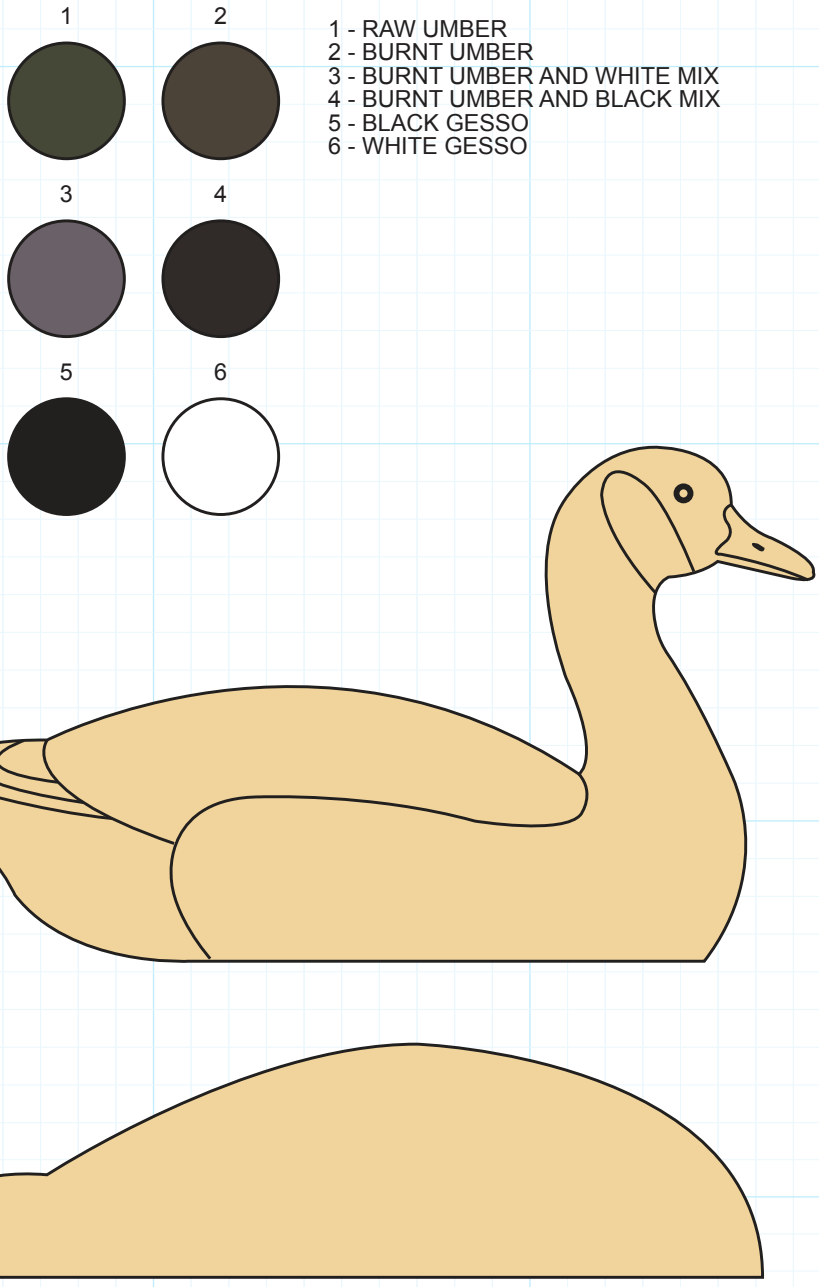
Things you will need

Tools:

- Personal and respiratory protective equipment (PPE & PRE)
- Bandsaw, coping saw or fretsaw
- Carving knife
- Rotary power carving unit
- Rotary carving discs or hand chisels
- Coarse taper burr
- Medium flame or taper burr
- Bull-nose stone burr
- Round-nose burr
- Fine ruby taper burr
- Drill and drill bit of for the feet
- Sanding drum
- Pyrography unit with scalpel-edge nib

Materials:

- Lime (*Tilia x Europea*) or Jelutong (*Dyera costulata*) of a size to suit your project
- Body: L530 x W230 x H200mm
- Neck: H150mm- W80mm
- Head: L130mm- W77mm
- 3mm ply
- Eyes & feet
- PVA adhesive
- Eyes or material for the eyes
- Plastic Wood
- Paint brushes/airbrush
- Abrasives 120 – 240 grit
- Acrylic colours as per the palette



Rough-shaping the body and head

1 The Canada goose is a large bird and you will have to decide how big you are going to make it. Given that the goose can reach 1.5m or so in length this can be a large project. So, like I did, you might consider making a scaled-down version rather than a full-sized one. Photocopy and scale up the drawings provided as you please. Even at the sizes I used, there was still a lot of wood required so, to save cost and because it was a necessity regarding timber sizes available commercially, I needed to laminate two pieces together for the main body. I cut two sections of wood and rough-shaped them on a saw to reduce weight, I hollowed out the inside using a drill and 25mm drill bit to remove some waste and then used a rotary carving disc and sander to refine the internal form.

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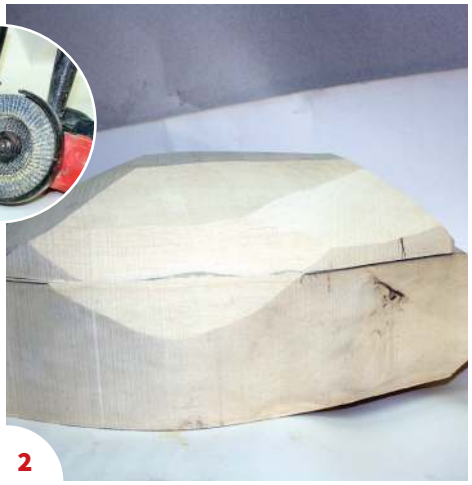

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2 Since I laminated the timber I needed to glue it together. Whether you're working with a solid piece or laminated body section, you need to have a rough-shaped body section ready to move on to working on the head and neck section.

3 For strength, the head is created from two sections of wood. These are shown clearly in the picture. Once the wood sections are glued together, use power or hand carving to roughly shape the relevant main shapes. I typically use power-carving techniques on my work, which entail a combination of rotary burrs and sanding bobbins. But of course, you can hand carve it too – it just takes a little longer, but you don't have to deal appropriately with dust, noise and the like from power carving.

3

4

4 Here is a view of the head and neck from the front.

5

5 When ready, adjust the body to allow you to temporarily fit the head and neck to the main body. Adjust as needed to get the position you require.

Feathers

6 Draw in all the feather details on the back then carve them in place. I use a detail burr and a sanding drum/flap to shape the feathers.

6

7 Now draw in the side feathers and carve those in place. Note also that above the tail at the end of the wing feathers there are two slots cut into the timber. These are to accept the primaries later on. It saves time and timber to have these as separate pieces.

Detail

8 Once the feather positions are carved fully create the detail using a scalpel-edged pyrography nib.

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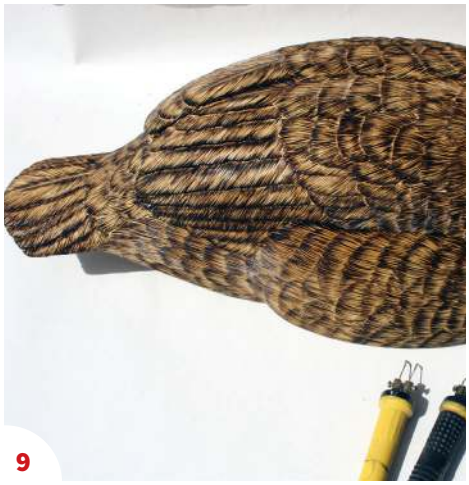

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9 Continue this process over the whole body, keeping a close eye on the positions and detail required. Check your reference material closely to make sure you are getting it right.

10 Once the body is done, move on to the neck and head. Cut two eye socket holes in the right positions and then insert either bought or made eyes into the socket, bedding them into plastic wood. Once pressed in place, shape the squeeze out then mark the feather positions and use a pyrography unit to create the detail.

11 Here is the neck and head temporarily fixed to the body with the pyrography detail all in place.

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12 It is now necessary to create the primaries. Two pieces of wood are required for this. Due to these being delicate if made from lime or jelutong, I use 3mm ply. It is cheap and can be easily shaped and detailed. Once finished, fix them in place.

13 Here is the bird ready for colouring.

Colouring

14 Undercoat the bird using black gesso and white gesso.

15 Use a mixture of burnt umber and raw umber to create a thin wash. Once done and dry, add some white gesso to the mix and paint the sides.

16 Now, using an airbrush or paintbrush – I am using an airbrush – edge all of the wing and side feathers with white. You can now see how the look is developing nicely.

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TOP TIP: The carving, pyrography and colouring of the feathers is a necessary process for creating realistic birds. Practice these techniques on waste timber before committing to using them on your final bird. None of the processes are tricky, it just takes a little time to learn how to bring everything together well.

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17 Once done, dry brush the edges of the feathers with white.

18 Now, using a mixture of black and burnt umber, airbrush the dark markings. This can be done with a brush if needed.

19 Coat the body with very thin washes of burnt umber.

20 It is now time to paint the head and neck with white and black gesso as required.

21 Edge the head and neck feathers with a mixture of light grey.

22 & 23 Here are a few other views of the finished bird.

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Sharpening gouges

Nic Westermann looks at methods of sharpening gouges

PHOTOGRAPHS BY NIC WESTERMANN

In this, the final part of my series on sharpening I will be looking at gouges. The breadth of this article took me outside my comfort zone as the gouges I have designed and make are used for a narrow application in green woodworking, so I have leaned heavily on Peter Benson for this article and would like to thank him for so readily sharing his knowledge.

Edge geometry

Plan view of edge

First, continuing with my two-part approach to sharpening we need to understand how the tool cuts then can decide on the optimum edge geometry.

This first and possibly most contentious thing to look at is the plan view of edge.

If crisp corners are needed, i.e. for lettering, then the edge should be kept dead straight. However, a dead-straight edge can make more free-form carving difficult although the sharp corners can be extremely useful for detail. If you want to slice sideways as you cut forms such as fur or hair then a bull nose can be useful.

Three plan forms of gouge. L-R straight, bull nose and softened corners

Rounded sides of gouge

If you are purely going to hollow and want to leave no tool marks at all then slightly softening the corners can help. Also the sides of the gouge should be rounded as any crisp edges can mark your work. This is more of a green woodworking than carving grind – indeed, in many circles rounded corners in the plan view are seen purely as a result of poor sharpening.

I would advise to go carefully on any reshaping – it takes a matter of seconds to round off the corners of a gouge, but if you then want to take it back to a straight edge there is a lot of steel to remove to achieve this.

Whatever form you decide on grind this before setting the bevels. This is known as jointing and can be achieved very quickly on a bench grinder – the grit used to do this is largely irrelevant as the scratch pattern left will not be part of the edge after putting on the bevels.

Bevel forms in profile

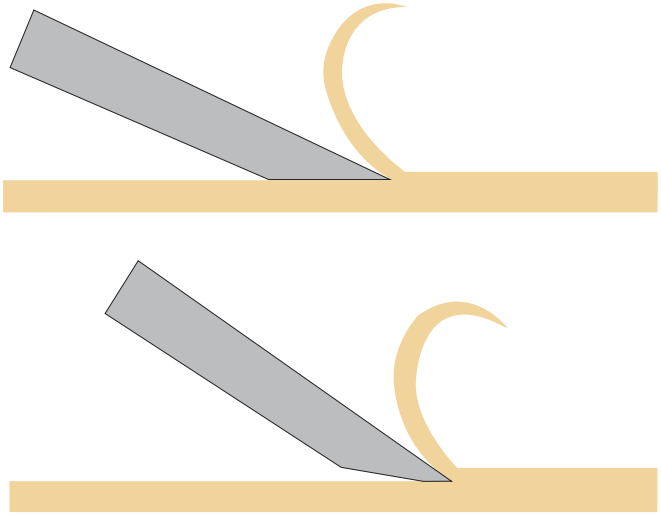
As you can see, a gouge will often have a secondary bevel – this is less of an issue than it is with a knife as, although the stability of the cut is no longer supported by longer bevel contact, this matters little as the length of the handle directly behind the edge means it is possible to guide the edge wherever you want it to go – this is the major difference between knives and chisels/gouges.

However, if you don't want to cut straight and need to make a concave cut then a long bevel will definitely work against you – you will have the leverage from the handle to overcome it but the cut surface will show how unhappy this combination is – chatter and bruised wood is the only possible outcome in this instance.

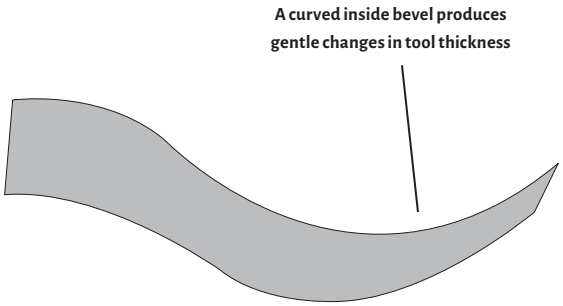
As ever the bevel must mirror the cut, so for hollowing, convex bevels are needed. In practice, because of the large amount of leverage available to guide the cut, it is common to find a short, flat secondary bevel and a convex primary bevel. This is easier to sharpen, as it is simple enough to follow a narrow flat bevel but keeping to a fully flowing convex is not straightforward.

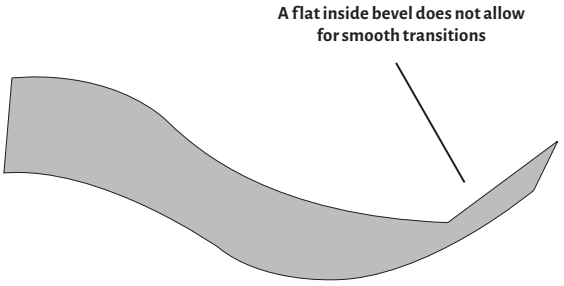
On a gouge, or tracery chisel, that is going to hollow deeply then the curve of the bevel must follow on for quite some distance to reduce the chances of the tool binding. This can cause problems with the inside of the tool. Ideally it should follow the outside to maintain a congruent thickness to the tool.

Sharpening a bevel of this type can be difficult – at Hewn & Hone we have developed some wheels that are suited to grinding and polishing these forms.

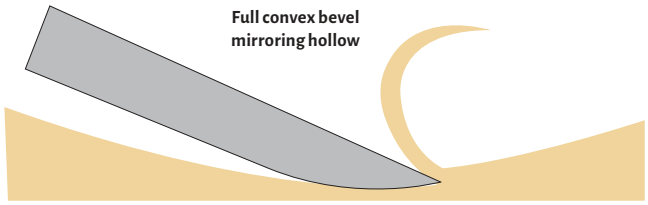


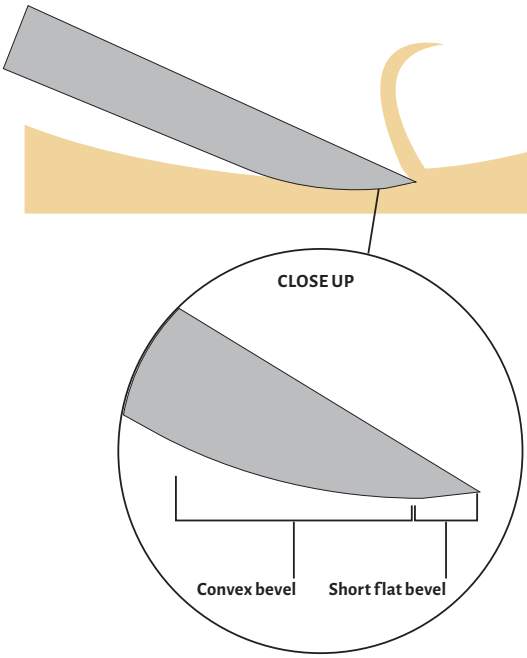
Simple chisel grind and secondary bevel with relief, both flat on inside





Cross section of a double bent gouge, the inside bevel needs to be curved in both planes



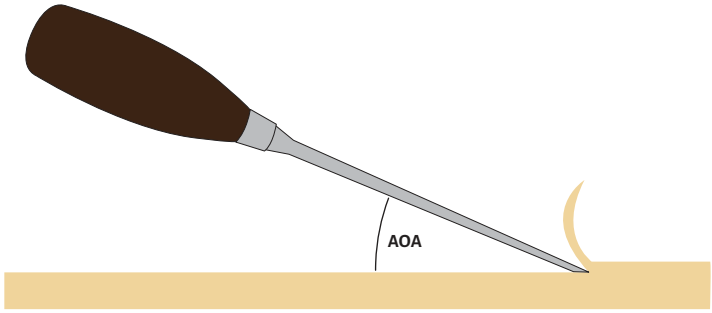


Two versions of a convex bevel – full convex and a convex primary bevel with a short flat secondary bevel

Using a felt wheel to maintain original grind on inside bevel

Angle of attack

The other issue to be aware of is angle of attack (AOA). This is a simple function of the angle of the outer bevel, the angle you have to tip a handle up for the edge to engage in the wood. It is easy to check on a flat surface. Purely in terms of maximum efficiency you should be cutting as close to the centre-line of the tool handle as you can – then the force from the mallet is directed straight into the cut. However, it rarely should be so flat that there isn't room to hold the tool handle, but the further you deviate the more force you will have to put into the tool to make a cut. A compromise must be made and there are many factors influencing how you choose the best angle of attack for yourself.



