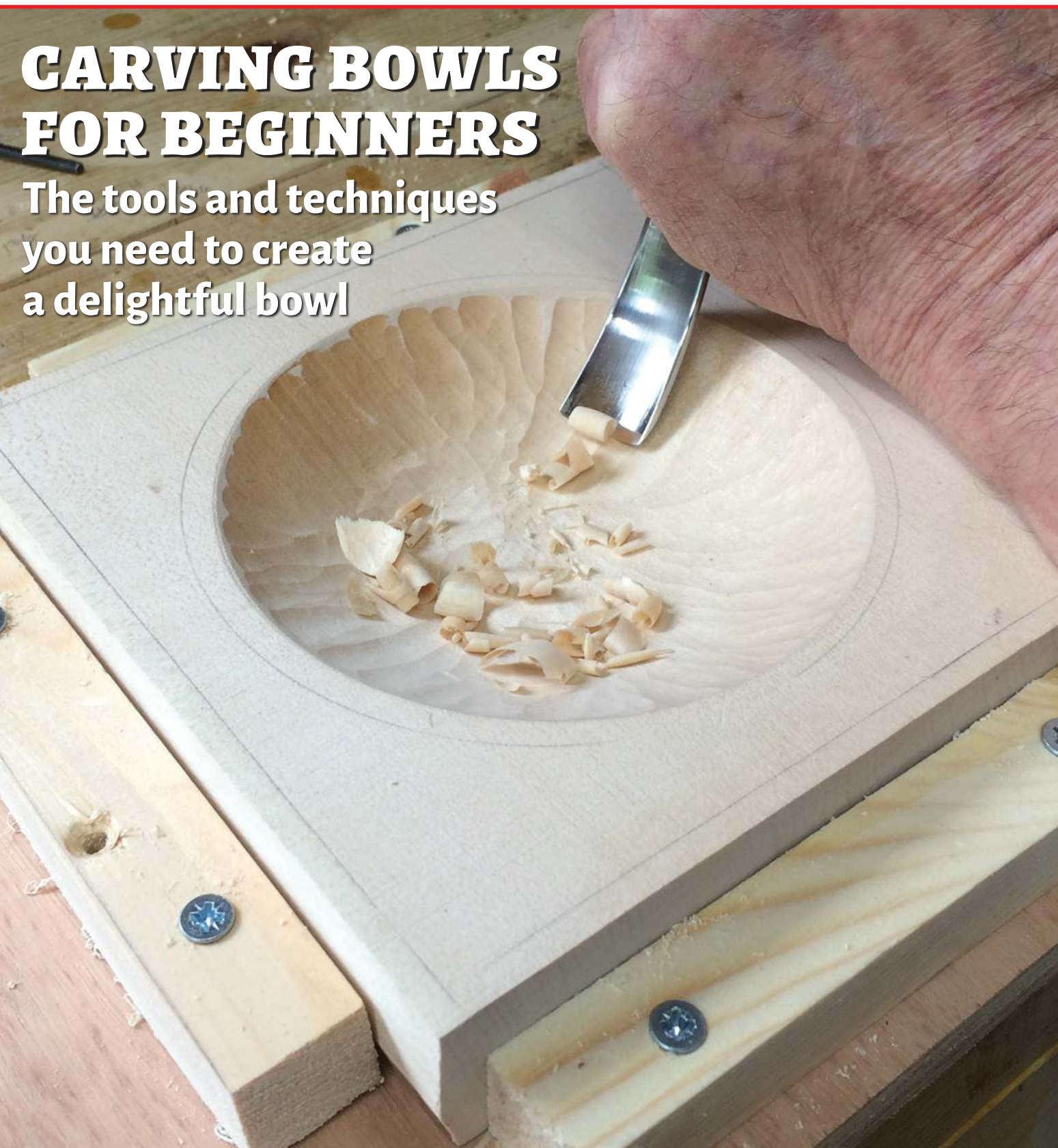


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Handling the curve balls



Having fun in what we do is essential, but when talking to people some of the comments can be condensed down to an often-used phrase: "Shoulda, coulda, woulda..." We have all been there,

whether it be a bad day at the office, something that's not gone right with work or we have some regrets about not having done something or dealt with something earlier. The list can go on and the aforementioned saying can be applied to all of us at times.

We all know that life can throw us some curve balls that blindside us and knock us sideways. We also all know that when we set a plan of action for a project in the workshop, a trip away, a route to progression of our career or what we want to do in retirement etc., things do not always go to plan.

When it comes to things that go wrong in the workshop I think foul-ups or mishaps with a piece of work are an annoyance rather than something to get extremely vexed over. Yes, it is time and possibly a wasted piece of wood – and I have many of those – but I have now learned that mistakes lead to greater successes if we take the time to rationally analyse what on earth happened. We learn and move on.

In the early days of my apprenticeship in carpentry and joinery, and also when learning to turn and carve, I would get vexed that I had made a mistake and sometimes my worrying about it meant that I could not appreciate that it was solvable. I always felt that I had let someone down or been stupid for not realising something was going wrong. In the case of doing so during my apprenticeship the result also led to a time delay and added cost in materials and time. So, added pressure and the embarrassment of making a foul-up and, rest assured, everyone would know about it.

That said, making mistakes in the workshop is a different thing all together. You make a mistake, only you know. Well, unless it was a gift for someone. We don't want to make mistakes, but we have to accept that we do and we need to learn from them so we hopefully don't make the same mistake twice.

I can honestly say that I have made the same mistakes, with numerous subtle variants, many times and I accept that I will continue to make them. I am not glad that I do, but I don't get so annoyed anymore and am able to just move on. I think that time has taught me: don't get angry, get even.

So the next project – the image shows me turning an item ready to carve with some embellishment. I will try to remember everything that has gone before and the work should and hopefully will run smoother.

Have fun and let me know about your workshop blunders and triumphs.

Mark



PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK BAKER/CMC PUBLICATIONS

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

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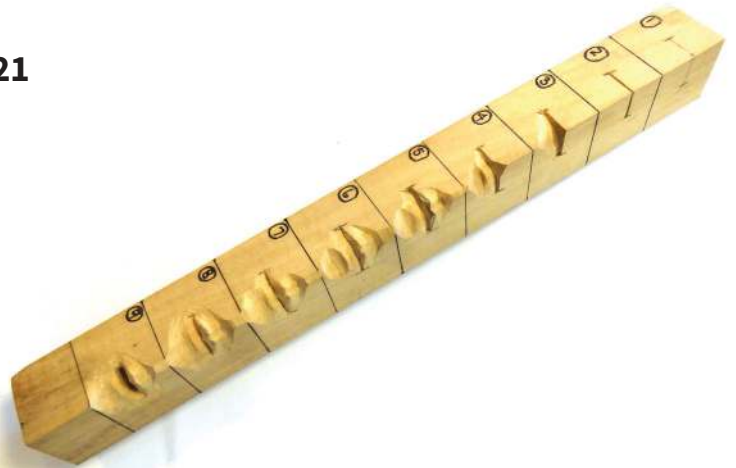
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Gothic tracery panel

Steve Bisco carves traditional tracery in oak



The Gothic style is perennially popular with carvers who enjoy working in traditional period styles. The inspiration for this project came from a pulpit panel in the parish church at Blakeney in Norfolk, which has many fine examples of Gothic woodcarving. Much of the original medieval carving was destroyed by iconoclasts at the Reformation, but a major restoration in Victorian times recreated the lost carvings based on the surviving original examples.

The term 'tracery' in relation to Gothic buildings describes the arrangement of curved ribs and bars that separate an arched window, screen or panel into separate sections for decorative effect. In a stone window or open wooden screen, the bars have glass or open space between them. When tracery is used on a solid decorative panel, as in this project, it is called 'blank tracery'. The name 'tracery' is one of those medieval masons' terms that is roughly the same in English and French due to our shared Norman heritage. In French the verb 'tracer' also means to plot the line of a curve, and medieval masons would draw out, or 'trace', the complex arrangement of curves full size on a white plaster floor to create templates for each carved stone section so it would all fit together when erected.

Tracery started off fairly simply in the 11th century and then became ever more complex as time went on. By the 15th century it had developed into the complex 'Flamboyant' style, with its extravagant curves and certain flame-like foils called daggers, fish bladders and mouchettes. Several examples of these can be seen in the panel in this project, which dates the design to this period even though the panel I based it on was a Victorian restoration.

This is a complex low-relief pattern on a fairly small panel, so it is an exercise in precision and neatness. On the other hand, there are no technical difficulties of three-dimensional construction to deal with, and once the 'grounding out' of the flat areas between the tracery is completed you can simply enjoy working your way through the curves, coves and cusps at your own pace. I decided to leave this panel in its natural 'new oak' colour rather than darken it to old oak as it tends to show up the shadows better on the low-relief panel, but you have the option to 'antique' it if you wish.

Things you will need

Tools:

- Gouges:
 - No.3, 10mm
 - No.3, 10mm fishtail
 - No.4, 6mm fishtail
 - No.5, 3 & 7
 - No.7, 10mm
 - No.8, 8mm
 - No.9, 3 & 20mm
 - Short bent 10mm
 - V-tool 2mm & 6mm straight
- Chisels:
 - Flat 20mm, 6.5mm, 3mm
 - Bent 5mm & 10mm
 - Skew chisel 10mm
 - Hooked skew chisel 16mm
- Jigsaw/bandsaw,
plane, spokeshave

Materials:

- Oak (*Quercus robur*) 525 x 265 x 25mm
- Wax polish

NAMING OF PARTS

There are a few terms you need to be familiar with when describing the elements of Gothic tracery:

BARS or RIBS are the narrow straight and curved lines that form the basis of the tracery by separating the various sections of the window or panel.

COVES (also called cavettos in Classical architecture) are the concave linear mouldings, roughly a quarter circle in profile, that run around the edge of a bar, rib or foil.

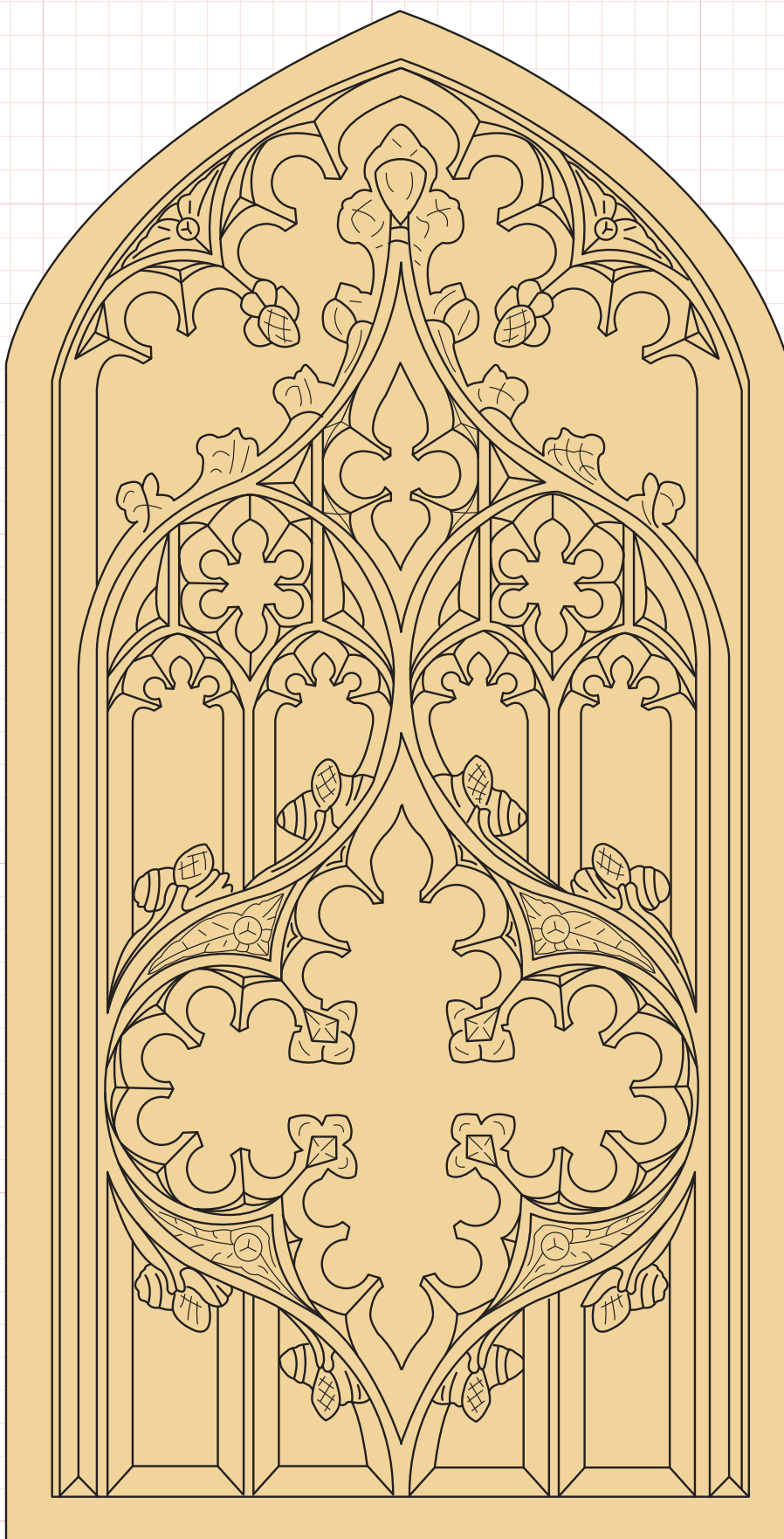
FOILS are the almost-circular leaf-like elements that are formed into groups of three (trefoils), four (quatrefoils), or many more in this carving, which occupy the top of an arch or form part of a larger pattern.

CUSPS are the pointy bits that separate each foil at the joints of the coves.

EYES are the chamfered triangular bits that fill the space between the small curves of a foil and the larger tracery curve outside it.

SPANDRELS are the triangular spaces in the larger gaps between tracery curves, and are usually filled with a carved pattern.

CROCKETS are the organic-looking growths that climb up the sides of a pinnacle or gable towards the **FINIAL** at the top, each one sprouting upwards from the tracery and curling over on itself.