Angle of attack, or biting point

Optimum grinds

You are a major factor influencing optimum AOA – we all work in varying ways at different height benches. If you have or favour a low bench then you will prefer a steeper AOA and vice versa for a higher bench. Bear in mind that this is quite subtle, only a matter of a few degrees. But if you have a favourite gouge or handful of gouges it may well be because their AOA suits you and in that case it makes sense to grind all the outer bevels of your gouges to this angle. Then every time you pick up a gouge it will bite at the same point, making your work more instinctive – there will be no adjustment period when you pick up a new tool.

On the other hand, optimum AOA will depend on the forms you are trying to carve – if you want to carve deep hollows then a large AOA is needed to give you clearance, this is found on my green woodworking gouges – hollowing cups and ladles is their most common use.

However, if you want to cut long, smooth gutters or flutes with a gouge like this is will be hard to steer smoothly, despite the leverage you have. A much shallower AOA is far superior in this instance.

Here you can see this taken to the extreme with an in and out cannel pair of gouges – notice the different AOA and how one will hollow and one will flute. However, despite them having a completely different bevel form, it should be noted that the angle between these two bevels, the included edge angle, is the same.

A steep AOA allows for deep forms to be hollowed

Angle of attack for in and out cannel gouges. Note out cannel gouge is so flat that the handle will foul the work

The degree to which you can hollow cleanly with in and out cannel gouges is marked

Included angles

We have purposely avoided mentioning the included bevel angles in this article for two reasons – the optimum angle for a gouge is a couple of degrees steeper than the point they will fail at. They will cut most efficiently at this point, but sailing too close to the wind can cause unexpected failures if you hit a knot or wavy grain, or lend a tool to an inexperienced carver. This angle will depend on the steel of the gouge and the wood you are carving. But the most difficult aspect is actually measuring these angles, due to the short bevels that can often be on both sides of the tool. It is far better to approach this empirically and pragmatically. However I, like many of you, do like to see some figures, so here is a list that may be of help.

Bevel angle woods

20-22° Basswood and lime (*Tilia* spp.), willow (*Salix* spp.) and poplar (*Liriodendron* spp.)

22-25° Most carving woods

25-28° Oak (*Quercus* spp.), yew (*Taxus* spp.) and softish, tropical hardwoods)

28-30°+ Very dense close-grained timber like boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens*) and other exotics like rosewoods

Harder wood – opening out the mouth of a gouge

Occasionally though you will have a gouge that is cutting well and the AOA suits you perfectly, then you move on to harder timber, the edge starts to fail and you are presented with this dilemma: You need to increase the included edge angle, this will need more force to make a cut through wood that is already tougher than usual. However, when you make this increase in bevel angle from the outside you will also find that you now have to hold the gouge at a steeper angle of attack, the gouge is now cutting less efficiently, so your carving will be much more difficult.

In this instance, increasing the bevel angle by putting a micro bevel on the inside makes a lot of sense – the side the wood sees is unaffected so the AOA will not change. This is known as 'opening the mouth of the gouge'.

Conclusion

You should adjust the outer bevel to get the AOA that suits you and the type of carving you want to do. Once set this should be largely left alone – this angle should not be altered during sharpening. At this point you should consider the included angle, and this can be done empirically, the most obvious clue being that if the edge folds it is too shallow.

When making these alterations be aware that an edge with a very shallow angle is likely to fail and be unusable on all but the softest woods. A more obtuse angle will work on a wide range of woods, it will not be ideal for softer woods that tear more easily, such as basswood and lime but they will still cut.

So make any adjustments to the tool on the inside bevel, then you are not affecting the geometry of how the tool cuts, only the force needed to make the cut will be affected.

Setting the outside bevel

Once you have understood the bevel form that you want, you need to cut this accurately.

There are various approaches if sharpening by hand. Rocking the gouge side to side or moving it in figure of eight, are the conventional methods – the bevel is constantly engaged with the stone.

It works very well but I have found with that the scratch pattern is not perpendicular to the edge – something I like to achieve. However if you are going to strop then this scratch pattern will be polished out. Secondly, with shorter bevels it can be hard to feel or judge if you are honing flat to the bevel. You can use marker pen to check where you are, but you then have to take the gouge from the stone and turn it over, then go back to put on the stone, meaning that you may create new problems with misaligning.

If this does turn out to be an issue for you, then the method below may work.

Setting the outside bevel, figure of 8 or rocking motion (shown)

It allows you to see exactly where you are hitting with each stroke without having to change position – it works pretty well for me anyway. For this method the gouge is held stationary and upside down, it could even be in a vice, and the abrasive is moved over it.

I would acknowledge though that sharpening on a bench grinder is much more common, but it has been covered many times before, so I won't go into any detail on this.

Setting the inside bevel

Once you have set the outer bevel of your gouge, you may, as has been discussed, find that the included edge angle is too fine for the edge to hold. In this case put a bevel on the inside.

This bevel doesn't have to be that long – even 1mm will be enough to reinforce the edge – it should be flat though as a convex here makes it very difficult to judge the angle. Generally the angles are all going to be arrived at empirically. If the edge fails you need a steeper angle, if it feels hard work even when the edge is freshly sharpened then a finer angle may well improve things.

Ideally whatever you choose should be the same diameter as your gouge – in practice smaller will work with care, larger obviously not as it won't fit.

Setting the outside bevel, alternate method

Refining the scratch pattern

This is the second part of my sharpening process, and it has to be said that this is not something that is done to the same degree as in knife sharpening. It is common to go straight from a bench grinder to buffing wheel with no intermediate grits.

I think improvements can be made to the edge by getting to a finer finish before polishing the edge, and would advise at least one intermediate grit up to 2000, or finer if you can, then stropping.

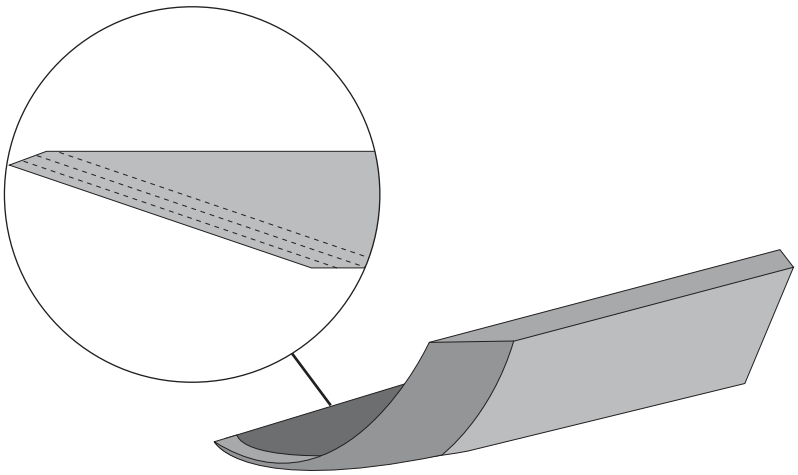
A buffing wheel is a very quick way to polish an edge but there is a danger of rounding the bevels if not done well. Cutting a groove in MDF is a great way to make a strop perfectly formed to your gouge, and will polish for a long time before you even need to add a polishing compound.

To strop the inside there are various methods that will work. Personally I never use suede on a wooden former as I don't like to increase the potential for rounding the inside bevel. I have found a polishing compound applied directly to a the wooden former to work very well. If the gouge bends in both directions then a shaped felt wheel can be very good. Like sharpening, ensuring the strop mirrors the bevel form will pay dividends.

Various ways to set the inside bevel – slips, abrasive paper on dowel, multitool or flexidrive mounted sanding wheel

Maintenance sharpening

If there is no major edge damage and the bevels are short then the amount of steel needed to be removed to touch up an edge is very small, so stropping or buffing will work for a while. Eventually you will round the edges and need to cut them back to straight, but largely I would tend to do this from the outside as it is so much easier to do and just strop the burr off from the inside. This too cannot be repeated that many times if you have an inside bevel as it will eventually be obliterated. But as ever I advise taking the easiest route for as long as possible, sharpening should be a quick and easy route to getting back to carving, not a chore!



Repeated sharpening from outside only can result in losing the inside bevel

HEWN & HONE

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 Nalezyty, an IT specialist and respected Kolroser and carver; Alex Yerks, an internationally renowned green woodworking teacher and kuksa carver; and Adrian Lloyd, a UK-based full-time craftsman, teacher and toolmaker.

To learn more visit: www.hewnandhone.co.uk

Different perspective

Laura Backeberg talks to woodcut printmaker Helen Brown

I've been a printmaker all my life. I always loved art but I like the process involved with printmaking, that you're actually making the block, not the finished piece of work. You start with this sculptural block and plate, and if they aren't right you're never going to get the result you want. There's always a magic that happens when you take a print: 'Oh my god, did I make it, did it work?'

I draw all my work from life. I go out on the Downs and work directly from the landscape. I think we're so blessed here in Brighton to have this amazing nature right on our doorstep. Other parts of the country have beautiful landscapes, but not all of it's that accessible. There's not a 'right to roam' everywhere and sometimes there aren't footpaths.

Changes of view

What I like about the Downs is it's ever-changing. There's a soft-rollingness to the Downs, the soft, rolling hills, and they repeat themselves. I like that repetition, and obviously printmaking uses repetition as you're making more than one thing. So there's that connection there. I find that when I look at certain views I'll think: 'That hill really looks like another hill from a certain aspect.' I live out in Peacehaven and from the back of my house, where I walk my dog, Mutley, you can see Mount Caburn and Itford Hill. I had one summer where I kept thinking: 'Right I've drawn from there,' and I'd drive somewhere else and draw, but everywhere I drew had those hills in, it was as if I was just circling around them. So I thought: 'I have to get on them and that way they can't be in the picture.' But that is something I like, that no matter where you go you get these certain shapes that link you to where you are.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY HELEN BROWN

Birling Gap

University years

I moved to Brighton for university in 1994, and came from Cambridge which is as flat as a pancake. So I come from a flat place but have spent my life drawing hills. I moved here to do a printmaking degree at Brighton University. I just loved having that workshop space, there are fantastically big workshops there, and they were empty as no one else came into university. I was in constantly and made such a stupid amount of work. When it came to the end of my degree they said I could only show four pieces, but I had about 3000 pictures... That's where I met Ann D'Arcy Hughes, who I work with at bip-Art now. She used to teach the Adult Ed. When I finished my degree I stayed on and did the Adult Ed as I still wanted to use the studio – just because I'd finished my degree didn't mean I'd finished making, I wanted to be in that space. Later, when Ann decided she wanted to set up a studio, I got involved in that.

Screenprinting

I first encountered screen printing when I was at school. When I was at secondary school, just before my GCSEs, we went on a school trip to Kip Gresham's screenprinting workshop in Cambridge. I was completely in love with it, I thought it was amazing. He gave me an old screen and some paper and some inks. Now everything's water-based but back then it was all oil-based so it was severely toxic. At school they let me build a screenprinting workshop in a cupboard. My dad bought some hinge clamps and we hinge-clamped the screen on. I had to keep the door closed because of the smell so I'd lock myself in this cupboard with these really toxic chemicals just making these wild prints, probably completely high but not realising. Through my GCSE and my A Level I did screenprinting in there as well, so I pretty much stayed in that cupboard for four years.

I then decided to do an art degree. I couldn't really think of anything else I'd do. I went to do an art foundation in Cambridge, where they had a fantastic printmaking department. I got a job as a cleaner at the college so I could have keys to the studio there. I then applied to Brighton, and as soon as I came to look around I knew I wanted to live here.

From screenprinting to lino print

When I came to Brighton I did do a bit of relief printing, but not very much as I just got completely involved in etching, which uses a metal plate. My work used to be very figurative and then it started to move more towards imagined worlds, rather than landscapes. Then I reached this point

Helen at bip-Art Printmaking workshop with the 1844 Colombian press

where I wanted a change, I didn't want to keep drawing from my head. Then it just struck me, I spend so much time out on the Downs, I want to do a landscape. However, I didn't feel like I wanted to do an etching.

I took a piece of lino (which is essentially the same process as with a piece of wood) and got the bus up to Devil's Dyke. I walked and found a view I liked, drew it, then went and sat in the pub and carved it. The woman in the pub was so happy I was making art that she gave me free chips. It made me feel like those old-time artists who'd paint and get given a cheese sandwich or whatever – like Rembrandt's there, like 'I'll have ale and a cheese sandwich for that painting', and now it's worth half a million pounds. So I was carving away and felt that the whole experience had been just joyful, I'd been out there, connecting to the Downs, and I'd really enjoyed it. That was probably 20 years ago and from there I just kept going out onto the Downs and drawing.

Lino to wood

I moved quite quickly from lino to wood. It's not necessarily a heavily grained wood, but you do see a grain, and I prefer how it cuts – there's a slight resistance to it as you're carving, and it makes a nice sound. It's flat as well. I do a technique called chine-collé, which is a Japanese method of printmaking where you lay coloured paper on, and having a block which isn't going to bow is a real bonus.

I've been doing it for so long, I'd say I've kind of accepted all of the challenges. You can't fight against wood, you have to go with it. If you try to resist it, it will win each time. When you're carving, once you've carved something out you can't put it back in, so there's a real commitment there. I really like that, but some people might find that a challenge. On a technical level you do sometimes get a block which has

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The Downs from Mount Caburn

Harrow Hill on South Downs Way

Cutting fine detail with a Sankakuto V-gouge

Creating texture

bowed. It's a natural material so obviously ideally it's completely flat, but there might be a slight dip in it, so more challenges will arise when you come to print it.

By the nature of the way I ink up my blocks I avoid most of these pitfalls, because I always use a smaller roller to get around any 'dips', and I also cut some of my blocks up like jigsaw puzzles. If you work with smaller pieces they won't bow, and you won't notice any dips.

Equipment

I use Japanese carving tools from intaglioprintmaker.com. I use a Komasuki, which is a U-gauge, and a Sankakuto V-gouge, in different thicknesses. These tools are handmade in Japan, and are hand-finished, which means they're tested so they have the right angle and are really sharp. The blade also runs down all the way through the tool. You can only see an inch of it but the blade itself is about 75 or 100mm long, and as it's sharpened it's pulled out. I don't sharpen my own tools as my eyesight's not good enough. I get mine sharpened by Lawrence's Art Supplies, [Hove] or I send them off to a guy called Chris Dauntt, a Wood Engraving specialist. I find that if it's just me using these tools they stay sharp for quite a while because the metal is such good quality.

Materials

What I use is a soft, Japanese plywood – well, it used to be called that, now it's called soft Asian plywood. The difference between the plywood I use and the plywood you'd find in a builder's yard is in the gluing. Each layer of the wood I used has glue covering it entirely rather than it just being in strips or spots, which you can get if you buy cheaper plywood from a yard. It's also very soft, and if you have very sharp tools you have a lot of control over what you're doing.

Some artists will use any old bits of wood they find. They'd use the top of a table, or just about anything, but when you carve harder wood you blunt your tools quicker. With woodcut, I'm using the grain of the wood, cutting either with or against it.

If you're doing wood engraving it's the end grain, and you'd use boxwood or lemonwood, and they'd be much smaller as it's more expensive.

You can get many fine lines with wood engraving but not as fine a line with woodcut.

Press

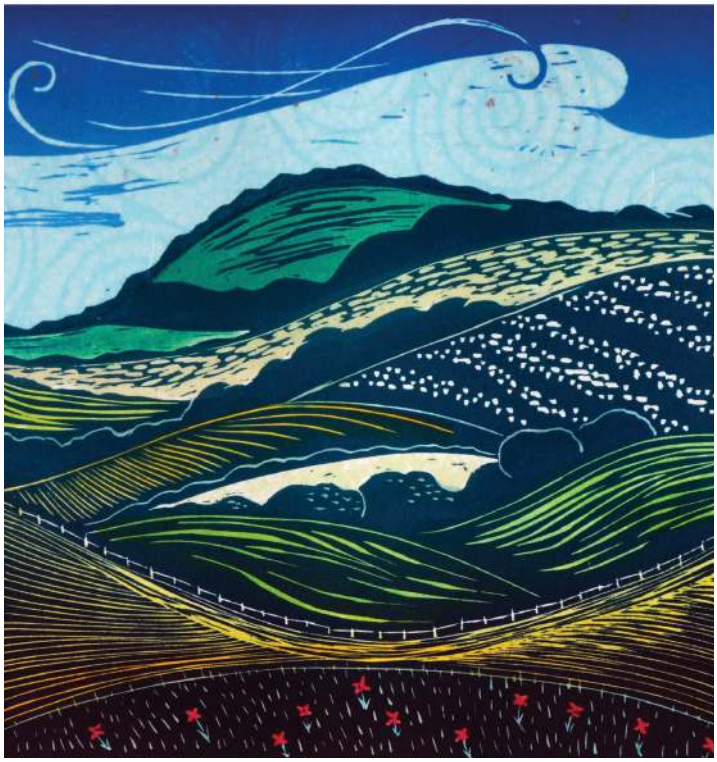
I use an 1844 Columbian Press. It was owned by Brighton university, which had three Columbian presses but only ever had one set up in the print room. The others were both in storage, one in its entirety, but this one was in pieces. Ann (D'Arcy Hughes) bought it from them, and I think they thought she'd never get all the bits, but she got it all together and had it restored.

Downstairs at the university there is a press but it's like a display piece, which I think is terrible. If I was a student there I'd be doing guerrilla printmaking on it as a protest.

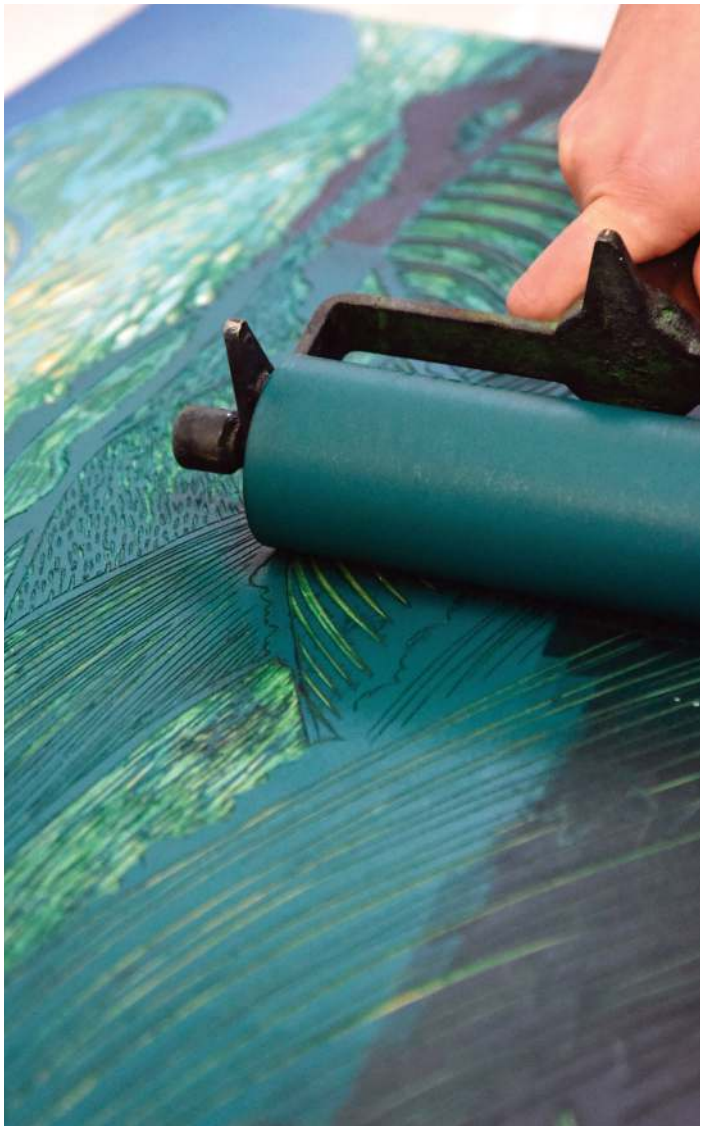
They're such amazing machines, and they're still working as well as they ever did – they actually print better than a lot of modern-day presses.

There are quirks to this press. Because you're using your body to make the print, and our brains are such amazing computers, you get to know 'how does it feel when I pull it? To get it to print how I want I have to pull it like this', so you have a muscle memory of exactly how you need it to feel. I think it's got a lot of character – it definitely has days it prints better than others. Some days I'll come in and it's like: 'It's a good

Chanctonbury Ring



Balmer Down



Inking up a woodcut block

printing day, print as much as you can.' But other times you come in and it 'needs a bit more effort'.

When you're using tools and machinery you do form a bond with your tools, they end up having their own personalities. I was running an evening class once and I was saying: 'Sometimes you have to do this, it depends how the press is feeling,' and someone said: 'Don't be ridiculous, it's a machine, it's going to either do it or not.' Then everything he put on the press wouldn't print properly, and everyone else's was printing fine.

We also have a little Albion, that's from 1865 and came originally from Fleet Street but, again, through the university. Unfortunately – well, not unfortunately for us – in the late '80s/early '90s when digital print started everyone got really overexcited. A lot of universities threw away all their traditional printing equipment. Brighton University didn't go the whole hog by any means but did clear out a quarter of the studio and fill it with computers. I think what's happening now with computers is that it's the app doing half the work, rather than the person. It went from learning how to be a computer designer and now there's this app designer coming in, so you've got these different layers, but you have to be able to still draw. It's having that base of something that's tangible.

Hopes for the future

I have a long-term project I only started a few years ago and that is to make a visual book of the South Downs Way. A lot of my views are either from the South Downs Way, as in I'm actually standing on or very close to it, or looking across to where the South Downs Way runs. So what I'd like to do is make a pocket book, a map book, so if you're walking there you can see: 'There's that view, there's that view.'

Of course I also want the studio to continue, it's working really well. A lot of people come here and it's very important for them. We have people who are in recovery from major illnesses, or a major life event, or they've worked all their lives and they've always wanted to be an artist but they felt they couldn't. That's a real joy.

Development

You're always learning when you're teaching. Technically I have a set recipe for how I make my work, because I like how it feels and I like the result. I find that when I'm teaching I get to explore all the 'crazy' things that other people suggest.

At bip-Art, we don't mind what you want to make. We don't have a house style, but we really pride ourselves on teaching printmaking as a skill. If you don't know what you're doing, it won't work, you won't get the result you're intending. The result you get will often be a surprise anyway, but if you have no teaching in 'how to' you're completely lost. I'll show people as many different ways as I know, but there are always more techniques. There's a definite structure to printmaking but within that structure you can really flex the rules, and occasionally break them totally. I think if you have a constraint in something it can weirdly give you more freedom in it.

For more information on Helen and her work visit https://helensprints.co.uk.
Helen set up bip-Art, an open access printmaking workshop in Brighton, with Ann d'Arcy Hughes and Hebe Vernon-Morris in May 2010. Bip-Art offers an array of courses in printmaking, including soft woodcut, taught by professionals. Visit www.bip-art.co.uk.

Large dinosaur

Brian Crossman shares his trials and tribulations in creating a fun triceratops

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRIAN CROSSMAN

I first started woodcarving classes in the early 1990s as part of my interest in furniture making and learned the basic motifs carving such pieces as a Georgian pie crust wine table and hall table with ball and claw feet. At that time I saw some of my classmates carving rocking horses and promised myself to do the same if I ever became a grandfather. Over the years this morphed into the idea of a rocking dinosaur as many youngsters seem to be more interested in dinosaurs than horses. I hadn't done any serious carving since the mid 1990s, apart from shaping some Windsor chair seats a couple of years ago, so this project was a long overdue return to carving.

There are plenty of books, articles and plans for rocking horses but I conducted an internet search for plans for a rocking dinosaur. I wanted to make a triceratops and the search did not give any worthwhile hits, so I was faced with the prospect of starting from scratch as to the design, but had plenty of reference material to be able to start with making the dinosaur. It took a while to make sketches and work out the various views and such like. This meant resizing these on a computer to obtain the outlines that were usable without being foreshortened. It was not an insurmountable problem but still rather time consuming. To help you, I have taken photographs of each relevant view so you can scan them and enlarge as required. You now have the chance to make a small dinosaur or, as I did, a large-scale one.

Timber

Good-quality wood for carving is becoming expensive in Australia, so the idea was to laminate the body from a plywood and medium density fibreboard (MDF) – then if the project went horribly wrong it would not be too expensive to discard. The rationale was the plywood would serve as a structural core for strength with the outer cladding in MDF shaped by chisel.

Rather than relying on power carving as the sole method, I wanted to use chisels as much as possible. I had already tried gouging a small sample of MDF and found it was reasonably easy to carve after piercing the hard, outer skin. The more complicated head would be carved from jelutong (*Dyera costulata*), which does carve nicely.

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The dinosaur from various views with helpful dimensions

1

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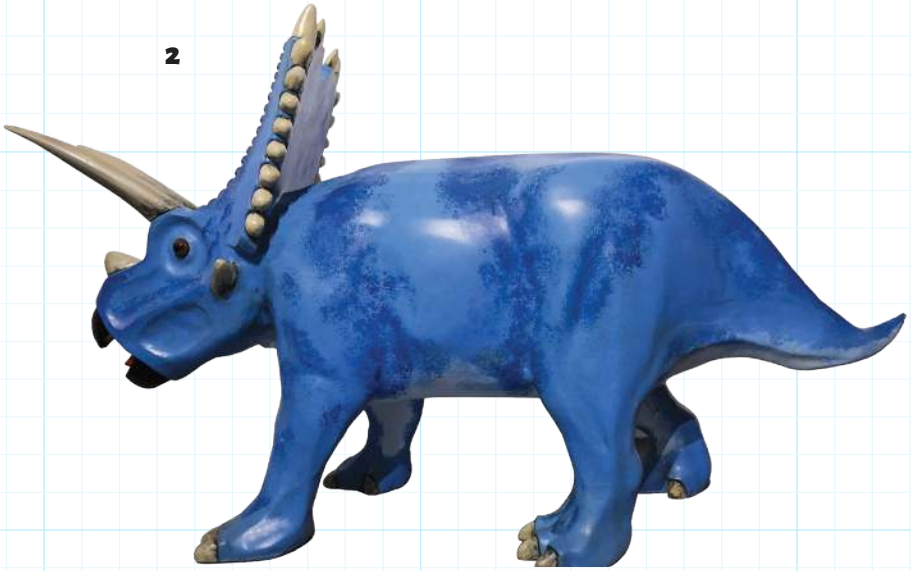

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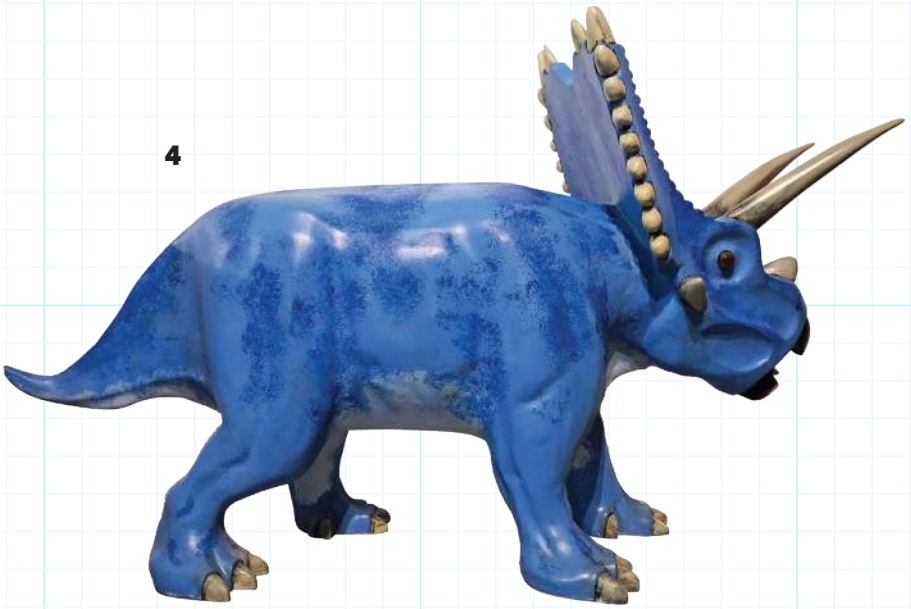


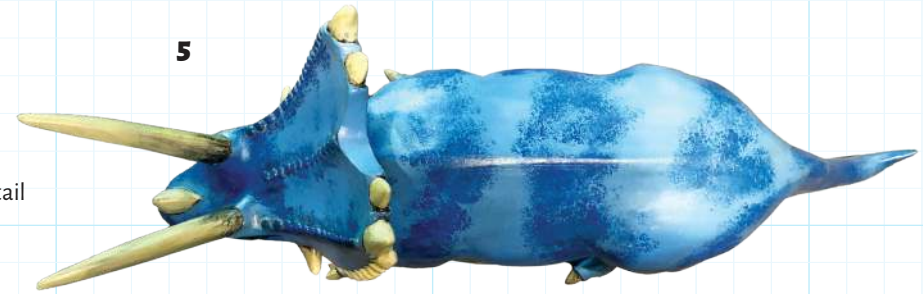
1 Front view
Height of RH horn off ground 715 mm
Height of LH horn off ground 705mm
Widest distance across frill 380mm
Highest point on frill RHS 880mm
On LHS 860 mm

2 Left-hand side view
Tip of tail to tip of main horns 1470mm
Height of tip of tail off ground 340mm
Height of front horns off ground 705mm
Height of mid back off ground 600mm
Height of highest horn on frill 880mm

3 Rear view
No dimensions – just to give a sense of the tail

4 Right-hand side view
Dimensions approximately the same as left-hand side view

5



5 Top view
Distance between tips of horns 245mm
Widest point across rear haunches 345mm
Widest point across claws of feet on ground 485mm

→

Initial construction

Using a bandsaw I cut the sheets from 30mm plywood and 16mm MDF to laminate the body and so had a rough blank body to take to woodcarving classes as, from now on, I needed the expert eye for shape and form of my old teacher Ken Vear, who runs the South Australian Woodcarving Academy (SAWA). He was the last apprentice to be taken on in the carving section of a now-defunct furniture manufacturer back in the 1960s before guiding many a novice like me over the years at SAWA. One of the first things Ken recommended was to study the shape of the triceratops carefully to have a better idea of it, especially the head. This proved wonderful in the long term.

With these preliminary ideas in mind let me now describe first the carving of the body then, second, carving the head. In reality, both were done pretty much concurrently.

Power carving discs

Rough assembly

Carving the body

One of the first major issues that arose when shaping the body was that gouging a small sample of MDF was relatively straightforward but carving on a large scale across four or five glued MDF laminations required heavy mallet pounding, so I decided to change to power carving for the rough-shaping process.

I already owned an angle grinder and Arbortech Industrial Blade and coarse, medium and fine carbide-toothed carving wheels.

Carving discs are dusty and noisy to say the least so, as I did, make sure you wear appropriate face, eye and lung and hearing protection and work outside so dust can blow away from you.

The other thing to remember is to keep all your safety guards in place on the angle grinder. Do not think about removing them believing you might have better access. I found with the manufacturer's guard in place I was able to carve much of the contours of the torso, legs and tail. For finer sanding and detail where bigger discs and sanders could not reach, I used a small contour sander and, for finer detail still and tight spots, I used a rotary carving unit with suitable burrs and hand tools.

Weight issues

The second major issue was the weight, as it was a large size suitable for three years to adult, and ultimately needed two people for a safe lift. MDF may well be medium density when compared to other fibreboards but it is still denser than many woods and the project was becoming heavy to work on and transport to and from carving classes. Hence it evolved into four parts: upper body; lower body and two flanks – one left and one right, which were positioned together with wooden locating dowels and held in place with a strap.

A number of time-consuming problems were encountered along the way.
First, after keeping fairly closely to the dimensions when scaling up the model, the triceratops became quite broad and potentially uncomfortable for a child to sit astride, so I removed four layers of MDF.

You can see the front legs are almost parallel – I decided to bring one forward to give a better sense of movement. These two modifications are easy to write in a sentence but, in practice, were very time-consuming and wasteful of material.

Third, the claws of the feet were quite shapely and stuck out, so a soft material such as MDF would be easily broken off in use. To overcome this problem the four feet were cut off and replaced by shaped sawn pieces of jelutong, which were glued and screwed on.

One puzzling point was the model had four claws on the hind feet but five on the front, which seemed a little odd. Whether this is accurate or an oversight of the model maker I'm not sure, but I decided to go with four claws back and front.