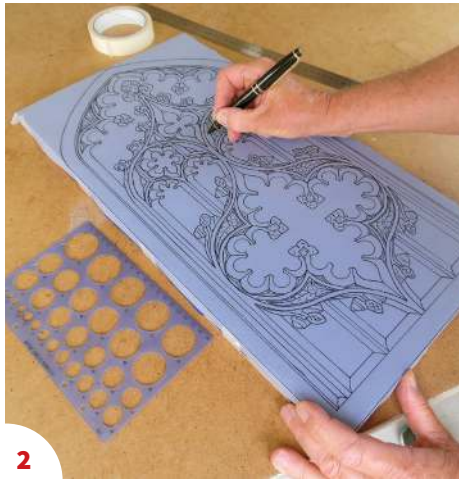


USING THE DRAWING

The pattern needs to be enlarged and printed out full-size on an A2 sheet of paper, which you can get done at a printshop. It is best to trace it on to the wood with carbon paper (see step 2) so you can see the grain as you carve, but as this pattern is complex to trace I won't hold it against you if you want to paste the print on to the wood.



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Preparations

1 Get a piece of oak, 525 x 265 x 25mm, fairly straight grained and free from knots and distortions, and planed on the face and both edges. Prepare the drawing to fit the panel, and enough carbon paper to cover it. You can, of course, opt to use a timber of your choice, but oak is a traditional timber for such items.

2 Position the drawing carefully on the wood, with the carbon paper under it, and tape it securely in place. Trace the pattern on to the wood, using a ruler on the straight lines and a circle template in the foils. Keep the tape in place on one side while you check all the pattern has been traced before detaching the drawing.

3 This is a complex pattern and the maze of lines can be a bit confusing, but if you colour in the background areas that will be 'grounded out' it all makes a lot more sense and will be easier to follow when you start carving.

4 Use a jigsaw or bandsaw to cut the 'lancet window' arch shape at the top, then plane the edge to a smooth surface with a spokeshave.

5 Draw a line around the face and sides of the board 3mm from front edge, then plane a neat chamfer up to these lines all the way round.

Excavating the background

TOP TIP: Grounding out the background area can be done with a router and you could save some time and effort in steps 7 & 8.

6 Set up the carving on your bench, using wooden blocks to hold it in place. Before chiselling out the background areas, first cut round all the edges with gouges that fit the curves to create a defined inner edge that will resist splinters running off into the pattern when we start excavating.

7 Now excavate the background down to a depth of 12mm. First chisel out the bulk from the middle of each area using a deep gouge, then steadily work down the edges of the pattern until they are vertical. Level off the base with flat chisels and continually check the depth with a simple depth gauge (see tip below).

8 Continue with this process over the whole panel until all the background is 'grounded out'. This may take 20 hours or more, so just allocate some time to it and work through it patiently. Finish the background by scraping the oak smooth with flat chisels held vertically and pulled towards you to produce shavings.

TOP TIP: To get an even depth on the background areas, create a depth gauge by inserting a screw through a flat piece of wood so the tip protrudes 12mm. Place the wood flat on the surface of the tracery bars and slide the screw around over the background area. The screw will make scratches on the parts of the surface that are not yet down to 12mm. Continue shaving and checking until the gauge no longer leaves any scratch marks.

Carving the tracery

9 The coves of the tracery are carved almost entirely with a 10mm no.7 gouge. Start by separating the border tracery from the inner bars with a V-tool, then carve a dead-straight double cove up each side between the border and the first bar by 'planing' along it with the gouge. At the upper end, continue the border cove as a full cove up into the curve of the first of the 'foils' in the top border. The bottom edge of the cove should be 3mm above the background.

10 Now carve out all the coves around the foils in the upper arch, taking care to work with the grain with a sweeping circular motion. Carve the cusps simply by continuing the sweep of the foil cove out to the end of one side of the cusp, then do the same on the adjoining foil (working with the grain) and the cusp will form itself. Tidy up the end and make sure the centre ridge on the cusp is even.

11 On all coves where the grain direction changes in the curve, carve downwards across the grain to get a smooth transition. The quatrefoil in the top centre of the inner tracery has two 'dagger' foils which are pointed with an ogee 'flame' shape. Carve a sharp crease into the point.

12 The central section has a 'super-quatrefoil' with a whole host of smaller circular foils and cusps, with dagger foils top and bottom.

13 The small foils in the upper 'window' panel are very fiddly to carve at this scale. Take care not to break the tiny cusps. Also carve the large triangular 'eyes' included in the 'window'.

14 Now move to the bottom four panels and carve the coves on the vertical bars. The upper edge of the 'bottom rail' is carved in a plain 45° chamfer as it would be in a real window.

15 To finish the tracery, carve the 'eyes' around all the foils. Some of these are very small, so use a very sharp no.4, 6mm fishtail gouge to carve the chamfers in from each curve, then sharpen the creases with a hooked skew chisel.

Carving the other features

16 The decorated arch at the top of the carving has two large cusps shaped as flower heads, and two leaf shapes in the spandrels. The flower cusps are three-dimensional and slightly undercut to make them stand out, but the spandrel leaf pattern is in very low relief and is carved with a fine V-tool and small gouges.

DID YOU KNOW?

The pointed 'dagger' foils in this type of tracery look rather like a candle flame, which gave the name 'Flamboyant' to this style. This word later came to be used to describe anything showy and elaborate.



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17 The main body of the tracery rises to a point with a typical Gothic feature called a poppy-head finial, commonly found on pew ends, pinnacles, and at the top of anything pointed. Designs vary considerably, but generally they fan out into three 'leaves' with the top one gathered inwards. Carve it as three-dimensionally as the 12mm depth of the tracery will allow.

18 Crockets are another typical Gothic feature, climbing up a pinnacle or gable towards the finial. They have an organic look about them as they represent foliage, each one sprouting upwards from the tracery and curling over on itself.

19 Around the outside of the central 'super-quatrefoil' there are eight crocket-like features that spring from the tracery bars. They curve upwards from the upper bars and downwards from the lower bars and have a cone-like feature carved with contra-rotating spirals, with undulating leaves reminiscent of a linenfold pattern.

20 Continue with the central area by carving the four spandrels between the foils and the tracery bars. These are leaves with a stamen in the middle, carved in very low relief like the spandrels in the top arch but a bit bigger. Each section of each leaf is finished by scooping with a shallow gouge to relieve the flatness. Carve the vein lines with a fine V-tool and sharpen them by running a curved skew chisel along the crease.

21 Now we finish the carving with the four large cusps in the middle of the 'super-quatrefoil'. These are a type commonly found in Gothic tracery and, like crockets, have an organic look about them with crinkly leaf forms surrounding the central cusp.

TOP TIP: Gothic carving needs to be bold and sharply defined. Many features like crockets and finials have deep cuts, or slashes, across them to break up the flow of a feature that would otherwise be too 'soft'.

FINISHING

22 With the carving finished, scrape the tracery bars clean of all tracing lines, tidy up the line of all the bars, and give the background another scrape to make sure it is smooth. At this point you need to decide if you are going to fume it to a dark brown with ammonia (see *Woodcarving* 166, 167 or 171) or leave it in its new oak colour. I went for new oak this time and gave it two coats, front and back, of a good light brown wax polish (Antiquax Original). Brush it into the crevices, then buff it up with a cloth to a soft sheen.

23 Hang or stand the finished panel in a place where the light will strike it sideways to enhance the shadows. ▶

News & events...

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

BDWCA NEWS



Winners of the Regional Group Competition – Cheshire Group

PHOTOGRAPHS BY FRANCES MILLBURN FOR THE BDWCA

A group of our members are planning on attending the 50th Annual Ward World Championship Wildfowl Carving Competition and Art Festival in Ocean City, Maryland, US, the 'show of the year' for bird carvers – more news of that show in a future edition of this magazine.

In the UK we only have the one bird carving competition, the BDWCA's Annual Competition & Show, which will take place this year on 12 and 13 September (the second full weekend in September) at its usual venue of the Agricultural Centre in Bakewell, Derbyshire.

While carvings for competition are generally kept secret until the day of the competition, the exception to the rule is the entries for our Regional Group Competition. Each year the group that wins gets to choose the subject for the following year. The 2019 bird was the long-tailed tit and there were 31 entries on the table, with our Cheshire Group winning for the third year in succession. Cheshire member Mark Langford won the prize for the best individual long-tailed tit. Our Trent Valley group took second place, and Thames Valley group were third.

The bird chosen by Cheshire Group for 2020 is the Kingfisher. Unlike last year's subject, which is often seen in our gardens, the kingfisher is more often just seen as a flash of bright blue and orange near slow moving or still water, so we may have to look to photographic references more than actual observation. This brightly coloured bird could be a challenge to paint, although painting is not mandatory for this competition as they can be realistic – either smooth or fully textured – and painted, or interpretive, which is usually polished wood.

Contacts

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



2nd place – Trent Valley Group



3rd place – Thames Valley Group



Best Individual long-tailed tit by Mark Langford

2020 Events

- The 2020 IWCA Style Decoy Championship**
 When: 14-15 March 2020
 Where: Holiday Inn, Strongsville, Ohio, US
 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
- 50th Annual Award World Championship Wildfowl Carving Competition & Art Festival**
 When: 24-26 April 2020
 Where: Roland E. Powell Convention Centre, 4001 Coastal Hwy, Ocean City, MD 21842, US
 Web: www.wardmuseum.org
- Carve in 4**
 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 to 4 July 2020
 Where: Verein, KUNA 3855, Brienz, Switzerland
 Web: www.symposium-brienz.ch
- Woodturning Weekender 2020**
 When: 1-2 August 2020
 Where: Orchards Event Venue, New Road, East Malling, Kent, ME19 6BJ
 Web: www.chestnutproducts.co.uk
- Carving on the Edge Festival**
 When: 10-15 September 2020
 Where: 368 Main St, Tofino, BC V0R 2Z0, Canada
 Web: www.carvingedgefestival.com
- Yandles Woodworking Show**
 When: 11-12 September 2020
 Where: Hurst, Martock, TA12 6JU
 Web: www.yandles.co.uk
- National Bird Carving Championships: The Festival of Bird art**
 When: 12-13 September 2020
 Where: The Agricultural Business Centre, Bakewell, Derbyshire, DE45 1AH
 Web: www.bdwca.org.uk
- British Stick Makers Festival of Wood & Crafts**
 When: 18 October 2020
 Where: Agricultural Business Centre, Agricultural Way, Bakewell, Derbyshire, DE45 1AH.
 Web: www.thebsg.org.uk
- North of England Woodworking show**
 When: 13-15 November 2020
 Where: Great Yorkshire Showground, Harrogate, HG2 8QZ
 Web: www.skpromotions.co.uk

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

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Hen bowl

Mark Gough shows how to make this cracking egg holder



Carving a bowl has been on my to-do list for a while and the idea for this came from a wire basket for storing eggs. Bowl carving is new to me and I was given the opportunity to write this article documenting my experience and also have the bonus of using some new tools, which is always welcome. I did my research largely on the internet, watching bowl carving videos, and reading through the spoon carving articles in past issues of this magazine to get an idea of the techniques I needed to learn. They are similar in some respects to hollowing out the back of a mask. Carving the outside was straightforward once the design was down on paper, but I was apprehensive about carving a bowl of this depth. My approach was to start with the tools I owned that were suitable for the purpose and

continue until they became unsuitable, then invest in something more applicable. The slight issue was the sheer variety of styles and brands to choose from, I also had to learn some new sharpening techniques for the tools I bought. I stopped short of a power carving unit which would have made the whole process much easier and quicker but that was not the objective. If, like me, you are new to bowl carving, I hope the following steps give you some idea of what is involved, although only the last few steps document the actual carving of the bowl. The hook knife I used was a left-handed single-edged type – in hindsight I should have used a double-edged one but it has been a learning experience for me and I shall upgrade next time round.

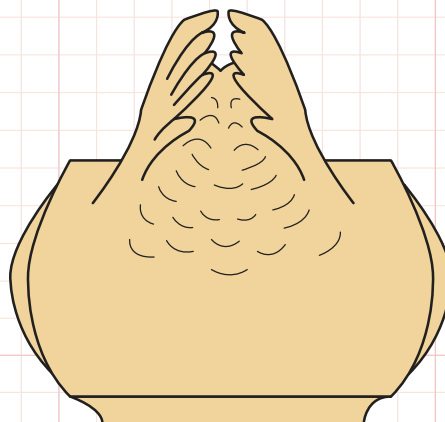
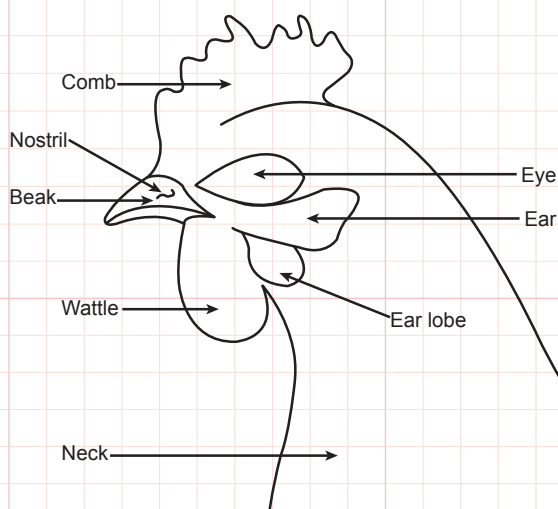
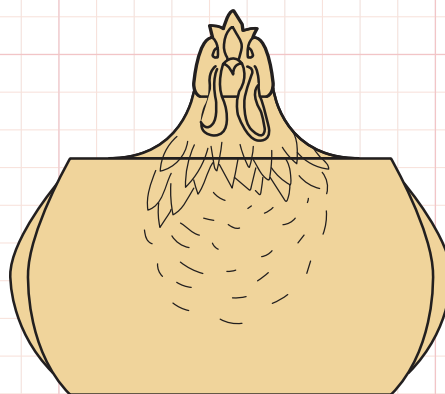
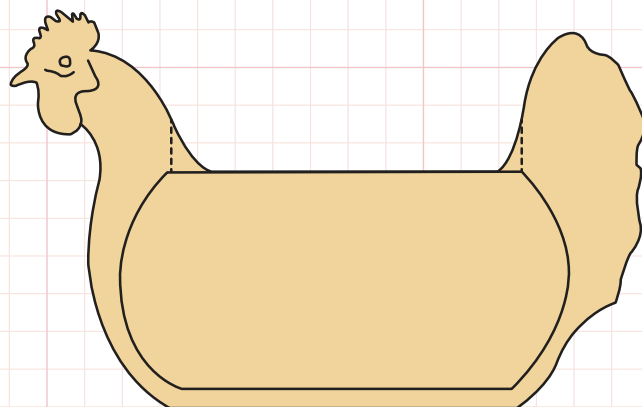
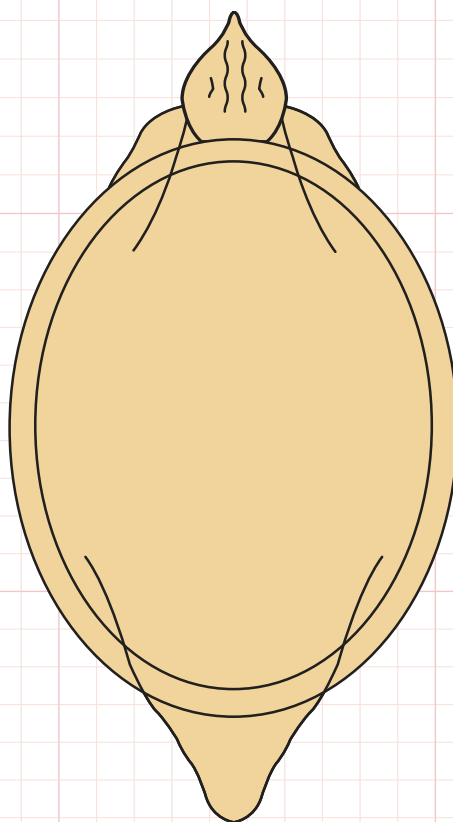
Things you will need