During this stage it was comforting to know that a reasonable amount of artistic carving licence was possible. Nobody has actually seen a 60 million-plus-year-old triceratops in the flesh, so a skinny version with the wrong number of toes is likely to go unnoticed by all but knowledgeable palaeontologists.

After this reworking I ended up with the four sections, which were finally glued and screwed together. From the last few photos you can also see how the head was evolving at the same time and the next section describes the steps taken for carving the head, horns and frill.

Refinement of the body

Carving the head

The two large horns shaped in pine were attached to the head with steel pins for added strength. You can also see the frill beginning to take shape. As this point I decided to cock the head to give more of a sense of movement and this proved to be another quite time-consuming change. The pictures give some idea of the angles planed to give the new cocked angle. It also involved adding plywood inserts into the neck of the body to allow for the removed wood and give a good indication of how the head and frill developed.

Grain direction is also important. As you can deduce from the picture the grain was running across the frill's outer teeth and scales and, since jelutong is relatively soft and liable to chip off, holes were drilled and dowels inserted to provide reinforcement. Notice that the head and frill are at a 45° angle, which meant gluing end grain to end grain, a potential weak spot. Hence the frill and head were both glued together with epoxy and two hefty 14-gauge wood screws used for added strength. With body and head finished they were screwed and glued together.

Sections ready for adjustment

Assembled for a better understanding of how it fits

Fitting the horns

Refinement of the head

Bony frill assembly

Adjustment and fitting everything together

Finishing the project and some concluding reflections

The triceratops was sanded and given a coat of gesso – a mixture of proprietary wood primer/sealer. I did consider using textured paint to simulate a dinosaur's rough skin, however a paint specialist advised against it as such a textured surface is likely to abrade easily if sat upon. He advised acrylic paints be sponged on to give a reasonable amount of texture, followed by two coats of clear polyurethane varnish to both seal the paint and give better wear resistance. The final version was completed with good-quality glass eyes.

Mounting the finished dinosaur is still a work in progress. The stand I used is essentially one taken from plans for a large rocking horse. The problem was that horses have relatively long legs compared to a triceratops, so the geometry is different. As you can see in the photo the swingers are quite short so it looks visually unbalanced. I had originally planned to add one or two more side rails to form steps down to the floor. However, the dinosaur's overall heavy weight means a very high centre of gravity and, when rocking with a heavy teenager in years to come, could prove to be unstable. Maybe in future the two upright posts will need to be shortened to bring it lower to the ground. Also the walnut stain does not really match with the blue so I'm toying with the idea of restaining to a black ebonised type of finish. As our grandson is not three yet, I'll see how he grows into it before deciding which way to go.

Sanded and base coat applied

Finishing touches

Finished result

Overall the end result of this apprentice/prototype project proved quite pleasing, both for me and the end user, even though I must have made pretty much every mistake in the book. Negative learning – or how not to do things – can be very time consuming and frustrating, but does reinforce the wisdom of keeping to time honoured good practices. Good pre-project planning, photographs and models, along with keeping to a conventional structure of blocks of wood or using an all plywood construction would have saved untold curses.

Possibly the greatest lesson was overcoming my distaste of power tools to become a bi – appreciating the merits of both hand tools and power carving. Admittedly, power tools will never match the quiet, soothing pleasure of quality hand tools but they do offer exciting possibilities, enabling the carving of difficult-grained hard woods or composites for medium and larger projects. Should my wife and I ever be blessed with another grandchild, I would certainly do things a lot differently. Who knows, maybe even a pink dinosaur one day?

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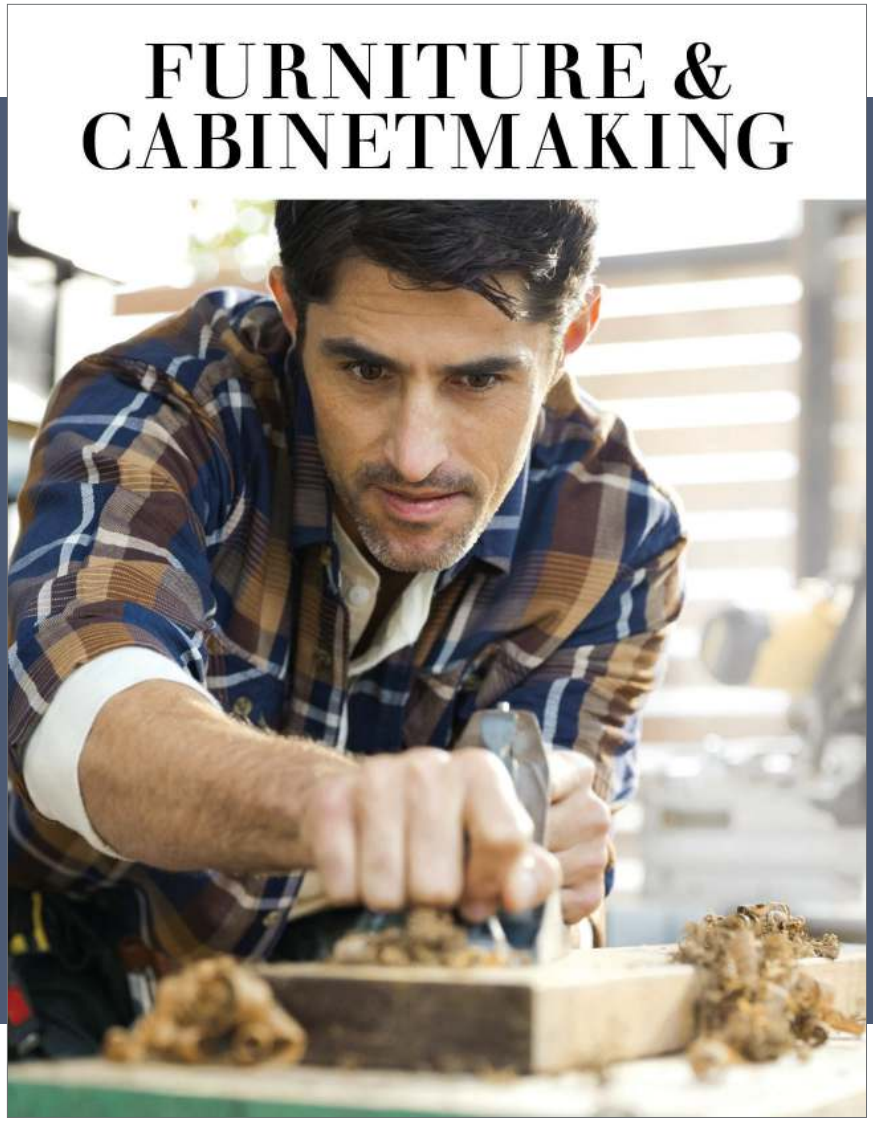

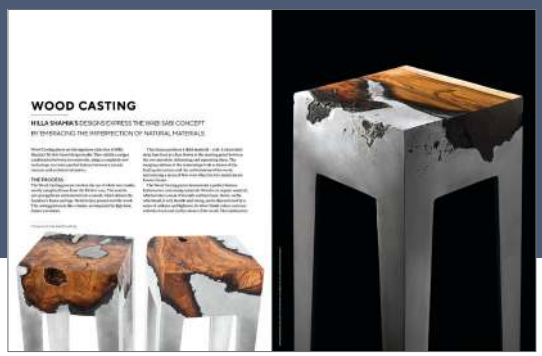

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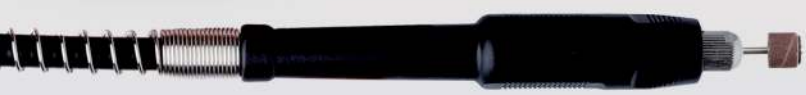

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Variations on a theme

Dave Western provides three styles of lovespoons for comparison

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVE WESTERN

During a recent conversation with a fellow carver and avid *Woodcarving* magazine reader, he suggested he would love to see an article where three period styles of lovespoon were carved side-by-side for design and technique comparison. He had read my articles on symbolism and thought it would be interesting to see an historically accurate design, a post-war 'traditional' design and one of my more artistic interpretations all on the same page. He threw down a further challenge by suggesting that I base them all around the same theme to help illustrate the variety of ways the same subject matter could be handled.

I've taken the challenge and have chosen the idea of a 35th anniversary commemoration to base the designs of my three spoons around. I selected this theme solely because a friend was having a 35th at the same time I was thinking about the spoon challenge and it seemed like a celebration that wouldn't have been covered too much before.

Rather than offer the typical step-by-step, I am zeroing in on points of similarity between the various spoons and, perhaps more important, their significant differences, and I want to focus on what it is that makes each of the styles identifiable. I have carved all the spoons from bigleaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*), taken from the same board so that the visual properties of the wood remain as constant as possible through the three spoons.

→

Broad panel Welsh spoon

Traditional souvenir-type spoon

Modern-style spoon

Welsh spoon

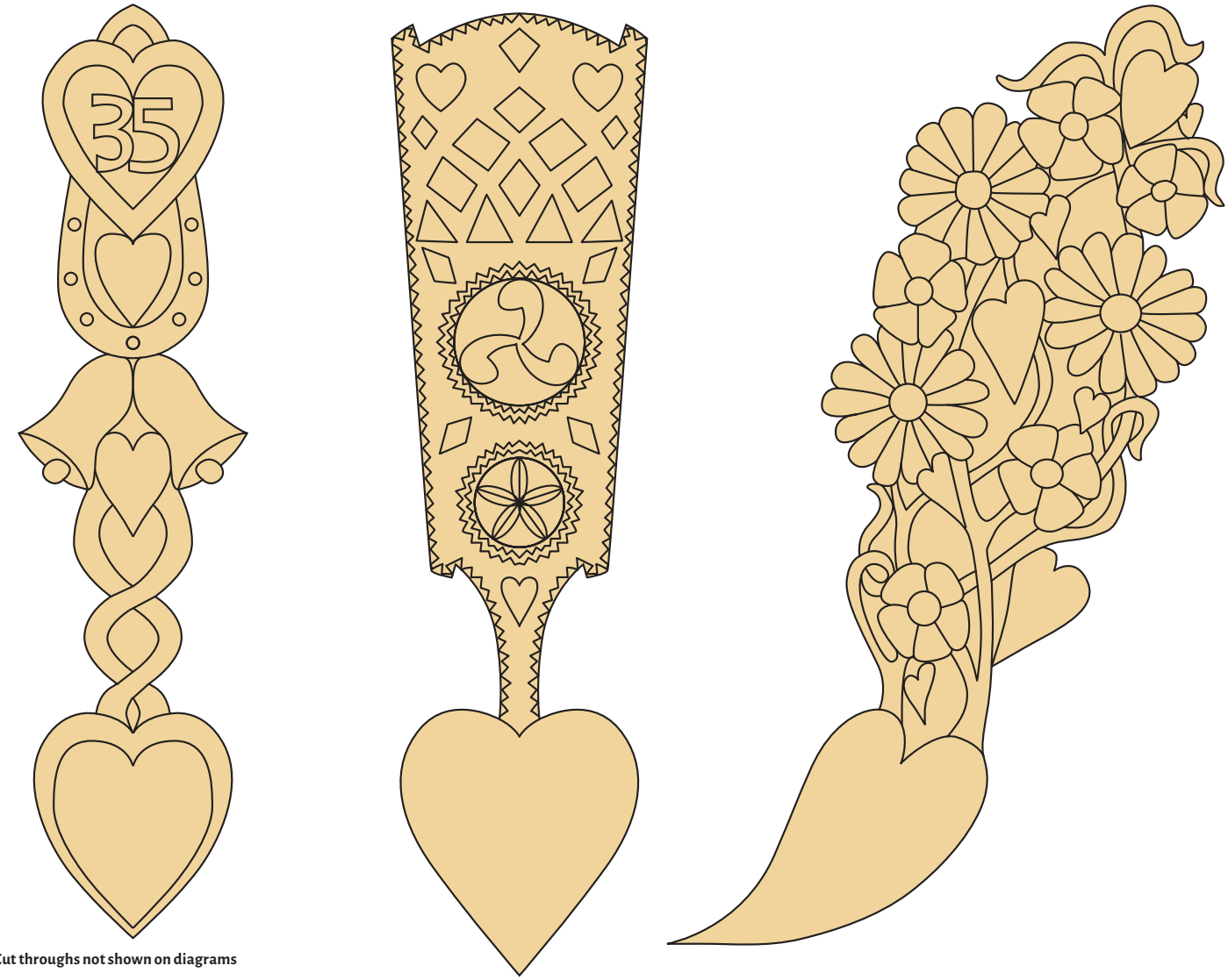
Let's take a quick look at some of the design differences between the three styles of spoon. The first is a broad-panel Welsh spoon typical of those carved in the 1700s and 1800s. It uses a limited number of symbols and relies on repetitive chip carved patterning in its design. Although an anniversary spoon would likely never have been carved in the old days, I've used the comma-shaped 'soul' symbol to mean three decades and five points on the eternal wheel to represent the years. Zigzag patterning and a chip carved border envelope the circles and the exterior edges of the spoon in the labour-intensive manner of traditional lovespoon carving. Love hearts and patterns of diamonds (prosperity) are accurate to the time period, as is a deeply curved stem, which connects the handle to a slightly tilted bowl.

Traditional souvenir-type love spoon

This post-war 'traditional' spoon is the type of design most often seen in souvenir shops and on online websites offering inexpensive, mass-market lovespoons. It is carved from a flat timber with no cranking of the stem and features relatively easy-to-machine details. It also features a number of 'traditional' symbols, which were not common to antique lovespoons. The good-luck horseshoe, wedding bells and the twisted stem are all relatively new additions to the symbolism catalogue, as is the simple and rather obvious fretted date marker. The spoon displays a stacked design with symbols piled one upon each other along the narrow, lengthy handle and the bowl is quickly carved, lacking the elegant finishing seen on the antique design.

Contemporary-style spoon

The contemporary artistic version steps away from the more obvious symbols, using a floral theme of daisies to symbolise the three decades and blossoms to indicate the five years. It looks very different from the first two designs, yet it retains a link with tradition in its use of a cascade of love hearts and the winding vine (a symbol of growth). Although the heart-shaped bowl appears occasionally among antique examples, it is more commonly seen in spoons of a more recent vintage. The asymmetric bowl is fairly uncommon in the antique and modern souvenir realms.



Cut throughs not shown on diagrams

Initial shaping of the spoons

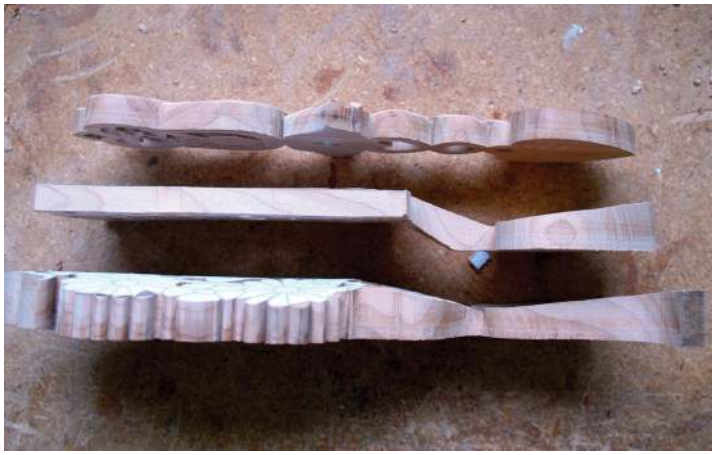
Before work begins, it is important to select wood that is thick enough to accommodate the type of carving which will be performed on it. The antique spoon and the artistic spoon both require a deep curve in the stem and, in the case of the modern design, a bit of doming on the face plane. The first photo shows the three timbers in a very roughed-out state. The modern (post-war) spoon blank has been planed to ½in thickness and is not domed or further shaped in any way. The antique blank has been left flat planed at a full ¾in thickness and the artistic spoon blank has been left at ¾in thickness but has had each side of the centreline planed down to start creating a domed effect.

This picture of the end grain of each blank clearly shows the doming of the artistic spoon, the full dimension flatness of the traditional spoon and the thinner flatness of the modern spoon. The doming was planed and scraped to a smooth finish before the paper pattern was glued to the blank.

→

Here the spoon blanks are shown after being cut to the exterior lines with a scrollsaw. The scrollsaw allows for super accuracy and a nice 90° edge when cutting out the exterior shape and the interior fretting. If you lack a scrollsaw, these designs can be shaped out by hand with axes, saws, a drawknife, files, drills or just with a straight knife. It's slower and more difficult, but it is the way carvers would have had to do it in the olden days.