Tools:

- Personal and respiratory protective equipment (PPE & RPE)
- Gouges: 16mm no.5 gouge, 12mm & 20mm shallow fishtail, 6mm 16mm & 10mm shallow straight, 13mm swan neck no.8, 32mm shallow bent, V-tool
- Large and small rasps, needle files
- Rotary power unit and hand piece
- Rotary burrs, bull nose, flame burr, cylinder burr, nail head burrs, diamond oval burr
- Straight and hook knives
- 40mm Forstner drill bit
- Junior hacksaw
- Hand punch
- Bandsaw
- Dust extractor
- Inflatable sanding kit (optional)

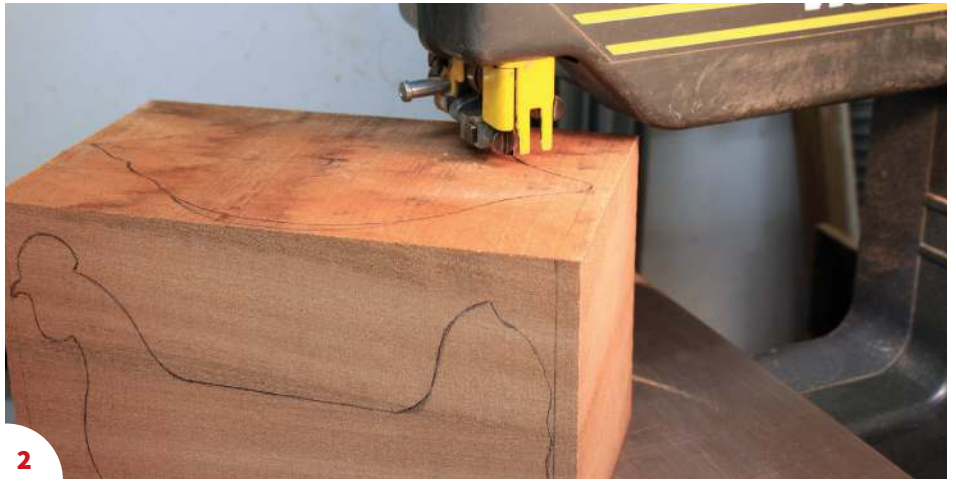
Materials:

- Sapele (*Entandrophragma cylindricum*) 40 x 134 x 140mm
- Dark-brown wood glue
- Double-sided tape
- Abrasives down to 240 grit
- Foam sanding pad
- Finish of your choice





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Preparation

1 The blank is two pieces glued together. The join is positioned on the top edge of the bowl where the head and tail join to hide it as much as possible. I intended to have the grain running in the same direction but made an error when gluing up. Notice the mock up at the side – this was done out of softwood to check the design and size. The initial size was increased by 10%. It is also helpful to refer to during the carving process.

2 Cut the shape out on a bandsaw. Start by cutting the plan view, and try to cut each side in one go, then reattach the pieces with double-sided tape, flip the blank over and cut the outline out. Go steady and check that the sides remain stuck – re-tape them if they come loose otherwise they will snag the blade.

3 Glue a clamping block to the bottom of the blank and mark a centreline on the top front and back, then start by shaping the rear of the neck where it merges into the top of the bowl. Use a shallow gouge, rasp or both and aim for symmetry on each side.

4 Mark in the position of the eyes and comb then cut away the waste and round over the top of the head with a coarse bull-nose burr.

5 Use the back of a medium shallow gouge to cut in the bottom of the comb and refine the top of the head.

6 Draw two vertical lines from each end of the beak down the front of the wattle then pare away the waste from the neck towards these lines.

7 Use a small flame burr to remove the waste from the middle of the wattle right up to the underside of the beak. The shape will be refined in step 9, so leave enough for this.

8 Now the front of the neck can be rounded over. Use a rasp or gouge of your choice – again aim for symmetry each side and merge the contours into the bottom of the bowl.

9 Use a small flame burr to shape the wattles – they are slightly concaved either side. You can of course use a small, shallow gouge too. Refer to the plans about hens' head anatomy to mark the features correctly in the following steps.

10 Sand the area down with 80 grit abrasive to remove the tool marks then draw in the ear lobe and the feathers covering the ear. Select a small, oval diamond burr and reveal the features each side of the head. Again check for symmetry.

11 Use a V-tool to separate the beak and check from the front that both sides are level before carving. Use strips of sandpaper to chamfer each side of the top section from the centreline down to the lower edge each side. When viewed from the front it should look triangular.

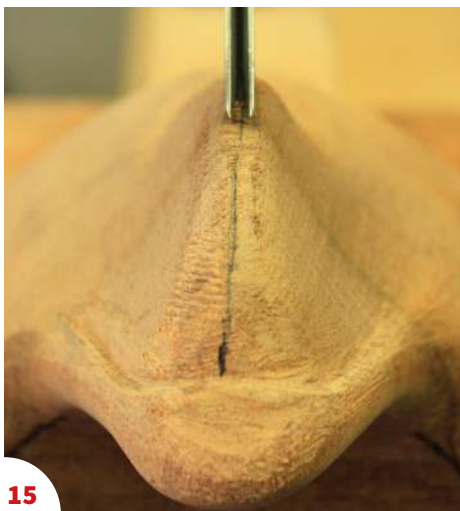
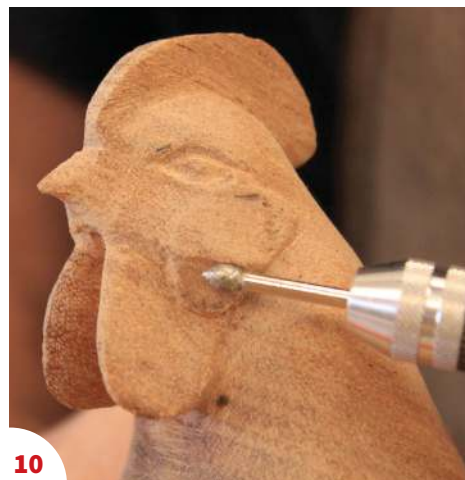
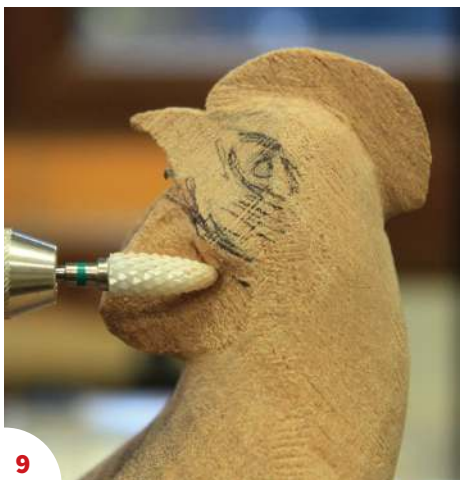
12 To form the eye, use a 6mm no.3 gouge or a knife to cut the fibres around the outline, then pare away small slivers from the centre towards the edge to shape the eye. Finish by making a small hole in the centre with a punch. The head can now be sanded down to 120 grit all round then sand the wattles, ear lobes and beak down to 240 grit.

13 Draw in the outline of the comb then use a junior hacksaw to cut out the waste. Finish off the shaping with small files and taper the sides up to a centreline on the top, round off all the edges and finish with sandpaper.

14 Select a medium-size shallow gouge and rough in the tail shape. Start from each side and round over the edges up to the top of the tail then do the same to the bottom edge round to the back. Smooth out the tool marks with a rasp and sandpaper.

15 Using a V-gouge make a cut at the back of the tail on each side up to and over the top and cut back the sides so that the front of the tail looks as though it is curling over the back. Make another cut up the centre of the rear feathers to split each side as shown.

16 Refer to the pattern and round over the top and bottom edges of each side and merge the profile into the front and back of the bowl. The final shaping of this area will be done once the clamping block has been removed. In this project I am using a combination of power and hand carving techniques. You can, of course, create this project entirely using either approach – there is no right or wrong way, just the way that best suits you and your carving preferences. Of course, power carving may be faster, but it does create more dust and this needs dealing with. Face and airway protection would be a must for power carving.





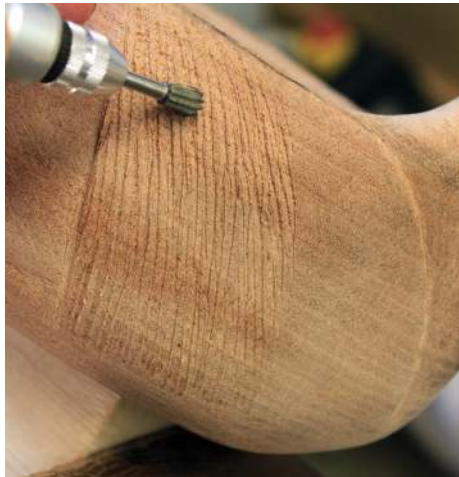
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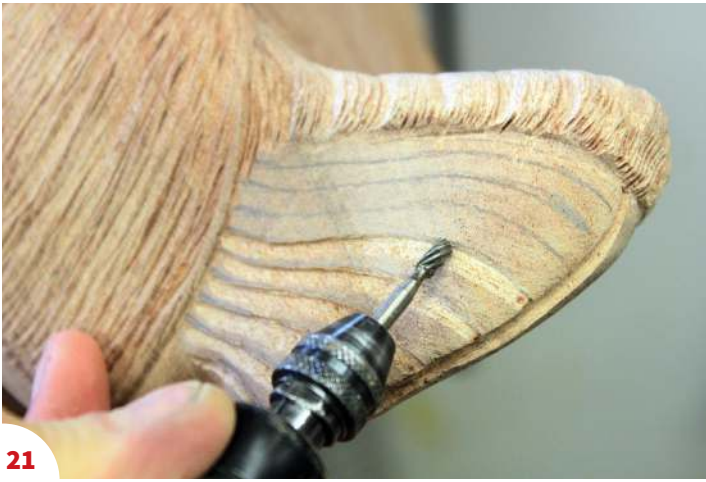


17 Draw in the wings and relieve the shape all round with a bull-nose burr then sand smooth. You may need to reshape the bottom edge again in this area. Do this with a small rasp.

18 Towards the back of each wing is a set of saddle feathers. These can be marked in freehand with a pencil. Make a stop cut with a knife along the outer lines then lower the level of the wing up to the front stop cut and lower the tail sides up to the rear stop cut as shown so that the saddle feathers stand proud.

19 Start with the head using a small nail-head burr and work back down the neck changing to a larger burr. You can enlarge the cuts by using a little more pressure the further back you go. For the saddle feathers, use the edge of a cylinder burr then cut random deep grooves with a V-gouge.

20 Use the edge of a medium and small cylinder to undercut the feathers and cut in the vanes with a small nail-head burr. Note direction of vanes. It is important to check reference material so you can see what is needed to create a realistic look. That said, it doesn't have to exactly match the feathers on a real bird, but should have enough detail to show it is a feather and to look right.



21

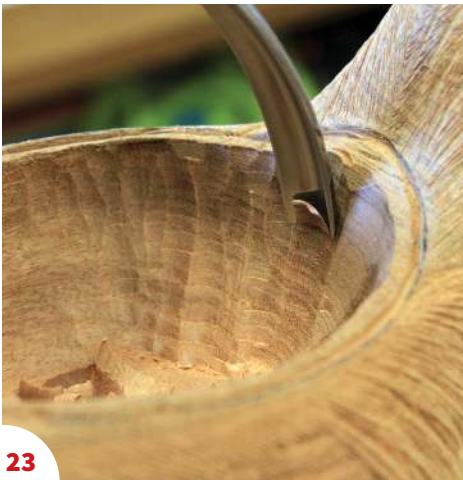


21 Use the same technique for the tail feathers then go over all the texturing with a fine abrasive foam pad to knock off all the loose fibres and finally clean the grooves out with a stiff brush.

22 Cut a small groove round the outline of the bowl. The purpose of this is to get a clean edge to work back to and it helps to prevent chipping the edge while carving out the bowl. Drill out a large hole from the centre with a 40mm Forstner bit then start carving towards the centre with a shallow gouge.



22



23



23 Deepen the bowl with bent gouges. Here 13mm swan-neck and 32mm bent gouges are used with a hook knife to carve out the tighter curves. The 32mm gouge has been ground to a higher angle to use as a scraper on the bottom. The bowl is then sanded with an inflatable sanding attachment held in a hand drill.

24 Round over the rim of the bowl by hand sanding and smooth. Then remove the clamping block and smooth over the bottom and lower edge evenly all round. Finish off with a couple of coats of satin polyurethane varnish to provide a wipe-clean surface. ■



24



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Practice makes perfect

Peter Benson continues his series on using a study stick, this time concentrating on carving the mouth

We all look closely at people's mouths when they are speaking to us but, for some unaccountable reason, you see more very bad mouths on carvings than really good ones. I think that is because we see things that are very familiar and take them for granted, not really studying them at all. It is said that this is down to the left side of the brain, which guides us through the mundane parts of our lives without spending any appreciable amount of time on the process, as long as we can get by on the minimal information collected. The right side of the brain, however, is happy to spend time collecting much more detailed information but has to be coaxed into action. The most effective way of doing this is to present the brain with something that is unfamiliar – the left brain can't be bothered with this and switches off, allowing the right brain to function. The easiest way to do this is to turn a picture upside down or to look at something from an unfamiliar angle – perhaps in a mirror.

The worst way to

study a face is from the front, as this is the normal viewpoint and will very much involve the left brain. Look at the different parts of the face from the side, top or bottom and the right brain will show you the various angles and shapes you need to get the detail right.

The most common faults with carvings of the mouth are that the corners are nowhere near far enough back and the bottom lip is too prominent. Study the profile and you will see. Also, the male mouth is invariably different from the female – this can also be more easily seen in profile.