To make life easier when carving the antique spoon, take the opportunity to saw away a substantial chunk of the handle material before you progress to drilling and fretting out the interior cut-outs. It will make cutting out the fretwork decidedly easier than by cutting through full ¾in stock. I leave a generous ¼-⅜ in thickness (depending on the strength of the stock being used) and will later dome the back to keep some structural strength while creating the illusion of a thin, delicate handle along the edges.



The two photographs above show the cuts necessary to remove excess stock from the antique spoon and for the required taper to the bowl angles and stem curve on the antique and artistic spoons. Being of thinner stock, the bowl of the modern spoon is not tapered and there is no curve cut into the stem section of the design.

The bowls

When I make a spoon, I generally hollow out the bowls before I begin any carving on the handle. That way, if there is a breakage or problem, I haven't invested too much time in the project. Be careful not to stress the stem section too much if you are aggressively removing stock from the bowl. Work carefully at the bottom of the hollow where the grain changes direction and don't chase any chip outs. Use scrapers or abrasives to smooth the bowl if you want that super-clean look, leave it from the knife if you'd like something a bit more rustic. I often use the end of a hard tool handle or a small block of rounded hardwood to burnish the bowl smooth.

When carving the bowls' backs, begin by roughly removing excess material at the nose of the bowl. This can be done with a saw, axe, drawknife or stout straight knife. The object is to start shaping the curve from the deepest part of the bowl toward the tip while the bowl section is still good and sturdy. With that completed, I like to utilise a series of chamfers (shown in the photo marked by various coloured lines) to guide the shaping process and to keep the curving fair and consistent.

Use a small, very sharp, straight knife to round and clean up the shoulders of the bowl where they join the stem. The stem can be brought out into the bowl a bit to add structural strength or it can be faired away, leaving the bowl to stand proud. Be careful not to put too much pressure into the cuts or on to the support hand as you can snap the stem quite easily.

These pictures show the bowls carved and sanded to 220 grit. The final 320 sanding will occur just prior to applying the finish so that any dirt or scuffing can be removed. I have left all three bowls standing clear of the stems for good visual definition and have also left a small section of stock at the tip of the artistic spoon bowl to protect it until the last possible moment.

Detail and refinement

I like to use the glued-on drawing as a guide for my carving, especially on the complicated sections of chip carving where having a guide keeps my cutting cleaner and more defined. I leave the paper on as long as I can to guide me and to protect the carving against bumps and dirt. When the carving is completed and I am ready to remove the remaining paper, I find that a small hand scraper is the ideal tool for the task. If you don't have one, use a dull chisel instead. Avoid the urge to scrape too ferociously though; it's easy to take more than just the paper off if you aren't careful.

With the carving completed on the face plane of the spoons, you can shape the backs a bit. On antique spoons, it was very rare to see much carving on the back. Often there would be a slight doming to keep structural support in the mid section, tapering outwards to a thin edge. This created the illusion of a delicate, slender handle while retaining some strength. More modern spoons are generally just flat and unadorned on the back while many artistic spoons are fully carved. If you have a good deal of material to remove you can use a bandsaw to speed the task. Be very careful doing this as it is easy to damage delicate edge pieces. Often, the safest bet is to slowly and carefully remove stock by hand with gouges and chisels. However you decide to finish your spoon backs, support the spoon well to avoid breakages and keep the carved area well protected against scratching, denting and chipping.

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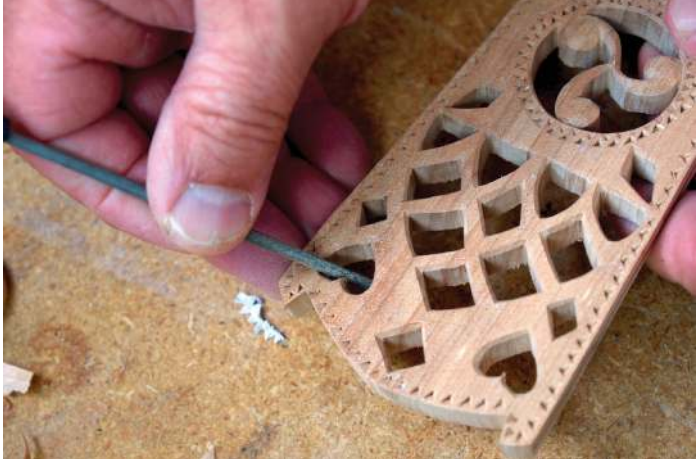
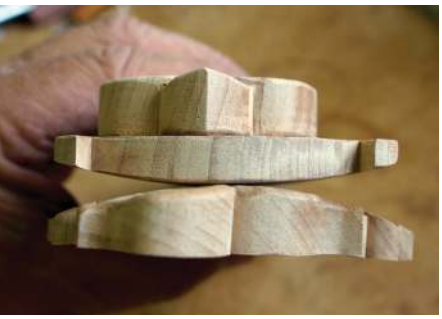


There are myriad ways to finish the spoons, from abrasive papers to scrapers, to files, burnishers and even left straight off the knife. The choice of techniques is personal but if you opt to venture past an off-the-knife finish, take your time and ensure you've removed all scratches and abrasion marks before you commit to applying your finish material. It's much easier to remove problems from raw wood than it is once the wood has been treated. I'm a big fan of using needle files to clean up internal cuts and I often make use of fine-grit, cloth-backed abrasives to fair round surfaces and tricky-to-reach areas.



This photo shows the cross-sectional profile of the three spoons almost prior to finishing. The top two spoons are completed, with the modern being flat on both planes and the antique being domed on its back plane. The artistic spoon at the bottom has its front face domed but the concave doming of the back surface has not yet happened.

Just prior to final sanding, I remove any small sections of protective material that I have left on the carving. In this case, I am removing the small piece of timber I left at the tip of the artistic spoon's bowl, which helped protect it against chipping during the carving phase. It's a delicate job which I am doing with a scrollsaw in this photo but which could just as easily be done with judicious hand cutting.

With all the carving and cleaning up completed comes the exciting moment of finish application. I make my own finish of 1/3 mineral spirits, 1/3 boiled linseed oil and 1/3 satin spar varnish to give me an excellent Danish oil-type finish. I like to use a brush to apply three or four coats, with each coat having a wet sanding with 1000 grit abrasive. After a week or so of curing, I apply a final coat of beeswax polish, which I buff very gently but also very thoroughly.

Commemorative panels

Murray Taylor looks at the planning, layout and carving of these attractive items

The thinking behind this article was triggered by the problems that students have when it comes to the design and layout of things they want to carve. One wanted to carve a commemorative piece for a caravan club celebrating 50 years of existence, and the other was struggling with a piece for his 25th wedding anniversary. They had ideas for what they wanted to include in the design, but no idea how to go about it. Seeing the problems they had made me realise that even some talented carvers have difficulties in this department.

Planning the project

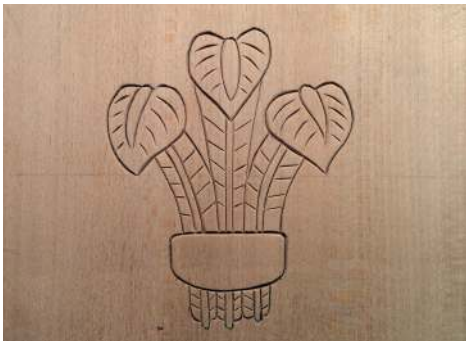
On 16 March 2019 Wales won the Six Nations Rugby Tournament to achieve the Grand Slam, as it is known, or Y Gamp Lawn in Welsh. I do apologise at this point to supporters of the other five teams.

Feeling rather elated having watched the match, I decided to make a wall plaque to commemorate the victory which would at a later stage be auctioned off at a local charity event. As I was setting out the design it occurred to me that the planning of a project would make a good article.

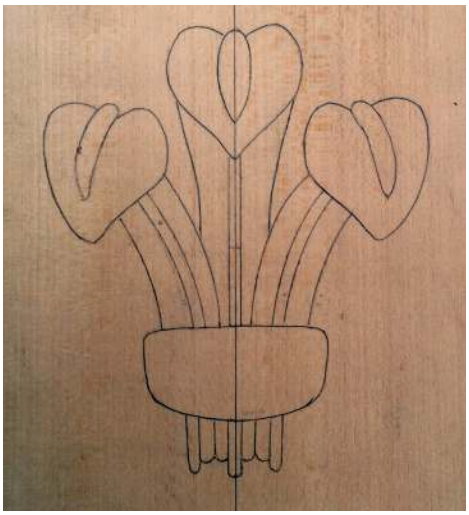
The carving style

The feathers can be depicted as a simple chip carving or in many other decorative forms requiring different skill levels. Line-drawn carving was traditionally done with a V-tool, sometimes referred to as the carver's pencil, which brings its own particular problems, one of which is the sharpening, but I won't go into that here. The other is that as you make a curved cut, one edge is always fighting the grain, so I use a knife. Line carving can be very effective, especially when finished with a dark liquid wax.

I am going to start by taking one of the elements in the design and using it to decide upon the style of carving. For this I am going to use the Prince of Wales Feathers, which is the emblem on the team shirt.



The feathers as a line carving. This is just a form of chip carving



Prince of Wales feathers marked out as a test piece

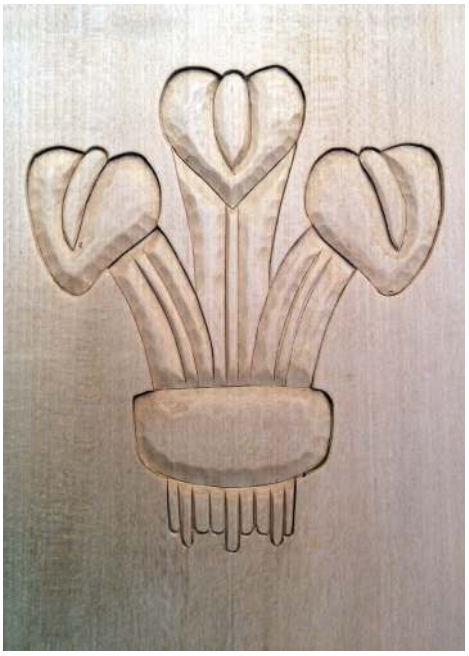
The line-carved feathers filled with a dark liquid wax

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MURRAY TAYLOR

→

The below-surface carving

This gives a very useful effect, especially when you require the surface to remain level. It starts with the drawing, which is then set in around the outline. The feathers are then modelled up to the setting-in line.



The completed below-surface or intaglio carving

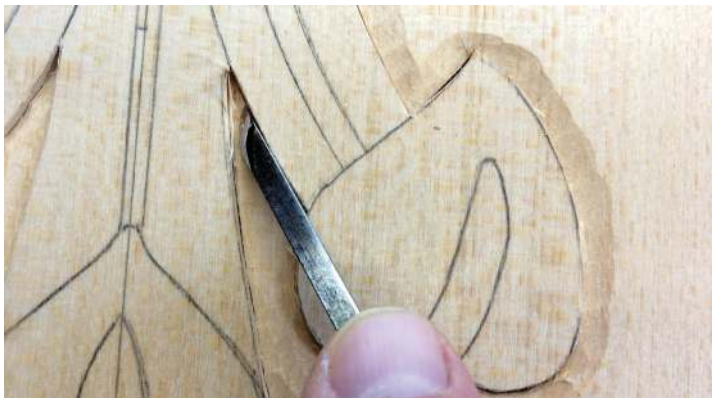
The partial relief carving

This is a form of relief carving when only a part of the background is removed. First, the design is 'set in' but, unlike the last example where we now start the modelling, a portion of the background surrounding the motif is removed.

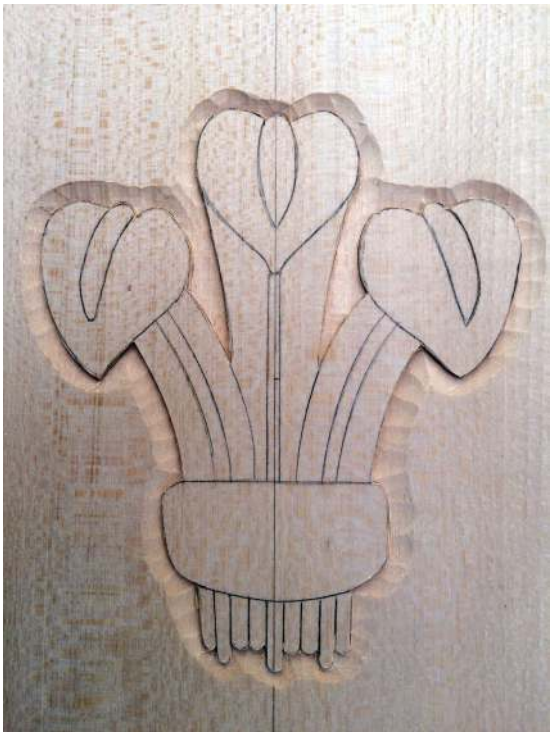
Modelling below the surface with a Gonzales hook

Carving up to the central raised part of the shaft of the feather using a skew chisel, No.2 in the Sheffield system or 1S in the continental form

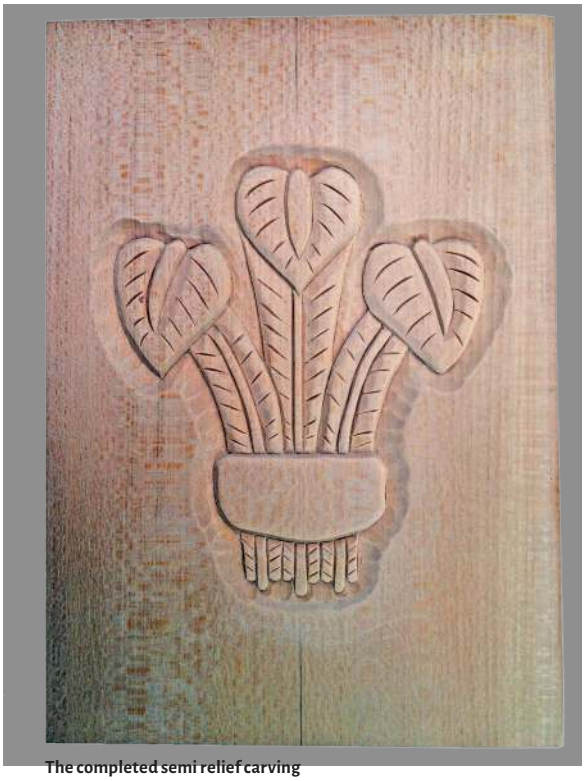
Starting to remove part of the surrounding background



Getting into a tight corner with a small skew chisel made from an old needle file



The surrounding background has been removed and we are ready to start the modelling



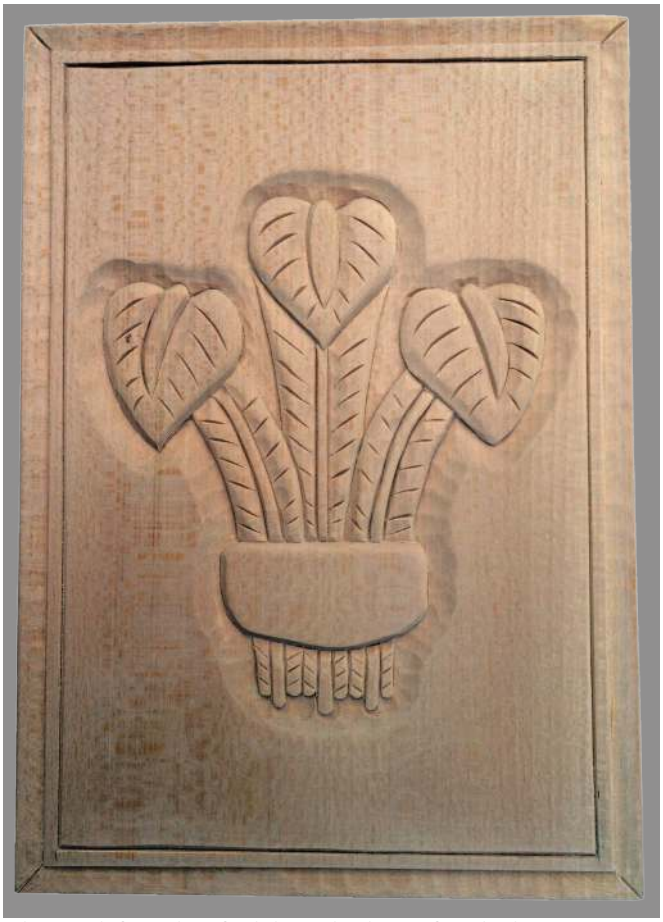
The completed semi relief carving

A variation on the semi relief

A double line border is drawn near the outer edge of the board. The inner can simply be delineated by chip carving while the other line is set in and carved down to produce what looks like a picture frame.