As most hobby carvers have probably

only carved a few faces it is highly likely that these common faults are repeated time after time, so trying to get things right in a study stick is the easiest way to remedy the situation.



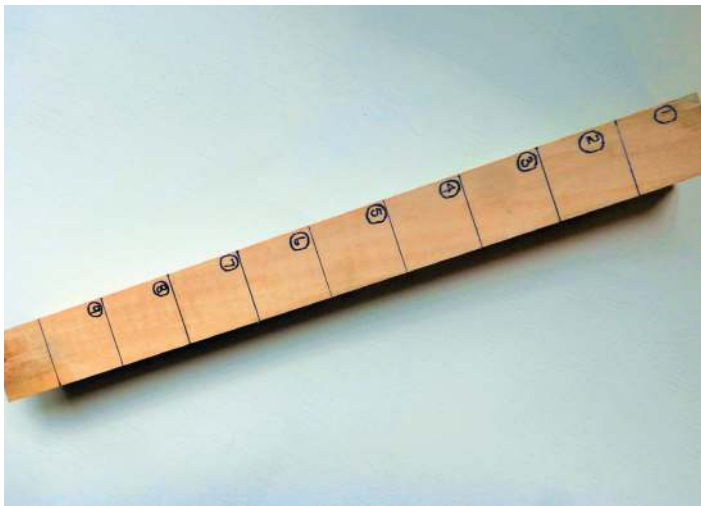
Creating the study stick

As with the last issue you will need to prepare a stick, preferably around 300mm long. Thickness can be whatever you have available but somewhere around 20-30 mm will give you the best results.

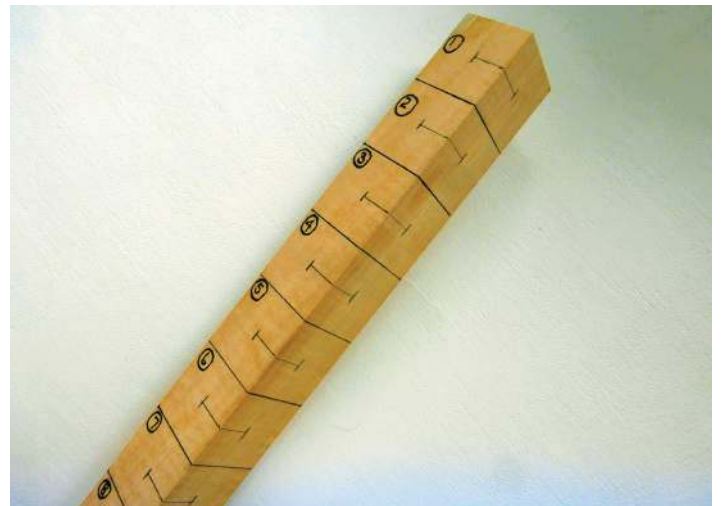
Divide it into equal sections of around 30mm and number from 1 to however many you have marked. The easiest way to complete this exercise is to use a knife but you can, of course, use small gouges if you prefer.

In the centre of each section draw a line approximately half the width of the wood from one corner in each direction, parallel to the dividing lines. Draw a short line across each end of the lines you have drawn.

With your knife, cut along each of the lines drawn in section 2, and then each following section, to a depth of around 1-2mm.



Stick marked for 9 sections



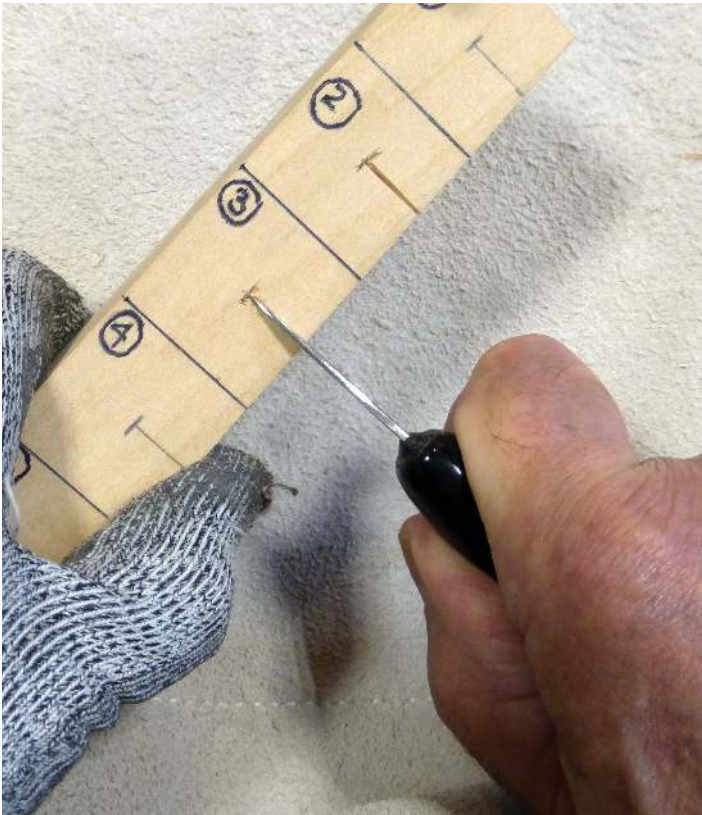
Mouth line marked in each section

Main features

Using the cut you have made as a stop cut, round off the part below the line as shown in section 3 to form the curve of the bottom lip, finishing each end of the cut into the small cuts at each end of the line you have drawn. Round off the surface of the lip and repeat for each succeeding section. Cut underneath the bottom lip as

shown to form the hollow between the lip and the chin. Avoid cutting around the edge of the lip at the sides as this will make it look hard and unnatural. Cut the point off the top lip as shown. Angle back the area above the top lip to roughly where the bottom of the nose would be. Increase the angle slightly at the top

to correspond roughly with the bottom of the nostrils. When you are happy with the overall shape, hollow the flat area above the lip to form the philtrum – this is the small hollow that goes from the centre of the top lip to the underside of the nose. Now draw in the shape of the lip that you require. Repeat for all following sections.



Lines cut in Section 2. Repeat



Round under line in Section 3 and repeat



Hollow under lip and point of top lip cut and repeated



Angle top lip and draw outline. Repeat

Detail and refinement

Shape the top lip by carefully cutting around the lines you have drawn, making sure that you make the two sides symmetrical. Unless you are ambidextrous you will probably need to do one side upside down, so don't rush this stage. Repeat for remaining sections.

The basic shaping is now complete. You will need to refine the mouth to make it realistic.

Round off the lips where they meet and make a clear line separating them. Round off the outline of the bottom lip to give it shape. The most forward part should be quite defined but the parts approaching the corners should be left softer, with no defined edge.

Whenever you do a study stick you can never really be sure how many stages you will need

to complete the exercise. If you have any stages left after you have what you want, use them for practice. You might like to try a different mouth. If yours turned out to be like a male mouth, try a female one and so forth. Here I have tried to produce a different shape as a contrast and have used the last one to try an open mouth. It may not be ideal but it has given me a chance to experiment.



Shape top lip and refine



Mouth complete



More feminine mouth shape



Open mouth

Conclusion

To sum up, the whole point of these exercises is to repeat each stage for all the sections available. This means that you reinforce the method you are using. It doesn't matter if each one is slightly different but you will get better as you go along. If you complete each section before moving on to the next you will tend to repeat any mistake you have made. The important thing here is that this is a practice exercise

to get the correct shape into your head. It is not about fine detail and finish. Once you are happy with the shape you have achieved you can then concentrate on the finer detail and finish. The whole process should not be stressful – it is only a piece of waste wood.

In the next issue we will look at producing a study stick for the eye.



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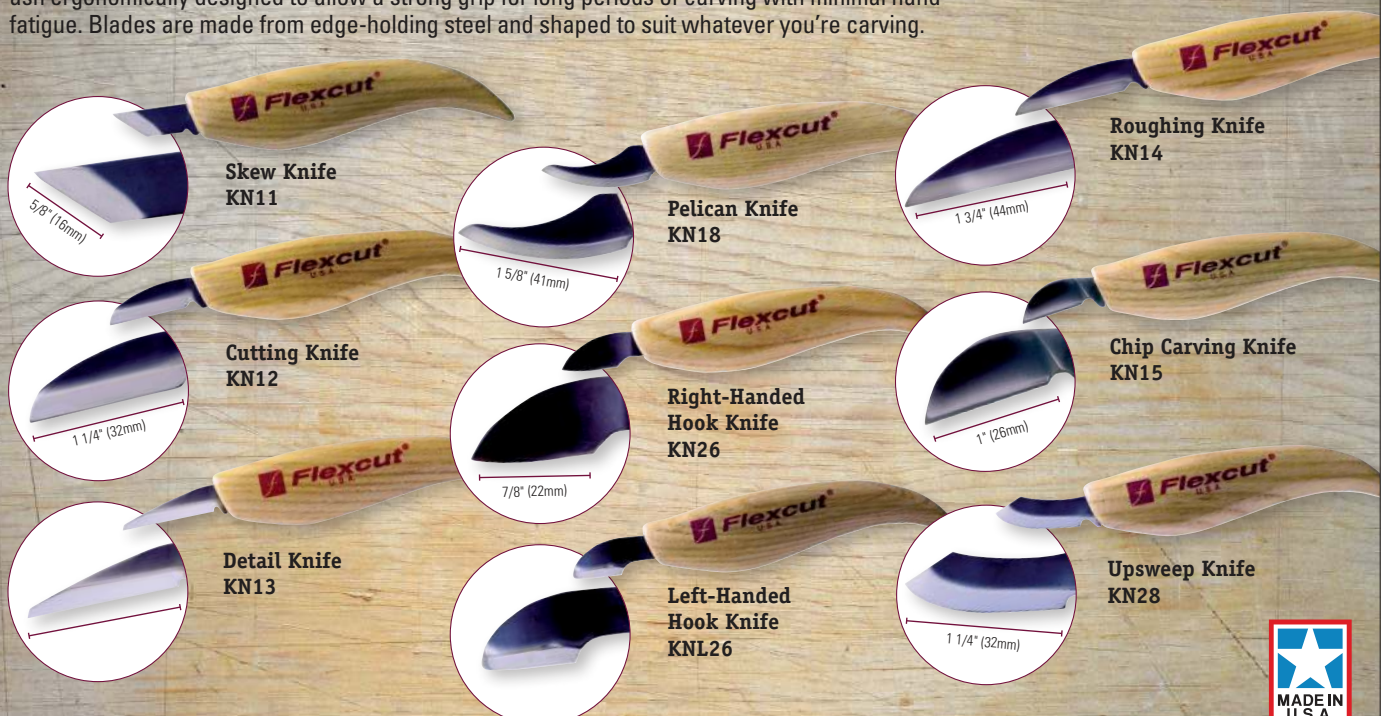
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Squares

In this extract from *Chip Carving: Geometric Patterns to Draw and Chip Out of Wood*, Tatiana Baldina provides a full guide to creating a dramatic twisting square pattern

In this pattern there is no need to draw perpendicular and diagonal lines, since they are not needed here. The main motif of the pattern are triangles that form squares, twisting anticlockwise.

Things you will need

Tools:

- 0.5mm mechanical pencil with H or HB lead

- Ruler

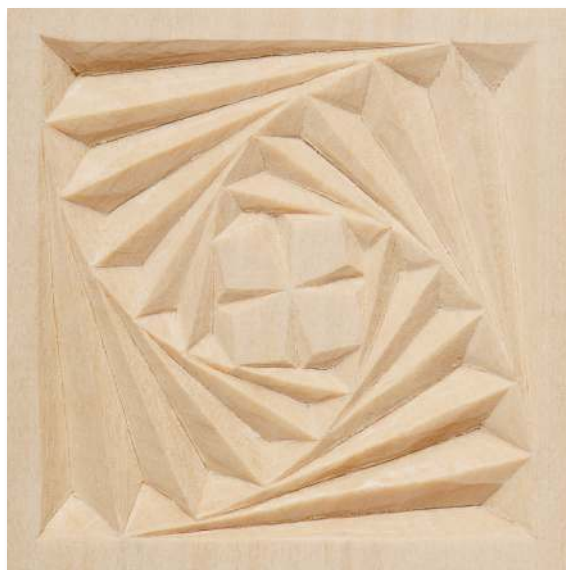
- Compass

- Skew knife

- Sandpaper or leather strips for sharpening

Materials:

- Basswood board (at least 100–120mm square and 15mm thick)



Drawing process

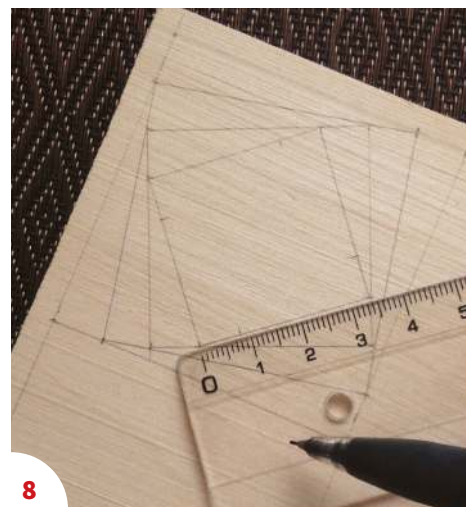
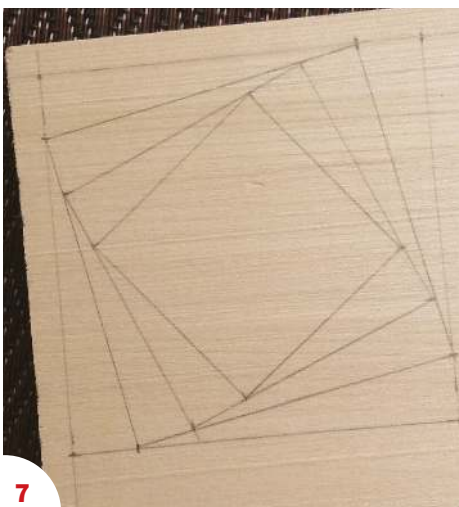
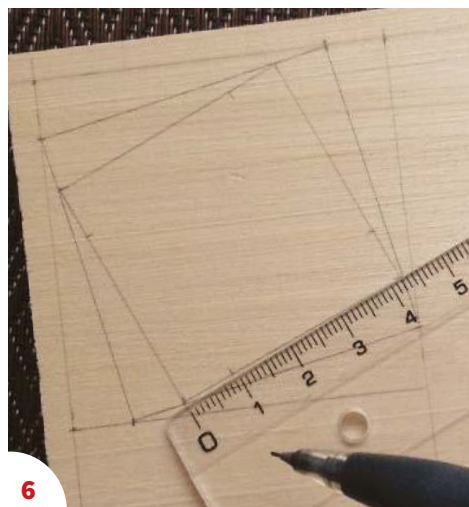
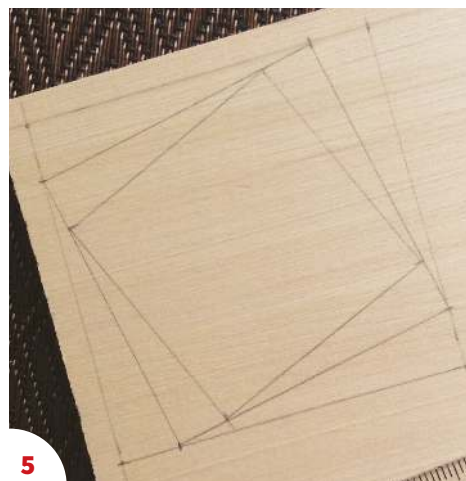
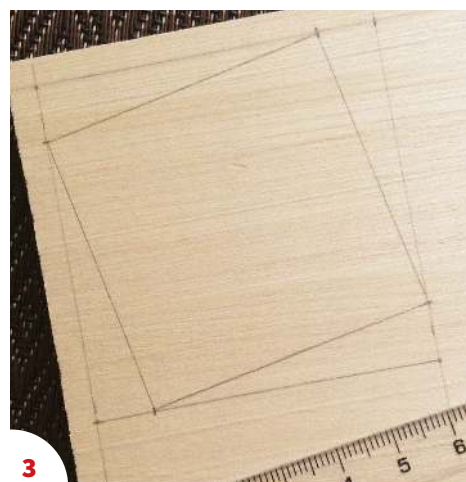
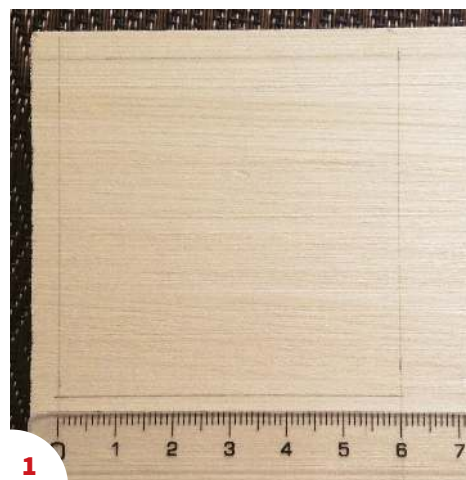
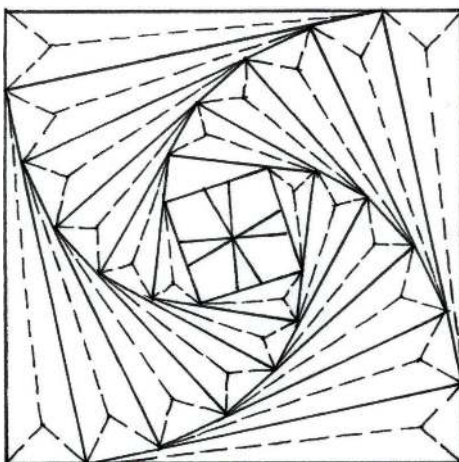
If you would prefer to transfer this pattern to the basswood board, use the template provided. Otherwise, if you prefer to draw the pattern directly on to the basswood board, follow the instructions below.

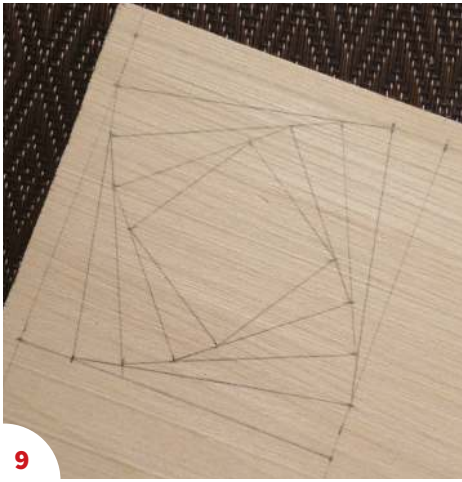
First, draw a square with 6cm sides **1**. Start marking the next dots: first, 1cm on the left side of the square from the top left corner down to the left side of the square; second, 1cm from the bottom left corner to the right side, on the bottom side of the square; third, 1cm from the bottom right corner up, on the right side of the square; fourth, 1cm from the top right corner to the left side, on the bottom side of the square **2**. All these steps – that is, the movement anticlockwise, only with different sizes – will need to be repeated several times.

Connect the resulting dots **3**. Next, on the resulting square, start to measure the following points: mark a dot 9mm from the top left corner down, on the left side of the previously drawn square **4**; then repeat all the steps with this size on the other sides **5**. Three squares are now ready (including the first) and you can begin the fourth. On the last square you drew, mark a dot 9mm starting from the top left corner down to its left side. Repeat all the steps on the other sides of the square **6**, then connect the dots together **7**.

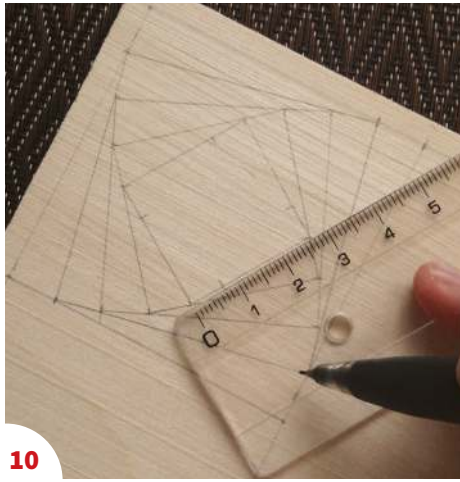
Now start the fifth square.

On the square just drawn, mark all the dots 8mm anticlockwise from the corners **8**, then connect them together **9**. For the sixth square, mark all the dots 7mm anticlockwise from the corners of the square on the square just drawn **10** and connect them together.





9

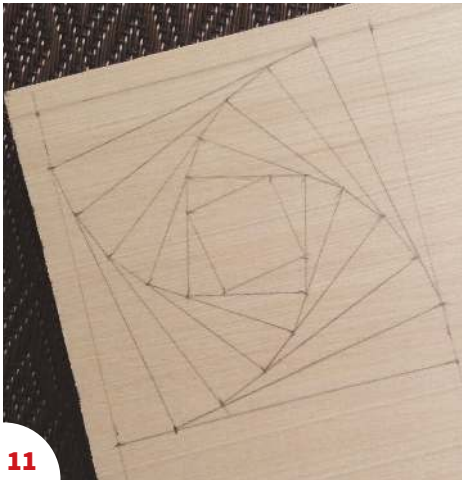


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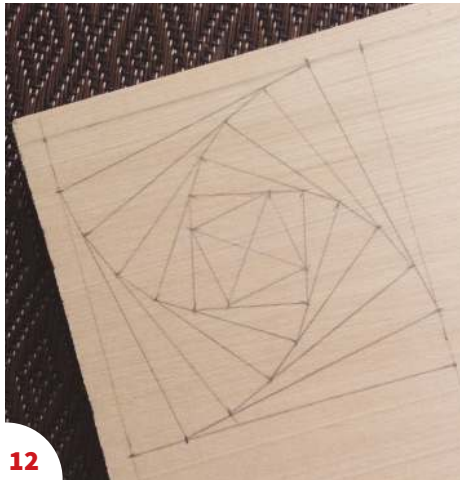
For the seventh (last) square, mark all the dots 6mm anticlockwise from the corners on the previous square, then connect them together **11**. Draw two diagonal lines that connect the opposite corners in the resulting last square **12**.

Now divide the sides of the last square in half, mark a dot, and then put dots 1.5mm to the right and left of it **13**. Connect these two points with the centre of the square **14**. Repeat these steps on the other sides of the square **15**.

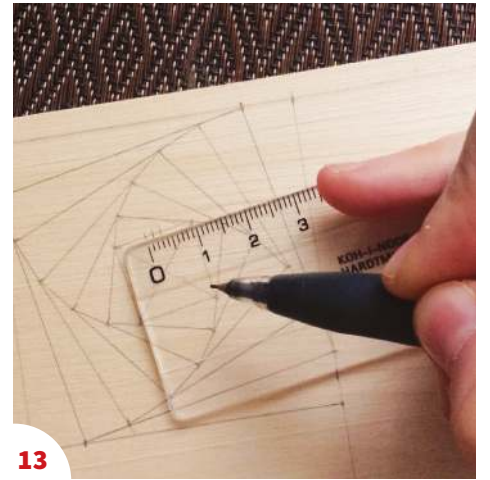
Now start drawing lines inside the triangles for additional stop cuts. Start with the first (outermost) square and the first triangle to the left inside it. Divide the widest place of the triangle in half **16** and connect this dot to the top of the triangle.



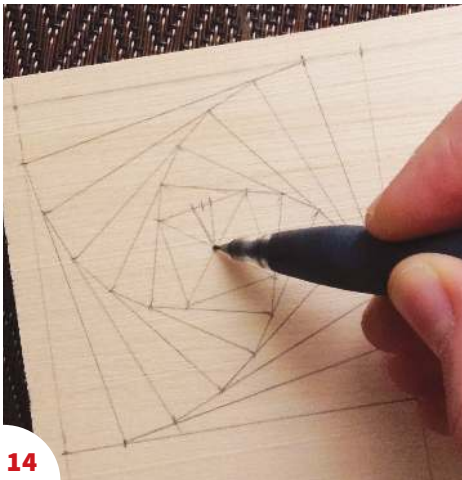
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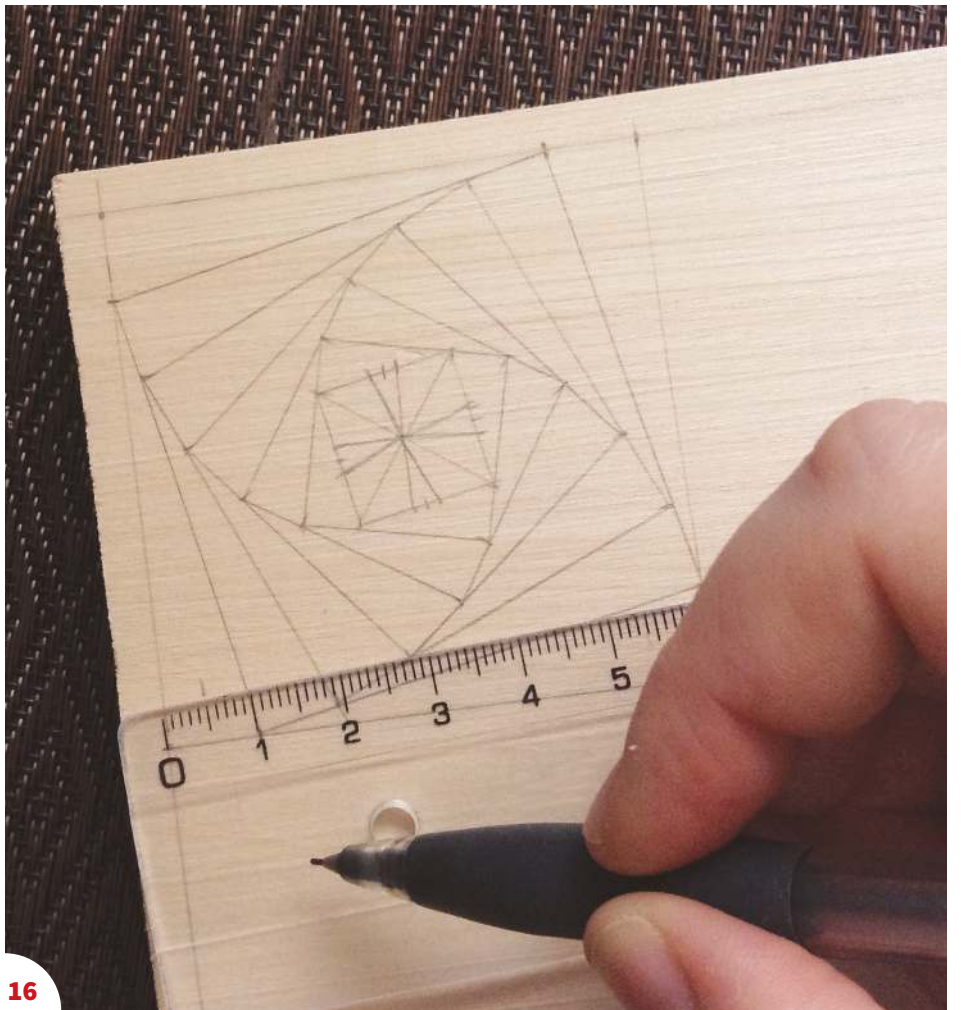
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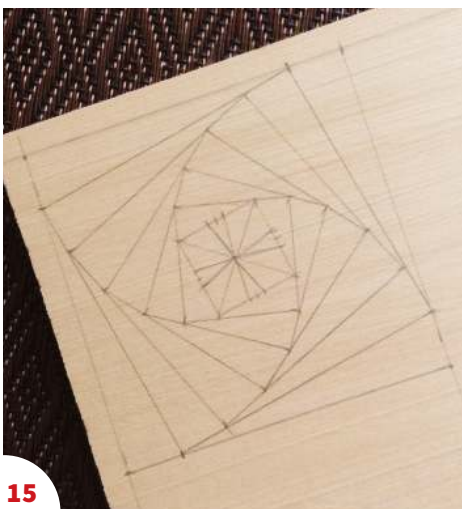
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16



15

Next, mark a dot 5mm from the base **17**, then connect it with the base of the triangle. Repeat steps **16** and **17** for the remaining triangles in the section, which follow a kind of spiral to the centre. For the first three triangles in the section, mark dots 5mm from the base for the additional stop cuts. For the remaining three, mark dots 4mm from the base **18**. When the first section is done, repeat steps **16**, **17** and **18** for the other three sections of triangles **19**. The pattern is ready for carving.

Carving process

First, make stop cuts inside all the triangles. Place the knife tip in the deepest place and lower the heel **20**. Keep the knife perpendicular to the surface of the wood to the top of the triangle, but avoid cutting the stop cuts right up to it **21**. Make cuts in the remaining triangles **21**.

Start carving the pattern, for example, from the bottom triangle that goes along the grain at the bottom of the square. Undercut the side that goes straight along the grain at an angle of 45 degrees, carefully checking when the knife goes smoothly through the grain (in my case, the knife went smoothly when undercutting away from me) **23**. Completely carve out the triangle, also at a 45-degree angle **24**. Then move to the left from this triangle, and undercut the base of the previous triangle; this will also go away from you (or towards you, depending on how you undercut the first chip) **25**.