Carving down to the outer line

CARVER'S NOTE: The impression of a frame is enhanced by carving in lines to represent the mitred corners.



The semi relief-carved motif with the simulated picture frame border

The motif in low relief

To complete the exercise in low relief the whole of the background is removed to a depth of 3-5mm right up to the frame or outer edge of the board. This is done using a No. 3 or other shallow gauge and a variety of small tools to get into tight corners. I use a collection of tools which I have made from dental probes. The background can be left quite heavily tooled or taken down to a smoother finish using a shallower gauge, say a continental No.2 or an Ashley Isles No.1½ designed by Chris Pye.

Small tools made from dental probes. They are left, right and straight cutters

CARVER'S NOTE: The expression 'shallow' when applied to a gouge means that it has a very low-profile curve.

The design as a pierced panel

If you are going to make a pierced panel it is important to make sure there are enough contact points between the motif and the frame to ensure the stability of the piece as a whole. Although the feathers appear not to be overpowered by the surroundings, they do in fact make contact at seven points with the frame.

Now we have several different styles of carving that we can use in the commemorative plaque it is time to consider the overall design. The first thing to do is list the things we want to show, in this case the feathers, daffodils, dragons and an overall rugby theme. The way I go about this is to make simple line-drawn cut outs of the various elements on paper or thin card, then I juggle them around until they start to form a pleasing design.

The pierced panel set out showing the seven contact points

The panel drilled for piercing with areas to be removed shaded in red

→

Cutting in with a hook knife – it is ideally suited to this task RIGHT: The pierced panel

From the centreline

As you can see from the picture below everything works from the centreline. When I am happy with the design the connecting parts are made using the rugby ball-shaped arches.

You may have noticed that a small amount of chip carving and lettering has been started before the piercing and you might well ask why. It wasn't because I was still in celebratory mood but because I had previously marked out and pierced a panel which, when I began to carve just started to crumble, so I redrew it on another piece of wood and did some test cuts before piercing.

So once again, as with all my articles, I do not offer this as a project but more as a way for you to develop your own ideas, although you are quite welcome to use all or part of this design.

I get requests for pieces like this to commemorate birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, new arrivals and other special occasions. They make very acceptable gifts, are highly personal and become treasured heirlooms.

The design is marked out on a piece of lime ready for piercing

The panel pierced and the levels carved down

The second stage in the modelling

The third stage in the modelling

The completed piece finished in soft wax and mounted on a sapele background

Developing the idea of a commemorative panel

The pierced aperture with the rebate marked on the reverse side. Setting in with a knife

Marking the depth line with a marking gauge

Carving down the rebate using a dog-leg chisel

You can develop the concept of the panel in various ways, one such being to include a photograph. This can be quite easily achieved by opening an aperture and cutting a rebate on the back.

The first stage is to mark out the aperture and pierce it out in the normal way. The more difficult stage is on the reverse side when we come to cut the rebate. Yes, we could do it with a router, but we don't all have one, so the photographs show you how they can be done by hand.

You can get an idea of the effect of adding a photograph from the picture of an incomplete wedding plaque project dated June 2010. This may seem a little strange, but you will see that the wedding was to take place in Thailand and unfortunately it had to be postponed due to civil unrest at the time. The wedding did take place later that year and I had to carve a replacement plaque. Lesson – don't carve the date until the last minute.

You can use a piece of glass or you might find it easier to use a piece of clear Perspex sheet, which is easily cut with scissors. It really does personalise the piece and makes it a treasured keepsake.

Additional ideas for inclusion in a commemorative piece

Some years ago, I was commissioned to make a lovespoon for a 25th anniversary and the customer asked if I could include a piece of silver to represent the silver wedding anniversary. As a working jeweller and silversmith, I made a small silver box with an amethyst top which was embedded into the spoon. I have made many such pieces since, using silver boxes or polished agate slices to decorate the carving.

I realise you are unlikely to use silver objects but there are many other small items that could be used. I once set a spoon with a silver pocket watch that had belonged to the customer's grandfather.

I hope this article has given you some ideas for creating a commemorative plaque. You can use any style of carving and include all sorts of objects into your carving. Think outside the box – your only limitation is your imagination.

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

The unfinished wedding plaque

Spoon made for HM the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, set with a silver crown

Tree of Life spoon set with a silver heart box (the spoon is unfinished)

Window on the world – suspended vine bowl

Neil Scobie shows us how to make a window bowl design derived from nature

This project is one that has been inspired by nature, as most of my pieces are. On our eight-acre property in northern NSW, Australia, we have predominately trees and some rainforest areas with large strangler fig trees. The strangler fig will attach itself to a host tree, then start wrapping multiple vines around the host, eventually killing it off. In the process of the host dying, little windows are formed that let natural light shine through.

I have used this inspiration to make oval and leaf-shaped mirrors for a number of years, with the windows formed by carving suspended vines on the top and bottom sections. These vines can either sit on the mirror or be suspended above the mirror glass. With this bowl, my thoughts were that I could use the suspended vine idea on a hollow form, with a single vine running around the inner rim supported by smaller carved support branches. I have previously made two other window hollow forms that have both been sold to collectors in the US.

Most timbers would be suitable for this project, but denser, stronger species will enable you to carve the vines and supports much finer. I have chosen to use jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*), which is a rich red colour and very strong in small sections.

The size of the pieces is not really important. If you are like me, the size will be determined by the size of the timber blank you have.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY NEIL SCOBIE

A complete loop formed in a suspended lawyer vine, forming an inspirational shape. Note the way two vines have twisted themselves around each other

→

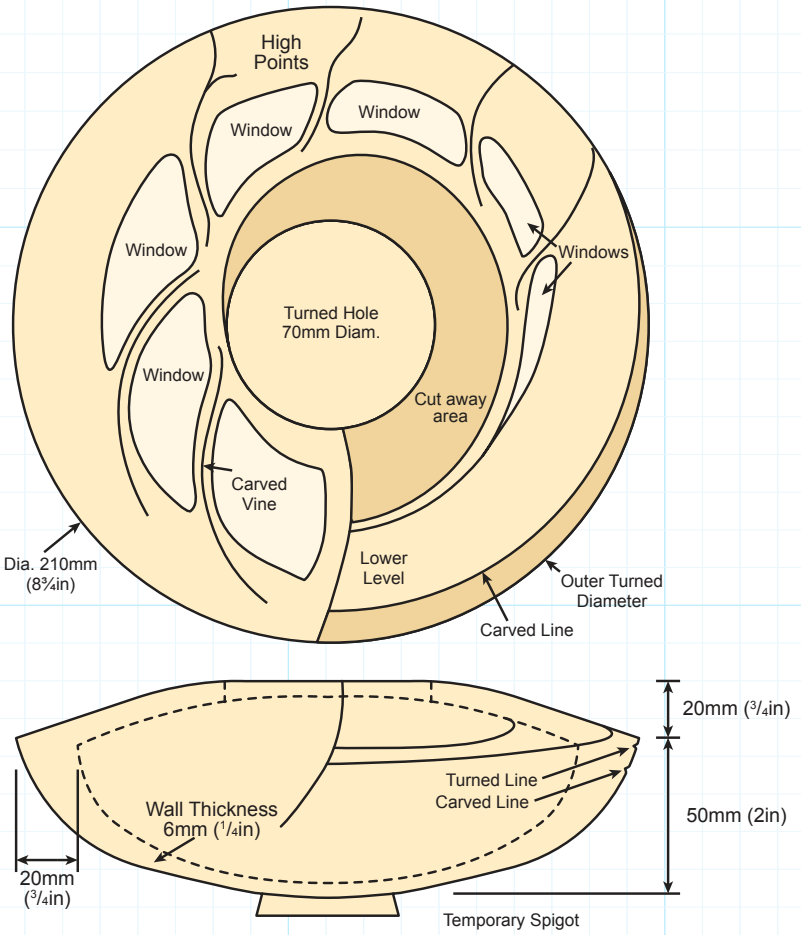
Things you will need

Turning tools:
- 12mm bowl gouge
- Round skew chisel
- Trimming tool
- Hollowing tools

Carving tools:
- Jigsaw
- Rotary tool
- Burrs
- Soft sanding discs
- V-tool for hand carving

Materials:
- Jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*)

A leaf mirror with suspended vines was used as a prototype for this project. Both top and bottom vines are suspended up above the glass

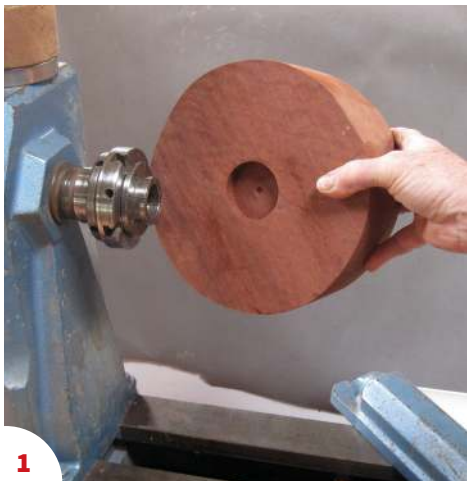


1 Fix your blank to a screw chuck. Alternatively, the easiest way of holding a bowl blank is to drill a hole to suit your chuck jaws.

2 Using a bowl gouge, shape the outside of the bowl by cutting from the base towards the rim. Use the bottom half of the gouge with the flute also pointing towards the outside. The intersection between the top and bottom sections should be about three-quarters up from the base.

3 Use a round skew or parting tool to shape the spigot to suit the scroll chuck you will be using. Think about the shape of the bottom of the bowl once the spigot has been turned away, as it will become a round or rocking base. Make the spigot too short and the curve of the rocking base could be lost. Now indent the centre of the spigot so you can locate a revolving centre into it later when turning off the spigot.

4 Use a trimming gouge to take a final shear cut, removing any torn grain that may have appeared during the shaping process. Sand the outer surface to about 180 grit at this stage.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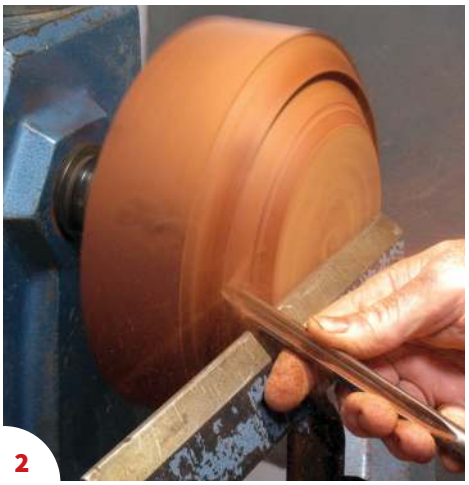
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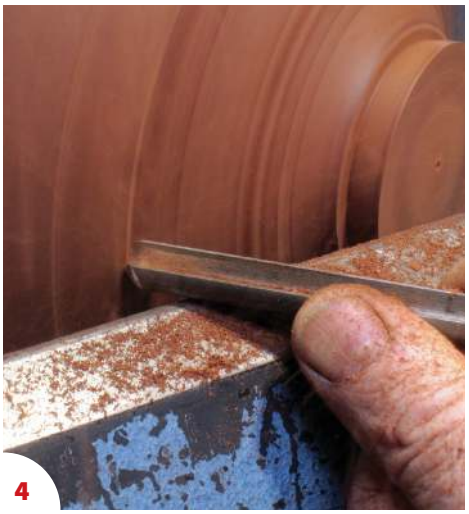
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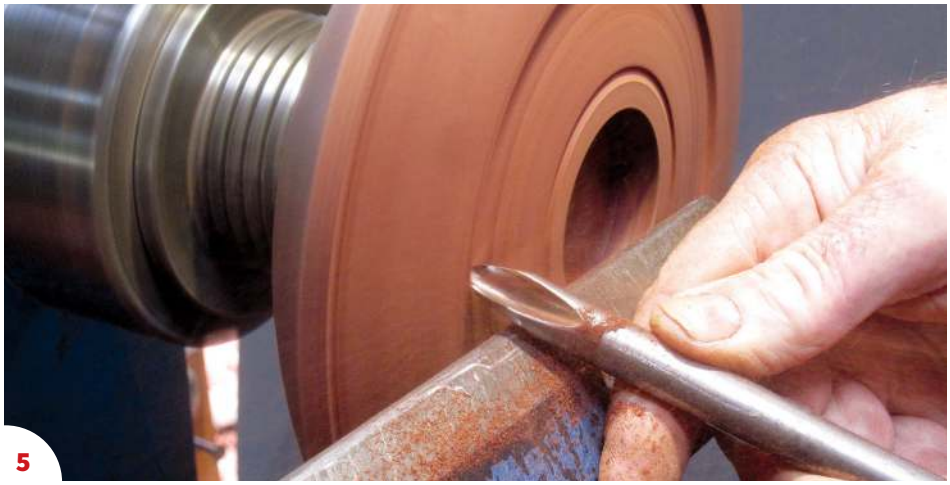

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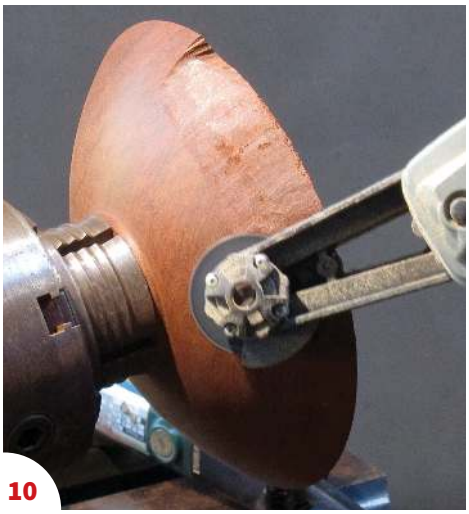

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5 Start turning the rim of the bowl to match the drawing. The process is the same as you used for turning the bottom section. The middle hole should be less than one-third of the outer rim – refer to the drawing for proportions. As this surface will all be carved, there is no need for any sanding.

6 Use the bowl gouge to hollow out most of the centre section, pointing the flute towards the middle and cutting with the bottom edge of the gouge. You should be able to cut out about 80% of the centre with this gouge. To cut under the rim, place the toolrest into the opening so you have better support for the gouge. You should still try to cut with the point and bottom edge of the gouge and avoid catching under the rim by holding the flute too upright. Cut in as deep as you can before swapping to a different tool.

7 There are many different hollowing tools with various types of cutting tip that you could use for this process. I chose a tool with a cup-type cutter presented at a shear-cut angle to cut away the waste and refine the surface. The wall thickness should be around 5-6mm on the bottom section and about 7mm on the top under the rim. The thickness on the corner between the top and bottom sections should be about 20mm to allow for shaping the outer rim.

8 To sand the inside, use a soft sanding arbor on an electric drill, working through the grits up to 400. It is best to fully sand the inside at this stage as it is not easy after the carving is complete. Slow the speed of the lathe so you do not get any heat cracks forming.

9 Use a soft lead pencil to sketch on the shape for carving, using an eraser to remove unwanted lines, and redraw until you are happy with the shape. Make sure you check the shape from all angles to make sure it looks in proportion before making any cuts. I have used a white crayon pencil so the lines photograph better. For carving, you will need to keep the chuck fastened on the lathe or, if you have one, use a dedicated carving jig.

10 Start the shaping by removing the section shown on right-hand side of the drawing. You can use any suitable power carving or hand carving tools. My tool of choice for fast waste removal is a mini carver. It is safe to use as long as the bowl is securely held in the chuck.

TOP TIPS:

1 Design – draw it, look at it and change if necessary. Maybe even look at it over a few days before you start carving.

2 Keep the carved lines flowing in gentle curves. Do not be afraid to add your own shapes to the design.

→

11 To smooth out the bumps left by the mini carver, an angle grinder with a 36-grit disc does a good job. It sounds really aggressive but, because of the high speed, it removes the high spots quickly. Smoother sanding can be carried out with a soft sander as shown in step 8.

12 Another method of sanding the underside is to use a soft sanding pad held securely in the chuck on the lathe. If you have a soft interface pad between the sanding pad and the abrasive disc, it will hug the curves of the bowl much better.

13 To cut the inner shape out, a small keyhole saw will do the job okay but it is a little slow. You will need to watch that you do not hit the inside bottom of the bowl with the point of the saw.

14 Alternatively, you can use a jigsaw with a short blade. I actually cut the end of a blade just to make sure it would not hit the bottom on the down stroke. A narrow 6mm blade will get around the curves much easier than a standard blade.

15 To clean up the sawn inner surface, use a small sanding disc on a rotary tool. At this stage all you need is a smooth curve all the way around the inner surface. Hand sanding with 120 grit on a curved sanding block will also work well.