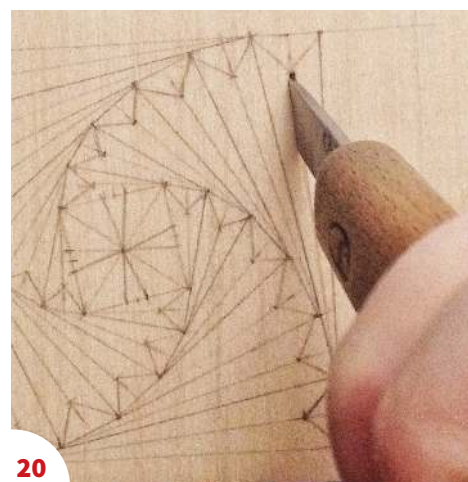
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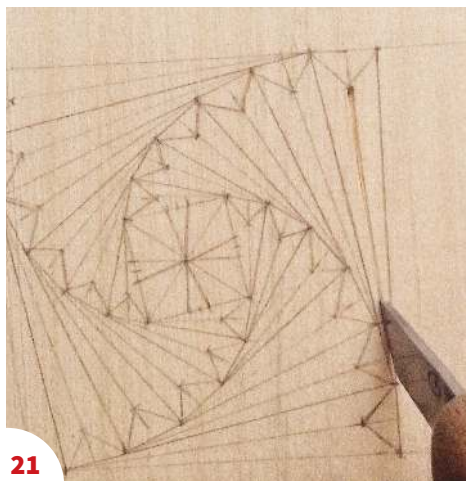
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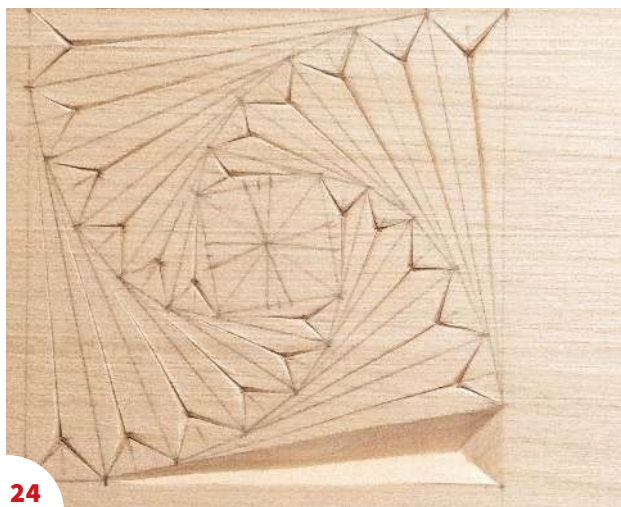
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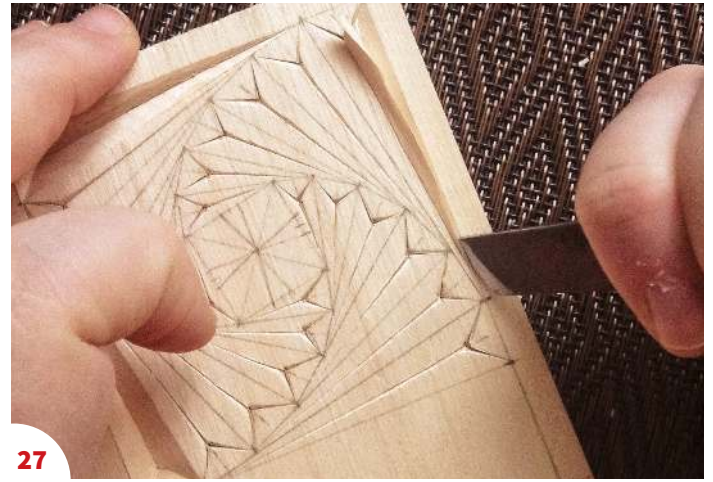
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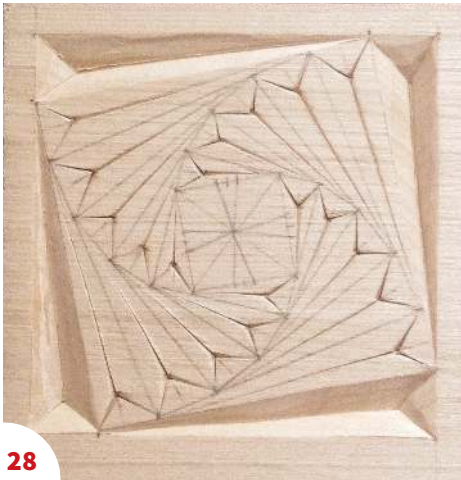
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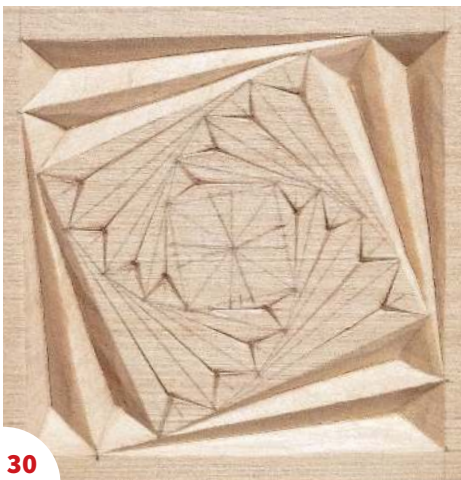
Carve this triangle completely **26**.

Now move to the top horizontal line of the square and undercut the side of the triangle that goes along the grain. The knife grip in your hand on this side will already be different from how you held the knife on the bottom triangle when undercutting its side, which also goes along the grain **27**. Carve out this triangle, then move to the right and undercut the base of the chip, then the whole triangle **28**.

The most difficult triangles are now carved. The rest will require you to simply hold your knife correctly when undercutting. Follow the direction of the wood grain and have confidence when making cuts. Begin to carve the triangles in an anticlockwise direction. Begin with their bases **29**, then carve the side that is connected with the triangle on the outer square, and lastly carve the third long side **30**. Moving anticlockwise, carve each triangle in turn until all the triangles are complete **31**.

Now cut out the very central pattern. Make perpendicular undercuts in the middle of each of the small triangles **32**, without bringing the tip of the knife right up to the point where these triangles are connected. Make cuts to the right and left of these stop cuts at an angle of 65 degrees **33**.

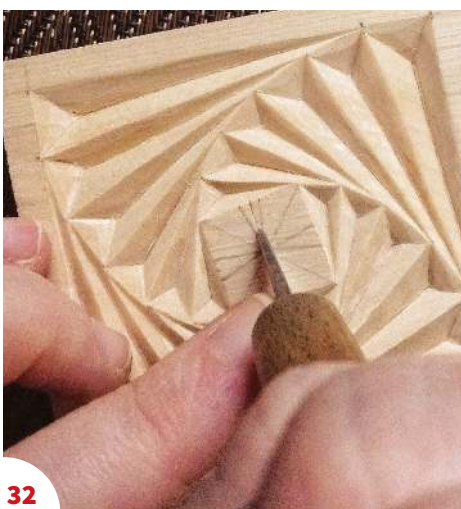
The carving is now complete **34**.



30



31



32



33



34

Chip Carving by Tatiana Baldina, published by GMC Publications, RRP £14.99, available online and from all good bookshops. ▶

Keeping busy

Mark Baker talks to Alan Denham, who is finding a lot to do in retirement



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALAN DENHAM

I started carving just over 30 years ago, when my wife told me I needed a little hobby to fill in the evenings. I was a teacher at the time, so I already had plenty of marking and lesson prep to do, but that was me told, so I went to a local evening class – and took to it like the proverbial duck to water. It kept me sane for many years – after a full day in the classroom, go home, take a chisel, a large mallet, and a piece of wood... and relieve the frustrations. I joined the BWA, attended a few meetings, and entered a few competitions – with limited

(but not zero) success. The tutor started us on a simple leaf relief, followed by an apple – a good choice of basic teaching material.

The first piece I tried without selecting from his 'project box' was a gryphon, from a sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) log. I am not particularly proud of it now, but I guess it wasn't bad for a beginner – and it won a small prize from a local tool shop. Working on it made me very aware of the problems of splitting in unseasoned wood.

When I retired, I spent more and more time doing odd jobs in wood, both turning

and carving – and eventually I volunteered at the Sunderland Maritime Heritage Centre. They needed a woodturner to make lots of cannon for a 10th scale ship (HMS *Venerable*, circa 1790) it is working on – but I also do a lot of carving for my own amusement, and occasionally sell through a local gallery. One of my great pleasures in life at present is to sit on the custodian's desk at the gallery and listen as people walk past saying things like 'Ooh, look at this – what a clever so and so' without knowing it is my work they are looking at. If I get the chance to talk to them

later, I will try to explain the time it takes to do this sort of work, and hence the prices. The ordinary public don't appreciate how much time is involved – they need to be educated.

I sometimes work in the round, but mostly I do relief and 'pierced plaque' styles of work – and that led me into mirror frames, which family and friends seem to appreciate.

Influences and challenges

That's difficult. I often wander round old churches, looking at carvings, particularly misericords and gargoyles, but I don't think they influence me much. And I read *Woodcarving* magazine – that gives me some interesting ideas. Otherwise, I pick up ideas from friends' photographs, or old greetings cards – pretty well anything.

Like everyone, I make mistakes and the most common is to cut too much off, of course. It often happens. But the other extreme means working so slowly that I would never finish anything. My greatest weakness in carving is poor finishing – I tend to give up before the piece gets the sort of polish I would like.

I need to improve my finishing skills. I probably ought to work on sharpening as well. And improve my 3-D skills – I mostly work in relief.

Experiences

I suppose a memorable one has to be my first sale. The BWA was running an exhibition to raise money for the Globe Theatre (yes, we are looking right back to the early 1990s).

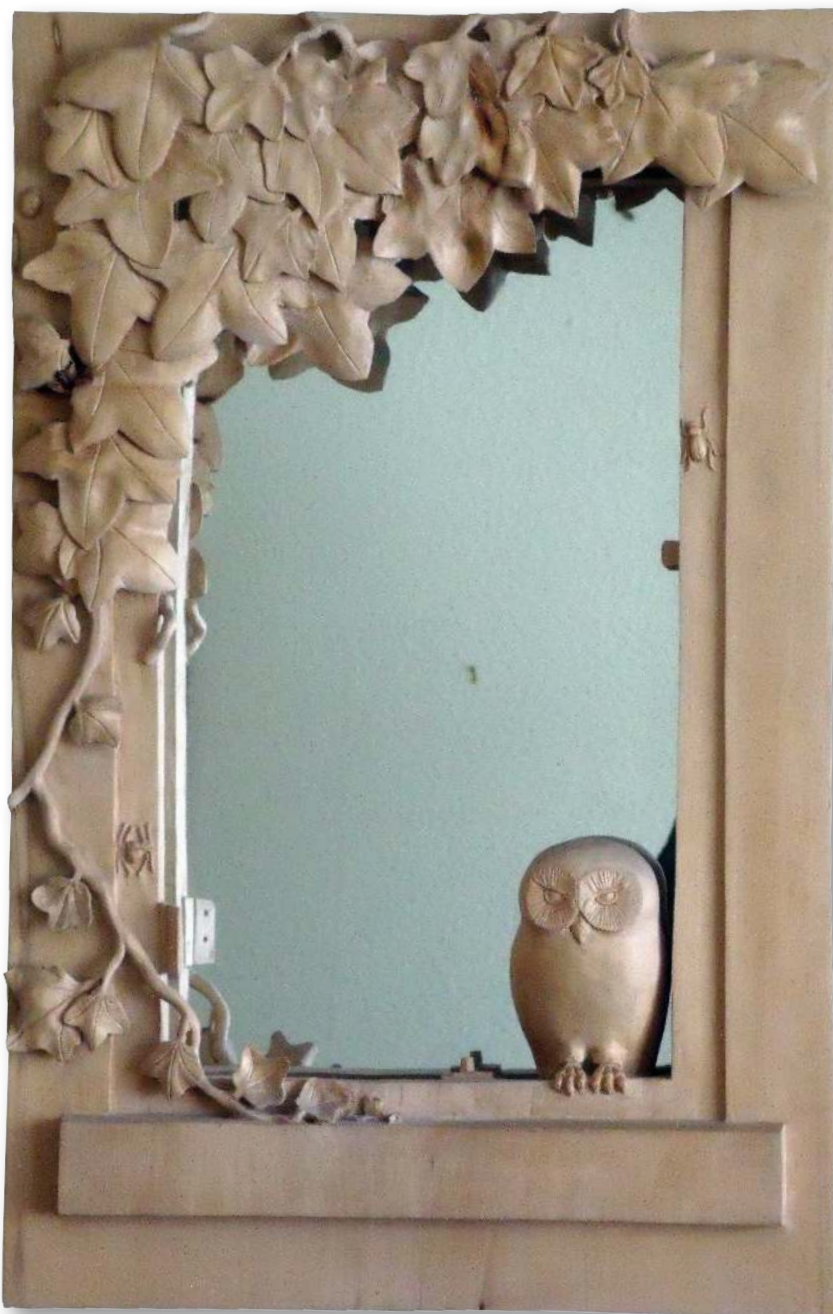
I did a relief of a scene inspired by *The Dream*, which didn't sell – but then they kept it going, at another location, so I tried again and did Puck ('I'll put a girdle round the Earth in 40 minutes') – a sort of super-human figure, zooming round a globe on a turned pedestal. That one sold, for what I then thought was quite a lot of money. I think it went to America.

What is your favourite type of woodcarving?

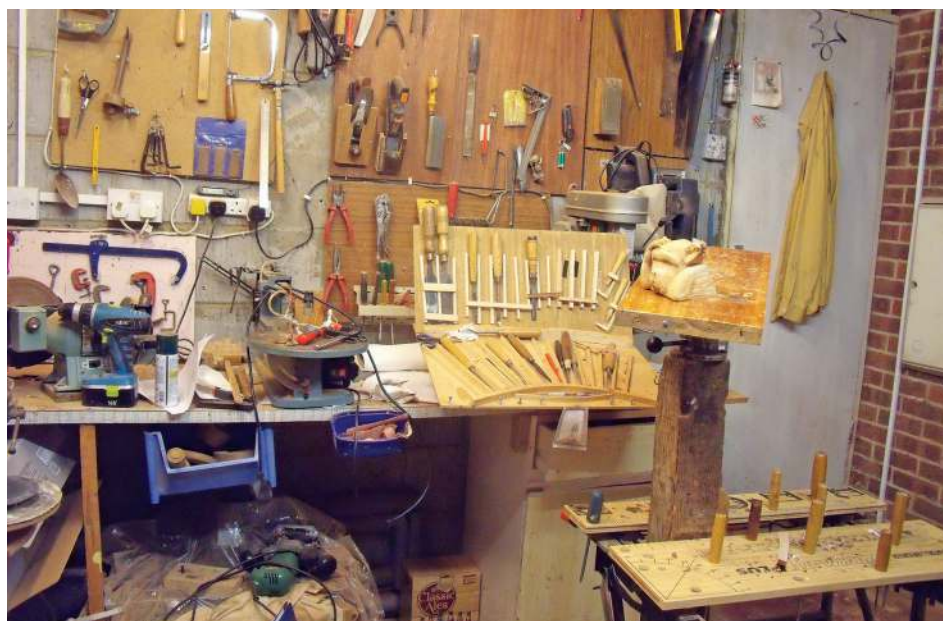
I have never given up on projects and transferred the items to the 'burn' pile. On the other hand, there are quite a few projects that I have 'paused' on and never gone back to they are still in an area of my workshop space.