16 To cut out the windows, drill holes in the corners of each window so you can get the jigsaw blade in place and cut between the holes. Where the windows are narrow, just drill a series of smaller holes and use a rotary tool to meet up the drill holes. It is really important not to over-cut the corners with the jigsaw – better to pull up a bit short than to have a cut that is too wide in the corners. When using the jigsaw, make sure you hold it at a slight angle pointing towards the centre.

17 To trim the jigsaw cuts, use a series of burrs held in a rotary tool. I find a flame-shaped burr really good for this process. Use small diameter burrs in the smaller windows.

18 For shaping the outside of where the windows meet the rim, a 50mm-diameter rotary disc is a good choice for shaping. I like to have the supports meeting the rim, a bit like a buttress root on a tree. The buttress section carries out to the outer side of the rim, so you will need to reduce the height of the rim between each buttress. The shapes of the buttress can be curved towards the outside, or even split in two if you like. Just remember, curved, flowing lines will match the design better than straight lines.


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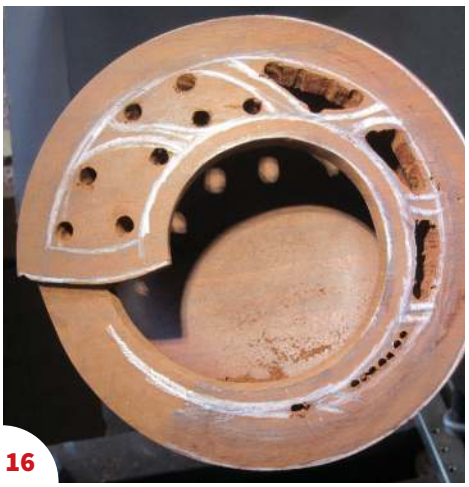
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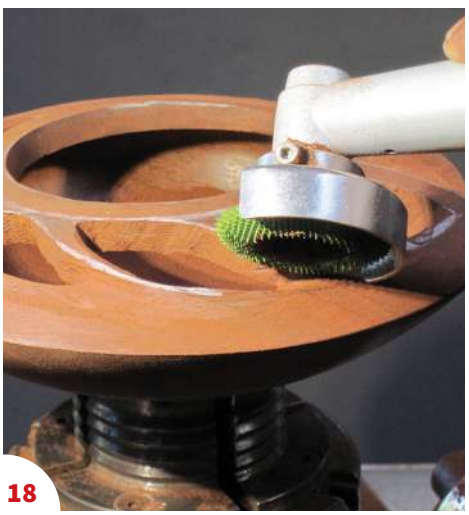
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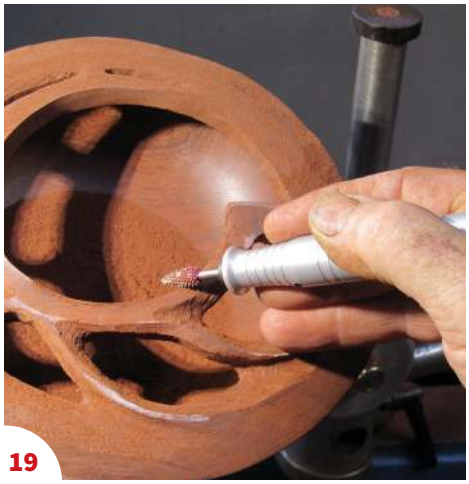

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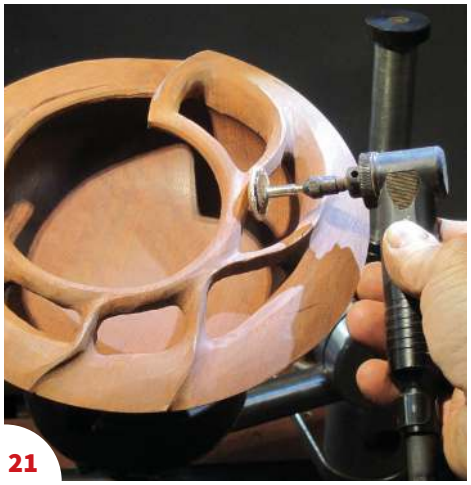

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19 Where the supports meet the centre vine, the intersection shape should also be a bit like where a branch meets the trunk of a tree, in a curved, hollow join. The flame-shaped burr is also great for this job. We are almost ready to start rounding the vine and supports so they look more like those in nature. You can use the burr on the underside of the vine as well as the top sections.

20 Where the vine is smallest meeting the rim, use a V hand carving tool to carve a V-shaped channel, wider next to the last window and getting smaller towards the narrowest part of the rim.

21 For sanding, there are many gadgets that you can use. I find a small, round sanding disc about 20mm in diameter powered by a small angle hand piece is best. Rather than use hook and loop material on small diameter discs I use thick, double-sided tape as it holds on much better. I would start with 120 grit abrasive and progress up to 400 grit. You can get into many of the corners with this sander, but not the smaller sections or on the underside of the supports and vine.

22 For those areas that the round sander cannot reach, use thin strips of cloth-backed abrasive. Start with 120 grit and work your way up. When you are happy with your shaping and sanding, use 600 grit or 0000 steel wool for a final sand with the grain.

23 To set up for turning off the chuck spigot, place a mandrel in the chuck and turn it to fit inside the centre section of the bowl. Turn a curved shape similar to the inside of the bowl and place a protective layer between the bowl and mandrel. Non-slip place mats are good for this job. Place the tailstock centre in the V in the middle of the spigot that you turned at the start and tighten the tailstock so that the bowl is tightly held. Turn off most of the spigot with either a spindle or small bowl gouge. Sand this area to blend in with the curve of the bowl bottom.

24 Use a small pull saw to remove the small spigot left behind. Undo the pressure on the tailstock spindle so that the saw will not jamb. A soft sanding pad with fine abrasive can now be used to blend in the round bottom of the bowl. Hand sand with 600 grit to prepare the grain for oiling. Before applying a finish, take the piece out into the sunlight to check that you have got rid of all the scratches.

25 Your finished bowl might look something like this. You can use artistic licence and change any of the shown shapes and sizes, remembering that in nature not all trees and shapes are the same.

From the community

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

New to carving

PHOTOGRAPH BY PETER LAMBERT

I'm a newcomer to woodcarving and have achieved limited proficiency through a combination of YouTube videos, instinct and luck. However, although vastly impressed by the creations of master carvers, I have no ambition to achieve such skill even if I could.

Instead I've adopted a philosophy of SWARM, which stands for Stylistic, Whimsical, Abstract, Rustic and Minimalist.

With this philosophy I never need to achieve detail or accuracy. I can skip the feathers on an owl or the scales on a snake. I also try to avoid symmetry because I've no wish to do the same thing twice.

I imagine a lot of would-be carvers are deterred from starting when they see a carving masterpiece and think: 'I could never do that.' Sight of some fun and simply whittling creations might alternatively tempt them to take the plunge. Basic DIY tools are all they would need.

I've included some photos of some of my work. The Norse figure started as one end of a small beech rolling pin and the two spoons and bird started as equal slices of a retired beech breadboard. I have carved with basswood and similar, but hardwood is a bigger challenge with a more pleasing finish and I'm never in any hurry to finish a piece, although I do like the newly-found effectiveness of a coarse rasp.

Regards, Peter Lambert

Turning & carving

Dear Mark,
I found your editorial in the July/August edition of *Woodcarving* magazine interesting, as I always enjoy combining turning and carving. Most of the carving I have seen seems to be in some sort of relief or piercing on the turned surface, so I thought you might find one of my projects entertaining as it involves carving in the round, and I think it is quite unusual.

It is inspired by a 'magic jug' which potters make in Peru, but I figured out how to make something along similar lines in wood as basically a turned item (in two parts). I carved the handle in the form of a sea lion instead of the more simple handle on the Peruvian version. It did need some careful thought and planning, and I appreciate that I have not managed to perfect the sea lion in terms of shape and proportion.

Basically this vessel fills from the bottom, retaining the liquid in the jug when it is turned the right way up. It is then emptied by pouring out of the spout (which is carved separately and glued on).

This makes quite a nice party piece and was admired by both my carving club (Cornwall Woodcarvers) and my woodturning club (Cornwall Association of Woodturners). I have made a few of them in different woods, one of which was just turned with no carving of the handle in situ.

Regards, Cedric Boyns

Celtic jewel

I was prompted to send in the photo of my wooden jewellery carving after Dave Western's excellent article *Celtic jewel* (*WC170*) where he comments that he's seen lots of knotwork jewellery but rarely seen any carved from wood. This has been a hobby of mine for many years and, now that I am retired, I can devote a bit more time to it. The subjects are many and varied, often suggested by the jewellery version but always modified to suit my own ideas and needs. This is purely a hobby pursuit and is most enjoyable and rewarding.

Eddie Arthur

Carving clubs

Amid much interesting discussion of there being too few clubs, I believe that there is a deeper problem connected to this, which is that there are fewer people willing and able to carry out the important functions in the running of clubs.

Even in situations where membership numbers are adequate, in any particular club there are fewer and fewer people available to do the organising and running, which involves so many vital tasks such as administration, finance and publicity, to name but a few. If the club also wishes to exhibit carvings at shows, there are often few people willing to help with transport, storage and erection of display equipment as well as carvings.

The balance between numbers of members who attend clubs solely to carve or substantially for the social benefit on one side, and those who are necessary to actively participate more widely on the other side, has to be addressed. The decline in the number of 'active' participants in club running is due to death, age, infirmity and no doubt other totally understandable factors, such as work and family commitments etc. The 'baby boomers' will be sorely missed when they are all gone.

We must find ways of engaging more, and often younger, members in the important tasks of accepting responsibility for the survival of clubs before it is too late.

The photograph (above left) is of my version of a tomb decoration.

Tony Wilson

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

Next issue...

On sale 26 December

Mark Gough's step-by-step guide to carving a pirate door knocker

Create a steam-bent carved floral display with Steve Bisco

Dave Western demonstrates how to carve a Celtic-style frog mask

Peter Benson shows how a study stick can help improve your carving techniques

Easy guide to carving a coat of arms, by Murray Taylor

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK GOUGH

Our contributors

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The carver's toolbag

Bringing you all the latest tools, machinery and products to meet your carving needs

All prices are correct at the time of going to press but are subject to change without notice. Photographs courtesy of the manufacturers/retailers, unless otherwise stated

Tormek diamond wheels & multi base

Mark Baker puts a couple of products from Tormek to the test

Many of you will be familiar with Tormek's wet stone sharpening machines and the range of products it offers to cater for the numerous needs of woodworkers. About a year back, Tormek launched the range of three diamond stones and a MB-100 multi base. I must admit I was intrigued.

The Tormek wet sharpening system is well established in the woodworking field and offers a huge range of jigs and helpful gadgets to enable woodworkers to pick and mix items to suit their sharpening needs. It has an array of stones to suit different needs too, so the addition of a diamond coated wheel piqued my interest further.

Tormek diamond wheels

The diamond wheels are metal, 250mm in diameter and 50mm wide with diamond coating all around the periphery l and on the outside flat side of the wheel, giving you two surfaces to cut. The diamond wheels come in three grit grades: coarse grade which is equivalent to about 360 grit; fine grade, which is equivalent to about 600 grit; and extra-fine, which equates to about 1200 grit.

Tormek comments that the wheels sharpen steel, ceramic and tungsten carbide. They never require dressing and retain their original diameter.

MB-100 multi base

The MB-100 multi base is designed specifically for use with the diamond wheels. It mounts vertically or horizontally to allow you to sharpen, with the relevant tool-holding jigs on the periphery or side of the wheel. You can see in the main picture the jig being used to support a chisel – sharpening a carving chisel.

In use

I had the extra-fine wheel, the 1200 grit one, for test and fitted it to the Tormek T8. Having read all the instructions, I noted Tormek comments that the wheels can be used wet or dry, but it says a finer grind is achieved when wet sharpening.

During the test I sharpened hand chisels, plane blades, knives and carving chisels on the wheel as well as an assortment of turning tools. I thought that would be a good representation of what people would likely use such a wheel for.

I used various tools and sharpened on the periphery to create a hollow grind and used the multi base unit to sharpen on the side of the wheel when I required a flat bevel. Every time, the process for sharpening on the side or periphery was simple and produced an excellent result. Tormek is right in that a better grind/edge is produced when the wheel is used wet. The multi-base is easy to use and really does allow you to get the most out of the diamond wheel.

I must say that having the wheel maintain a constant diameter means setting up jigs is simple and there is no pfaffing about with dressing the wheel etc. I know this is a boon if you like the traditional stones, but the diamond wheel to my mind is just so easy to use, but it does come at a cost.

If you use the Tormek system a lot in your workshop, then I think the cost is insignificant when compared to the benefits of the diamond wheels. I would highly recommend you try them if you have the chance, and see for yourself what they can do. I do not think you will be disappointed. I loved using them. As for the multi base, if you buy the diamond wheel and want the full benefit then it is a must-have and will serve you well.

I think both items are great additions to the Tormek range.

Multi base £58.96
Diamond wheels from £206.50
Contact: Brimarc Tools & Machinery
Web: www.brimarc.com

Arbortech power carving unit

This new Abortech power carving unit is a package of products designed to make power carving and shaping wood easier. The package comprises a variable-speed motor angle-grinder unit, a sanding pad, chip catcher, levelling guide, fan and chip tube.

Sanding pad: Designed for initial sanding stages, this high-performance, slightly flexible sanding pad is capable of moulding to slight contours due to the flexible lip. Use the sanding pad in combination with the chip catcher and attach to a vacuum to control wood dust.
Levelling guide: When used with the Turbo plane (not included), this attachment allows for an extremely flat-levelled surface. Use with the sanding pad (included) to achieve a very even, smooth finish.
Chip catcher: Designed to collect dust and chips during free-form carving and sanding stages.
Chip tube: Without a vacuum, the chip tube is an easy option to funnel wood chips into a bucket to reduce mess.
Fan: Use the fan in conjunction with the chip tube and the Turbo plane (not included) to get rid of most of the wood chips and dust without a vacuum.

Price: £267.95
Contact: BriMarc Tools & Machinery
Web: www.brimarc.com

Red Scorpion pyrography unit

The electronics in the Red Scorpion feature many levels of protection to provide consistent heat output throughout its full range, improving reliability even under heavy loading. The heat range of the unit allows the user to set a light heat setting for delicate, artistic work, increasing through to pyro-engraving and up to high heat output for branding and heavy-duty texturing.

The Red Scorpion is supplied with a heavy-duty flexible cable, at the end of which is fitted a heavy-duty, fully-vented pen to prevent heat build-up and help it run cool even when used for prolonged periods.