One resulted from a competition set by *Woodcarving* on the theme *Denizens of the Deep* – late 1980s? I started a squid, in holly, partly because I fancied the title – *Illex* in *Ilex*. I still come across it from time to time, when I am tidying the shelves. It is about a third done.

My work is mostly relief. Not sure why, but it seems to suit me. I do a lot of mirror frames, but nothing simple – I like the frame to be a picture (or story, or joke) in its own right, with the mirror an integral part of it. That means I have done a few bats and dragons, and saved myself a bit of trouble by only having to carve one wing – the other one is in the mirror.



Owl mirror



My workshop

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

Now there's a question. Nice people, for a start – always friendly and helpful. But as regards the woods, and the pieces produced? I like to see wood with a bit of interesting grain, nicely polished – I don't normally go for painted work, so I suppose the decoy bird carvers will stop reading at this point. I think that's about it, I don't have any particular preferences for size, style, or subject. They all show skill, and love of the subject or the craft, and that's good enough for me.

Quick-fire questions

What are the biggest differences in carving from when you started?

Another difficult question. The range of small power tools has improved considerably over the years – I now use burrs far more than I used to.

The best advice you've ever received?

When power sanding, wear a dust mask. This was difficult advice at first, because I get hayfever, my nose runs, and I have trouble wearing a cheap nose/mouth filter mask. Once I got a proper full-face



Mermaid chain



Claire's dragon

helmet mask everything got a lot easier, though it was expensive. I now think they are worth it, and damn the cost.

What is your favourite piece of equipment?

I suppose it has to be the bandsaw, which saves me a lot of time and effort. Otherwise, it would be some of the gouges I have bought at car boot fairs, many of which are substantially older than me (and in better working order).

Any advice for other carvers?

See what I wrote above about dust masks. And after that, do what you enjoy, and keep doing it. I am in the fortunate position of not needing to sell my work – but I do, because I get a real buzz from sitting in the art gallery watching visitors

go around, and somebody suddenly saying 'Look at this. What a clever bloke' or words to that effect. That's worth more than the money, to me. If you can develop that attitude, you will be happy.

Meet other carvers, swap ideas (or occasionally, friendly challenges). Most people don't mind having their ideas 'borrowed', unless you are seriously cutting into their income at craft fairs etc. – and they will tell you before things get really bad. The carving community are a friendly, helpful bunch, with lots of advice to give. You just have to be part of it.

They now know that I carve and turn and I keep getting jobs keep coming in. Whoever said retirement was a chance to take life easy? That just ain't true. Okay, now I am off back to the workshop.



Topologist

Recent project

Last August, while having a few days away with family, I chanced to visit Burton Constable Hall, where there was a touring exhibition of music stands, carved to celebrate Chippendale's 300th anniversary. Nice exhibition. Again by chance, when I got back from that holiday I went into the Heritage Centre and asked one of the senior men what needed doing. He pointed me at a 'lectern' that held some notices and said: 'It's a bit grotty, can you improve it?'

Well, he was right, it was a bit grotty. It was basically a floorplate made from a piece of plywood about 300 x 400mm with a piece of round handrail screwed to it like a pole, and another piece of plywood screwed on at an angle at the top. So, having just seen all those nice carved music stands, I felt inspired – but it was going to be a carving job, not turnery.

The making of the lectern

Since this was the Maritime Heritage Centre, I kept the piece of handrail, it looked a bit like a mast. And I made a 'sail', carved bellying out, full of the wind, from a piece of limewood (*Tilia x europaea*) about 400 by 350 by 60mm.

I curved the front in all directions, roughly

'doming' it away from the centre – but while the top had to curve right down for near enough the full thickness, the sides could only go halfway back, and the bottom not quite all the way back – look at the attachment points on a sail, and you will understand why. I had to leave a couple of blocks on the side for attachment to the workbench while I worked on the logo.

The Heritage Centre logo can be found on its website but I missed out the bridges and the words – sometimes there is not enough reason to make that much trouble for yourself – and I took just the ship. I cut it into the sail then filled the cuts with brass resin mix – like cold-cast bronze, but very heavily loaded with brass powder. There followed an awful lot of sanding down, wearing a very good dust mask.

Creating the various elements involved

Dowel was used for the spars. I thought about tapering like a real yard-arm, and decided I wouldn't be able to get it to look right, so just rounded the ends and stained them. Then came the rope work holding the sail to the yards. Again, making them look like rope was not something that seemed appropriate for this job – plain, clean lines were more important

than realism. I worked out where they should go, scalloped the edges of the sail, but didn't glue them in place yet.

The next job – hollowing the back of the sail – required thought about the weight and strength. Too heavy, and the whole lectern will fall forwards; too light or thin and it would be too delicate. In the end I cut away an awful lot of wood with a rotary carving disc in an angle grinder, and tidied up the result with a gouge. And not until that was finished could I cut off the blocks that I had left on the sides for screwing to the bench.

A piece of cedar (*Cedrus* spp.) from an old drawer base was tidied up and used for the sloping book rest section of the lectern. A triangle of cedar was used for strength, temporarily screwing the various parts together – and start to worry about the base.

My original thoughts had involved a ship's prow as the base, with either thin dowel cut to resemble rigging, or actual rope, but I was persuaded to make an anchor. It is made from an old mahogany doorstep that was lying around in the workshop, built up on the flukes to provide the necessary thickness. A mortise and tenon joint holds the shank alongside a dollop of epoxy resin. It was then a case of fixing it all together and applying a finish. ▀



The lectern

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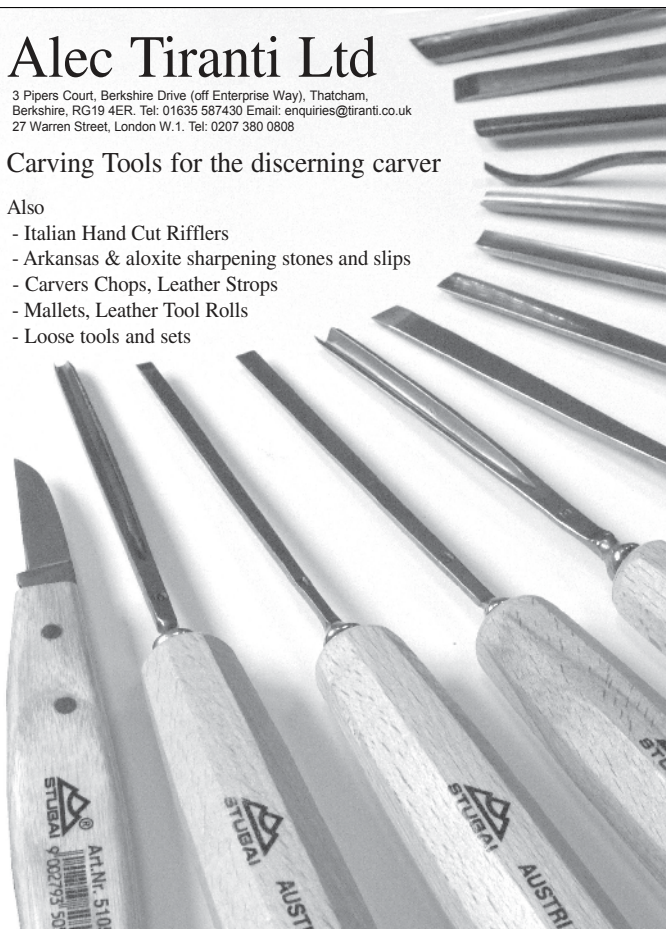
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Easter chicks

Terry Nokes makes these cute creatures for a table decoration



The Easter chicks in this project were made from a short length of 50 x 50mm American basswood, which is available in large hobby shops in the UK in 300mm lengths – enough for five chicks. Basswood has a slightly lower density than lime, our English equivalent. But either wood species would make a good choice.

This is a beginner whittling project and mainly knife based. So, for ease, I have designed the chicks to look straight ahead, making them roughly symmetrical and without the additional carving of any feet.

More experienced carvers could greatly improve this design by changing the posture, twisting and/or tilting the head to achieve

many different poses. This table decoration project is for a local pre-school, but just mounting the chicks on a log or a patch of artificial grass would look good too. Just imagine a multiple display of differently posed chicks – it would look quite outstanding.

I have an engineering background and this tutorial might be influenced by my own carving approach, instruction and overall method. This was an enjoyable project, and would be an ideal first project for a beginner. Although I sealed it with linseed oil before painting, this could have been left out as there were no worries if the paint bled down the wood pores.

Things you will need

Tools:

- Bench vice
- Bandsaw
- Electric drill
- Square/compasses
- Pointed bradawl
- Dremel
- 1.5mm twist drill
- 4mm diamond burr

- Carving/whittling knife

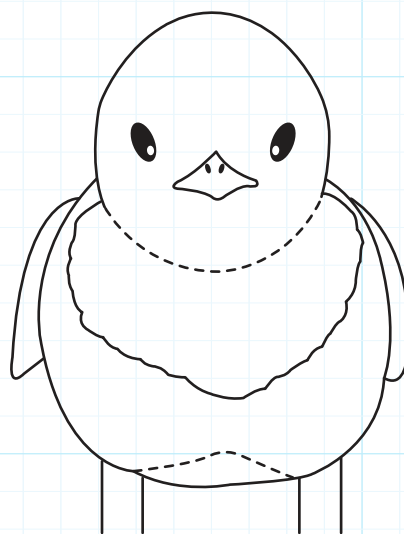
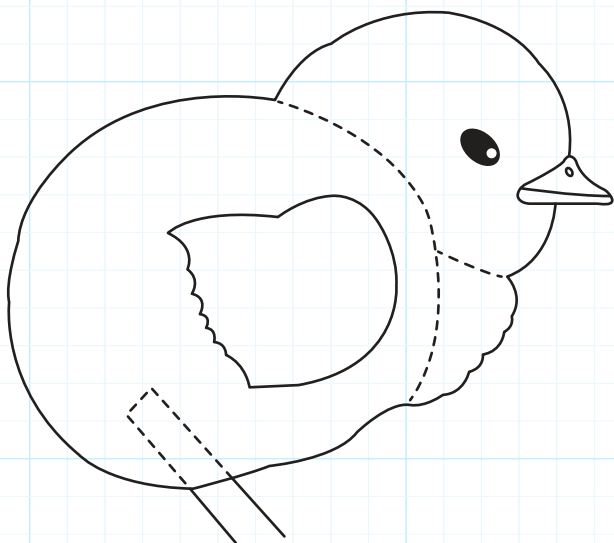
Materials:

- Carving timber blank 50x50mm (2 x chicks 120mm long)
- 4mm dowel
- 4mm black glass eyes
- PVA glue
- Abrasives 320 grit
- Boiled linseed oil

- Acrylic paints
- Finishing – satin aerosol spray

Safety:

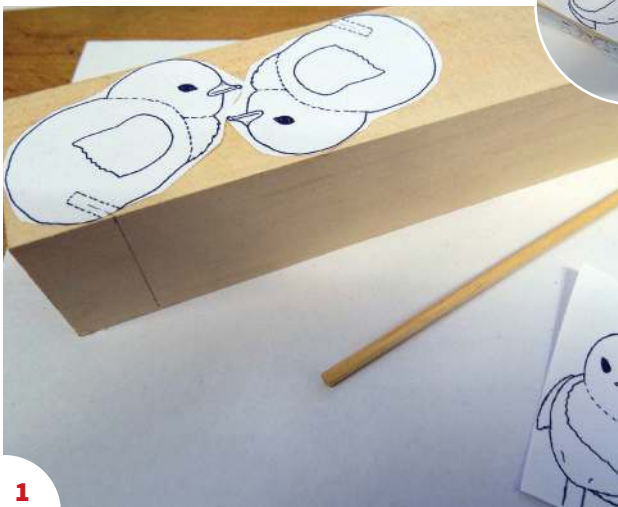
- Cut 5 resistant gloves
- Dust mask
- Disposable nitrile gloves
- Leather thumb guard
- Blue cohesive bandage (sports use)



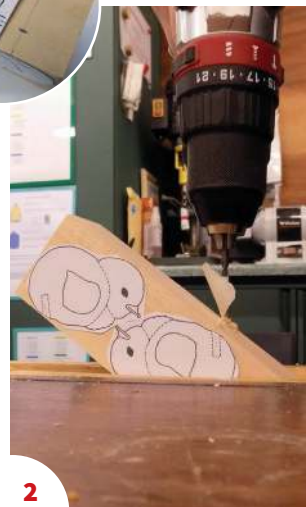
Length 62mm
Width 42mm
Height 48mm
4mm dowel @ 50 degrees

1 Prepare and cut your carving blank to 120mm in length x 50mm x 42mm. Next size and print off the paper templates then, with a glue stick, adhere them to the blank so the grain aligns with the beak as shown. For increased safety at this stage, the 4mm leg holes were also drilled at 50°. The holes were located by squaring the leg centres round as displayed.

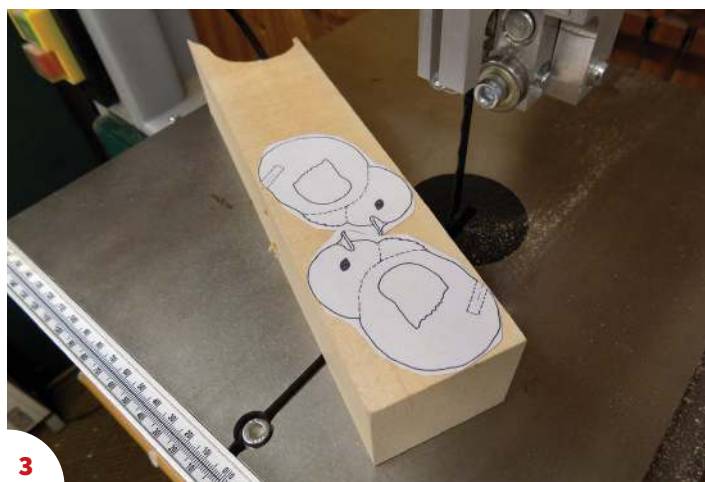
2 Next bradawl punch and drill the two 4mm leg holes at 20mm apart for the legs made of wooden dowel. Perhaps instead of measuring the 20mm just fold the template as shown inset. Make a temporary depth guide by wrapping masking tape around the twist drill.