Price: £230
Contact: John Woods
Web: www.woodart-products.co.uk

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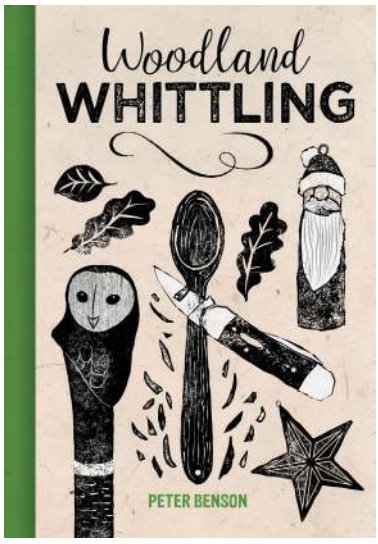

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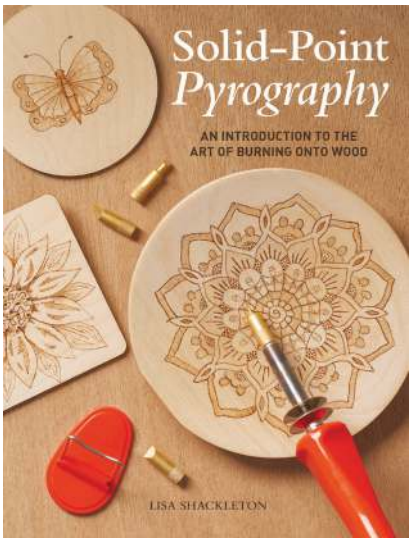

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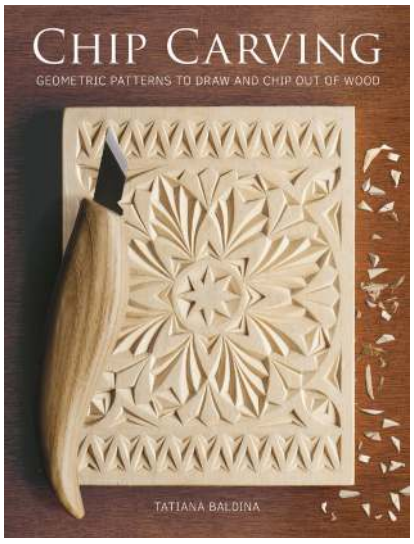

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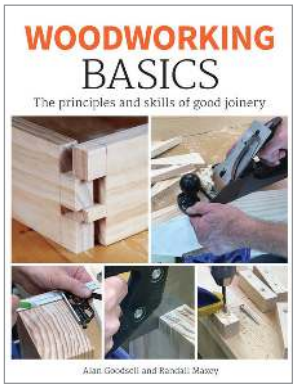

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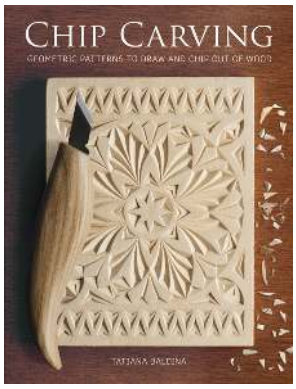

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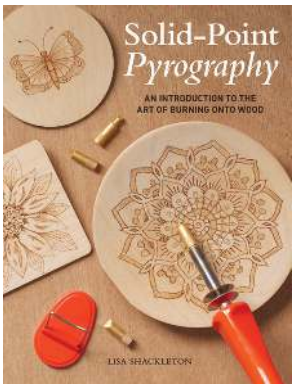

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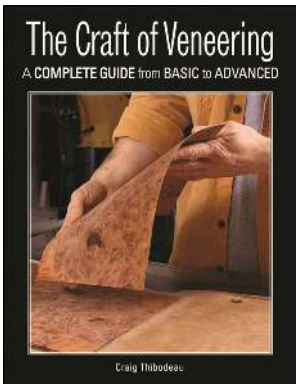

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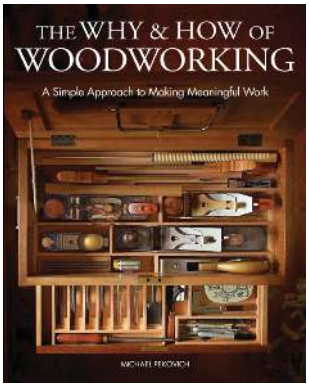

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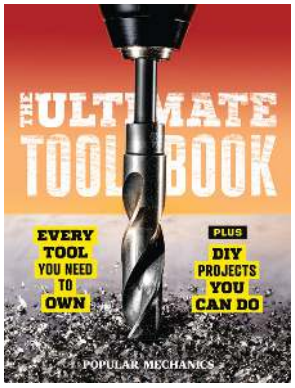

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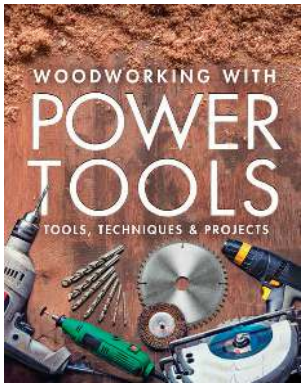

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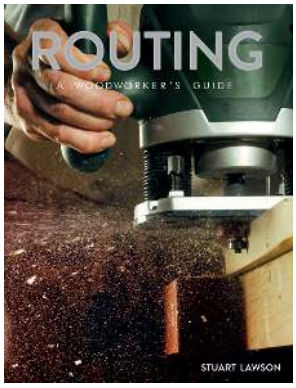

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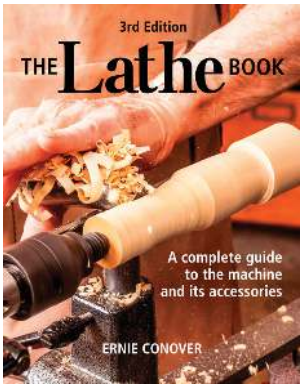

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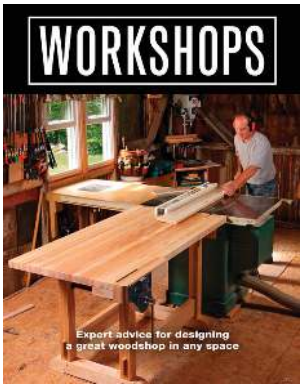

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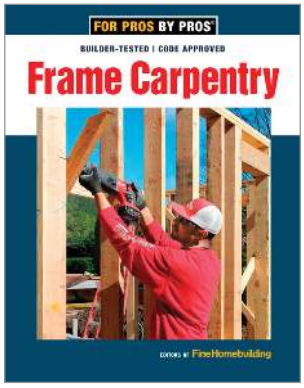

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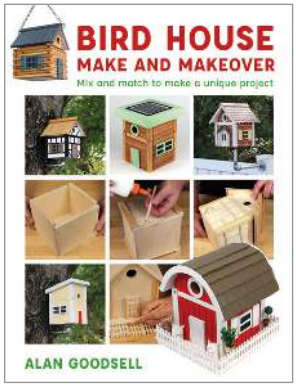

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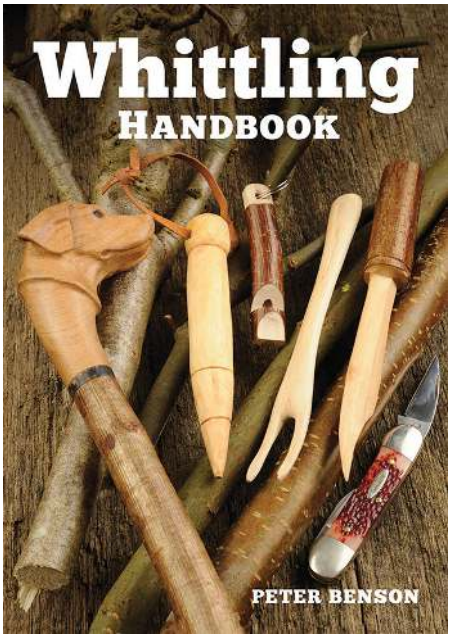

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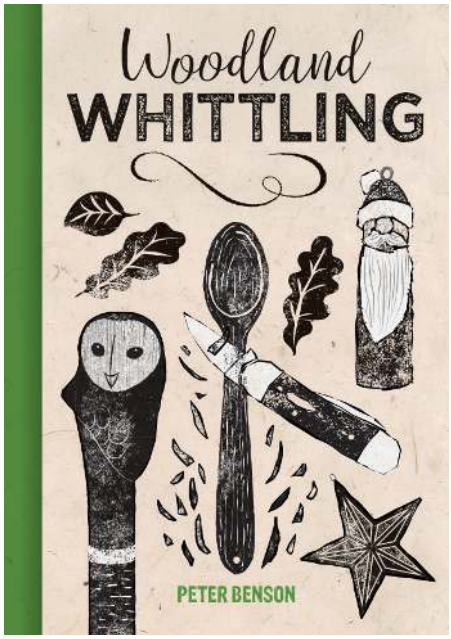

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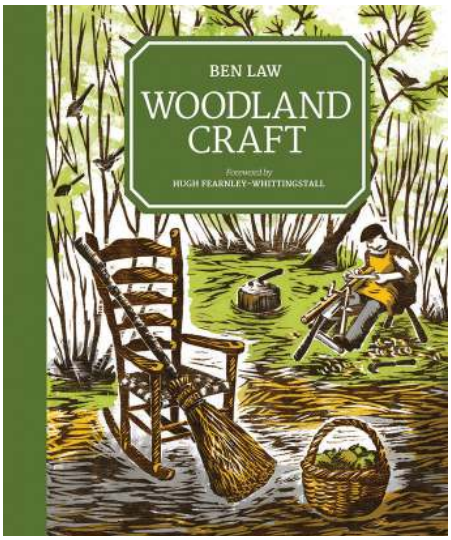

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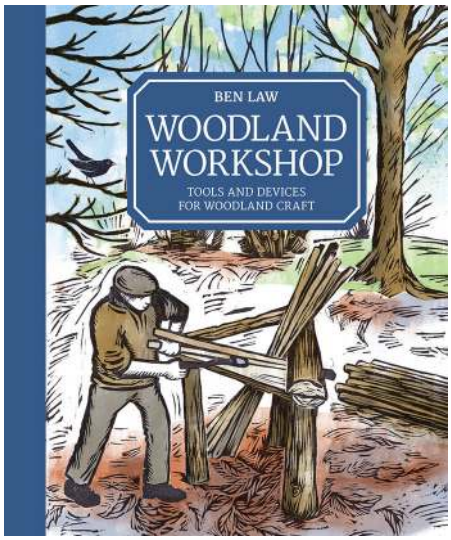

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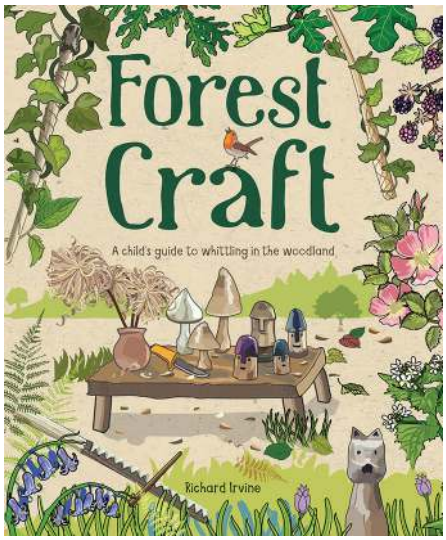

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The many buildings feature carvings and artworks in both Han Chinese and Tibetan styles.

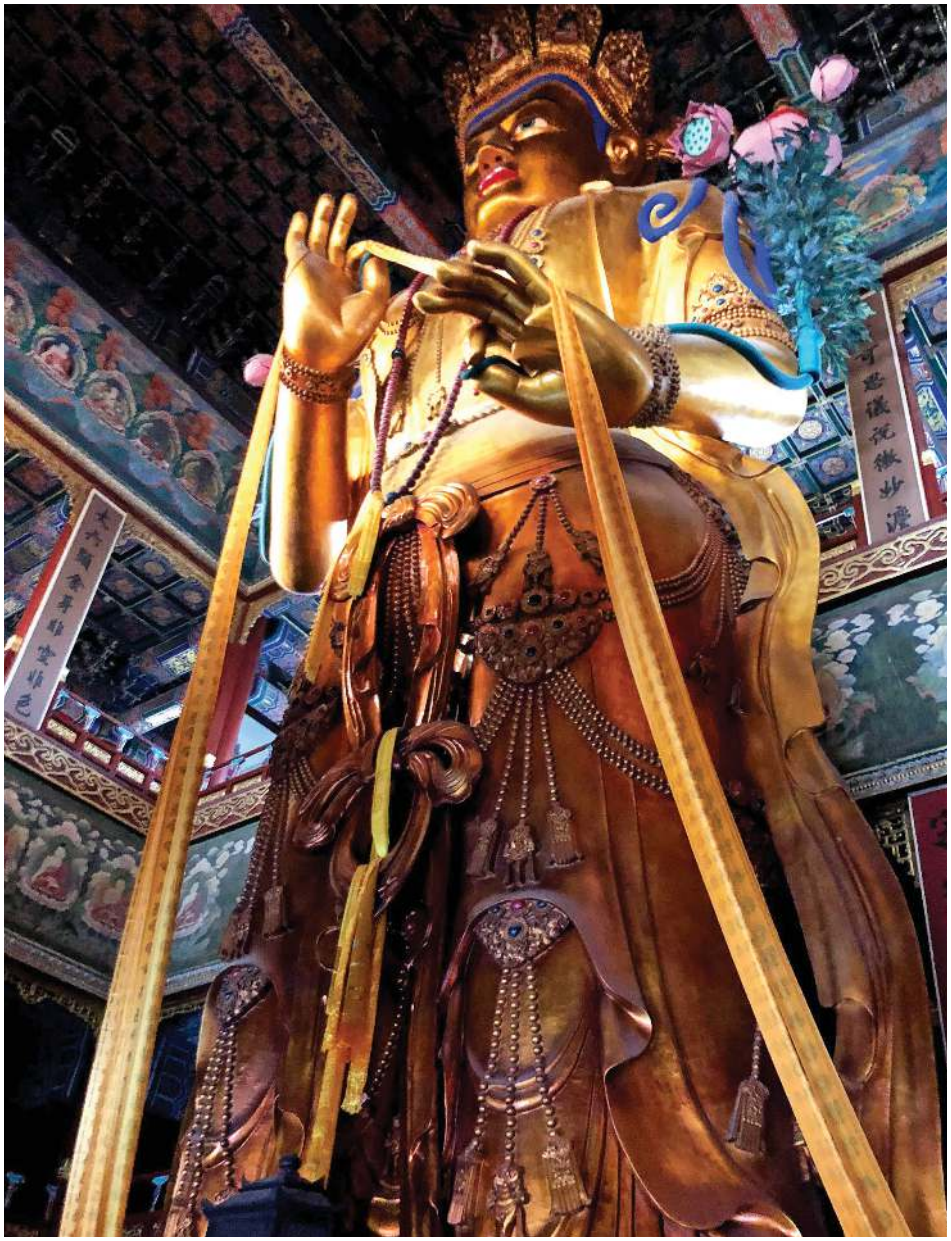
Covering an area of 66,000sq m (16.3 square miles), the temple has a total of 1,000 rooms, featuring five large halls and five courtyards with beautifully decorative archways, unturned eaves and carved details. It houses a treasury of Buddhist art, including sculptured images of gods, demons and Buddhas, as well as Tibetan-style murals.

The Pavilion of Ten Thousand Happinesses is the largest pavilion in the temple. In the centre is a huge standing statue of Maitreya, Buddha of the Future, carved out of a single trunk of white sandalwood tree. It is 26m (85ft) high, 18m (59ft) above the ground and 8m (26ft) under the ground, and 8m (26ft) in diameter.

According to the *Guinness Book of World Records* the Maitreya is the tallest and biggest in the world today. Behind the Great Buddha there are 10000 small Buddhist statues on three storeys, hence the name Ten Thousand Happiness Pavilion.

Presented by the seventh Dalai Lama to the Qianlong Emperor, it is recorded that the total time taken to transport this statue from Tibet to Beijing was three years.

If you are ever in Beijing, don't miss this often overlooked attraction.



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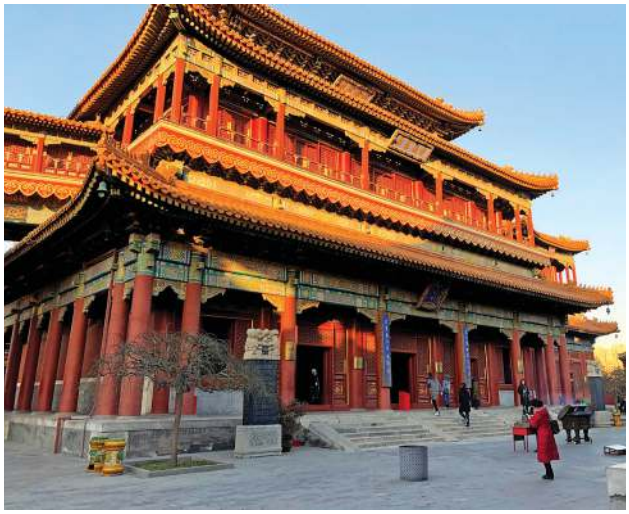

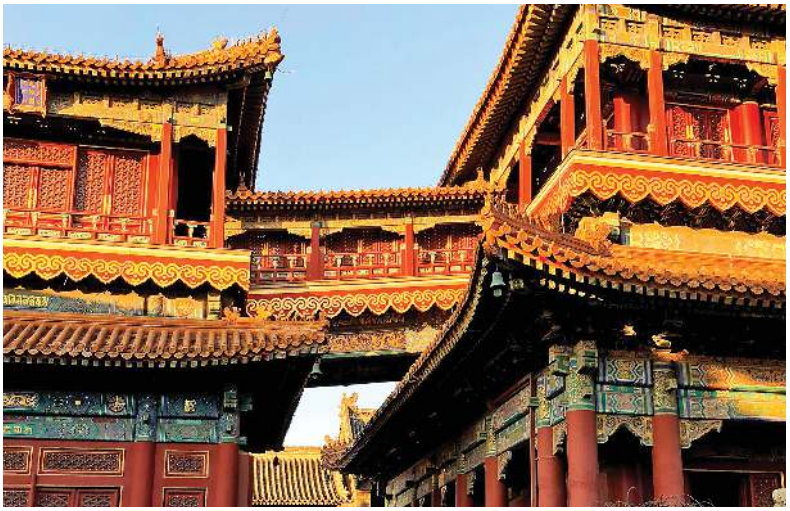

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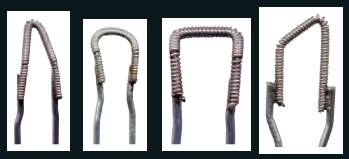

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