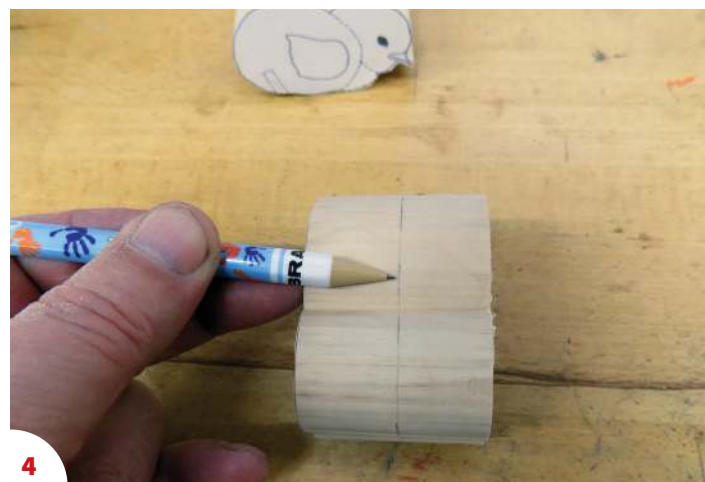
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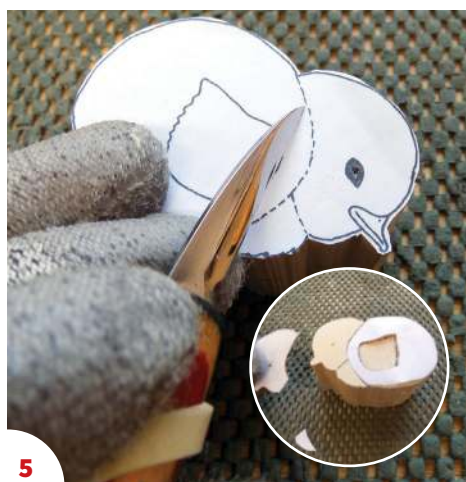
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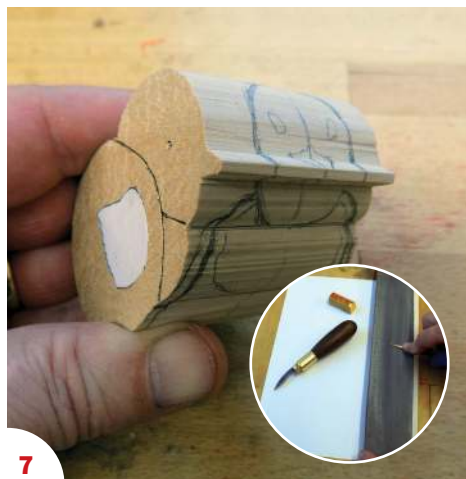
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3 Cut out carving blanks on a bandsaw. I normally cut very close to the outline, but around the small beak I added some additional waste.

4 For this project example our chick is looking straight ahead, so draw a centreline around the whole piece. Like in the picture, try running a pencil line all round, using your index finger as a guide. Next, with a pointed bradawl, punch the eye centre.

5 Place on anti-slip matting and transfer the neck and wing from the design by cutting through the paper template and marking the wood. TIP: If possible gently peel the template away and use it on the other side (note inset), or draw the wing and neck line design by hand.

6 Draw the front profile on to the blank – folding the template may help.



7



8

7 Picture of progress. Now you're ready to carve. Before we start, ensure the knife is sharp and remember to periodically strop. The strop shown is homemade, just a leather strip bonded, suede side up, to a flat piece of wood. There are many different abrasive stropping compounds available to dress the leather. The knife used today was actually my very first knife, purchased second-hand a long time ago, and made by Warren Tools. This blade has a curved cutting edge.

Carving

8 Safety gloves with high cut resistance are essential when hand carving small items. Here my gloved thumb is fixed, so the pivot point of the knife action. Sports bandage grip is normally coloured blue and may help too.

9 Make your cut as shown with the grain direction – notice the big chips that are splitting off. This is when the timber grain has an advantage, as roughing out time is quicker. Keep an eye on the bradawl hole – before it vanishes completely put it back. It's important to ensure the bradawl is vertical so template design stays accurate

10 In this cut the knife edge is also being twisted to create this scoop cut.



9



10



11



12



13



14

11 Following the curve of the chicks back, make a stop cut as shown, then (inset) cut downwards to remove a chip. Continue to work around the back of the neck on both sides. Next round over the head top. Our main centreline is our only guide and should remain until the end, but if for any reason it's removed, then pencil it back in.

12 Continue to round over the top of the head to the centreline. This is the pull cut being illustrated. Use a thumb guard or additional glove.

13 This upward cut starts by first scraping into the cut with the knife tip. Inset – replace centreline. Here the cut is made by pushing the blade on its blunt back.

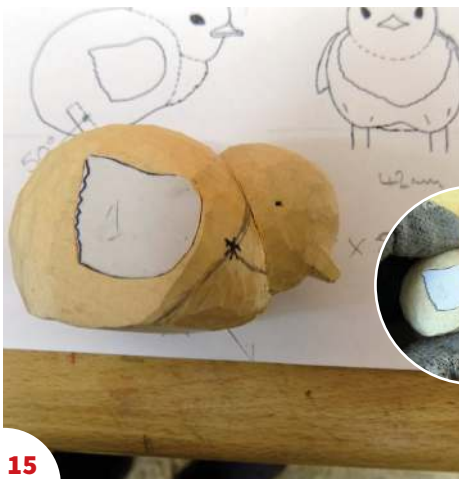
14 Continue to round over the back, and extend round to the front.

15 Next note this corner, highlighted with a star redrawn from the template, is part of the head, so remove this waste.

16 The chick has a fluffy chest, blend in this area.

17 Next remove some waste from around the wings, and continue to round over the bottom to the centreline underneath.

18 Progress so far.



15



16



17



18



19



20

19 For the eyes, we need to mark out both sides for a scoop cut area. First draw a line between the eye and beak.

20 Draw out the area to be removed as shown on both sides, ensuring the two eye holes are symmetrical. Double check this with callipers/compass by making various measurements from the original centreline. When happy, your marking out should look like the inset picture.

21 Make a scoop cut to remove this waste, then repeat on the other eye. The carving is nearing the end. Final check is to roll the carving around in front of your eyes, along centreline and head axis. Make any final adjustments.



21



22

22 To insert the glass eyes, drill a 1.5mm hole with a twist drill, then create an eye socket with a 4mm diamond ball burr. Take time here and keep periodically checking the socket hole with the glass eye. Do not glue the eye in place at this time. The burr will get clogged up at times – to clean these, there are rubber blocks available, a bit like an eraser or a small brass wire brush.

23 The textured finish is just multiple knife cuts that have been gently sanded with 400 grit foam-backed abrasive. Once gently sanded glue in the eyes.

Finishing

24 Apply a finish of your choice. For this example I sealed the chick with boiled linseed oil first, then, once dry, the chicks were painted with small tubes of artist's acrylic paint. A few layers were applied for good coverage. Any wet acrylic paint over the glass eyes was easily removed with a clean brush and kitchen towel.

25 The chicks were then mounted on some scrap plywood for painting and spraying. The satin finish was applied with an aerosol spray can. Spray an even coat all over. This is quickly touch dry in just a few minutes.

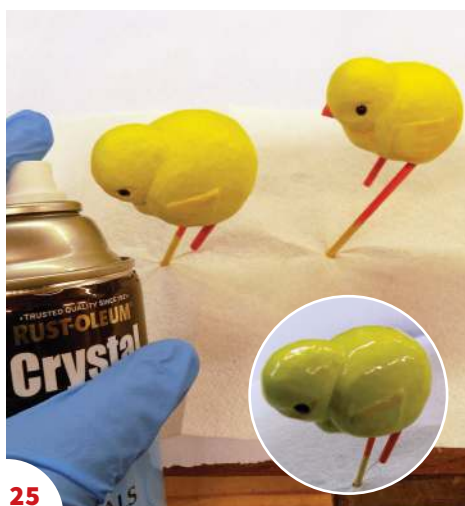
26 The finished Easter chicks. ▶



23



24



25



26

Knife grips for carving wood

Adrian Lloyd, in the first in a series of articles, explores traditional carving techniques



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ADRIAN, MEACHAN AND HUW LLOYD

In this series of articles we will focus on some simple, and most importantly safe, knife grips and cuts for carving wood. Most of these will build on our last article, using skewing and slicing to increase the efficiency of the cutting action. In this article we will be sharing some techniques that are designed for rapid removal of stock, using knife grips that concentrate on cutting away from the body. The next article will be focused on grips that are designed for more detailed work and involve grips that are designed to safely cut towards the body, and then the final article of the series will demonstrate using smaller knives to make finishing cuts and add decorative details.

We are purposely using long pieces of wood that are square or rectangular in cross section to demonstrate these knife grips and the cuts they make. These practice pieces are often used in the Swedish 'slöjd' system of carving and are known as 'try' or 'test' sticks.

The knife we are using in the article is a standard Mora of Sweden Morakniv 106 carving knife. It has been hollow ground using the Hewn & Hone slloyd jig on a wheel grinder and then honed using our range of adhesive-backed abrasive papers to produce a razor-sharp yet durable cutting edge. I am writing the article from the position of being a right-handed carver, that is I hold the knife in my right hand and the piece I'm working on in my left.

This article will show how, using a variety of different knife grips, major muscle groups can be put into play that can make this sort of stock removal seem effortless when watching an expert. Often students will assume this is because their teacher's knife is especially sharp – although it pains me to say it, this is not the case. Good technique will trump a laser-sharp knife every day, especially as the sharpness of a blade is always degrading while you cut. The fewer cuts you make to achieve your goal the longer your blade will stay sharp.

There are a range of different knife grips or grasps that we use when carving, from powerful wasting strokes away from the body to more precise cuts made towards the body. Done correctly all cuts can be made safely, but there is no substitute for seeking instruction from a suitably qualified or experienced teacher.

The knife grips have been passed down through generations of carvers, and it is likely that, wherever in the world craftspeople are using knives to carve wood, they will always be using similar grips. This is because they are proven to be not only safe – done correctly – but also efficient for the task in hand.

Safety

Keep your carving knives sharp. A dull knife requires more force to achieve a lesser quality

finish, and with more force comes a decreased degree of control of cut.

Some carvers choose to wear a Kevlar anti-slash/cut resistant glove on their workpiece holding hand to protect against a slicing cut. These will not protect fully, but will mitigate some of the damage from a slicing cut. Wearing a glove, while offering some protection against an errant cut or slip, can restrict your feel for what you are doing and may lead to complacency and the development of poor technique. Many green wood carvers do not wear gloves, but there are many knife carvers working with both green and seasoned wood who do. The choice to wear or not wear one is yours alone to make. But always remember, your personal safety is important so make the right choices for you.

For cuts towards the chest, some choose to wear a thick apron or protective bib, some of which are leather. Others are happy to gradually wear holes in their most worn work shirts.

A leather patch tied with some twine will help to maintain the life of your fancy suit trouser legs.

Even if you are wearing gloves, whenever you are using sharp tools, always have a first aid kit to hand with different sized plasters and Steristrips (adhesive wound closures) and make sure you know how to use them.

The knife grips

There are many different knife grips, maybe about 15 in common use, and they are designed to achieve different outcomes towards completion of a project. Some carvers adapt the knife grips to suit a particular application, although this should only be attempted by experienced carvers who understand the way their knife moves in relation to their body position and the piece being worked. People develop favourites depending on the type of work they commonly do, and will consequently find some challenging to perform if they are not practised regularly. In this series of articles we hope to share some of the most widely used grips, all with positional safety built in.

When practising any of these knife grips and the cuts they make, try to execute them as slowly as you can, and really focus on your body position and the position of both the knife handle and the cutting edge while making the cut. This will not only encourage you to improve your technique as you practise but will also help to ensure that every cut is as efficient as it can be.

The power strokes

Power strokes are used to remove large amounts of material effectively, efficiently and safely. Carving down the grain with a lot of power does offer less control as there is no natural or material stop – the cut finishes when the knife exits the workpiece into free space.

If there is more material to be removed than the knife grips shared here achieve effectively then the carving axe is the tool you should be using.

Forehand grip

The forehand grip is a powerful wasting grip and is one of the most important and fundamental grips when carving with a knife. It is most safe when performed sitting down, with plenty of space and nothing in front of the knife as it is leaving the workpiece. The workpiece or the hand holding the workpiece should be supported on the leg, towards the knee with the cuts being made out to the side and away from the body rather than between the legs.

The knife should be held in a fist-like grip with the spine towards and the edge



Forehand perpendicular – observer's view



Forehand perpendicular – observer's view



Forehand skew – observer's view



Forehand grip with backstop – carver's view

away from the body. The bevel is first laid flat on the workpiece and then angled to engage the cutting edge. The cut is made by pushing towards the floor with the arm.

There are a couple of variations with the cut – with the knife edge perpendicular, or at right angles to the direction of cut, or with the knife edge skewed with tip trailing and the edge at an angle to the direction of cut, making a cut using the whole edge of the blade, from hilt to tip.

To add further power and control, place the end of the workpiece on a block or stump, first ensuring that it is clean and will not damage the cutting edge.

Drop shoulder forehand grip

To make even more powerful wasting strokes the forehand grip can be used in a slightly different fashion. This technique is often used to save reaching for the axe again when more material is needing to be removed. Rather than using the muscles in the arm to push through the cut, this variant uses body position and the dropping of the shoulder to waste large amounts of wood quickly. This cut is executed in the same way as the forehand grip above, except that both the wrist and elbow are locked firm, the shoulder is raised and then dropped, driving the knife through the workpiece to the floor.



Drop shoulder perpendicular – observer's view



Drop shoulder skew – observer's view



Drop shoulder – carver's view

Chest lever grip

The chest lever, or ‘chicken wings’ as some carvers refer to it, is another extremely powerful grip that cuts away from the body. It not only uses the arms as levers, but brings into play the enormous strength of the muscles in our shoulders and upper back while working against the natural fulcrum of an expanding chest. This is a naturally safe cut as it is made with the edge facing outwards and moving away from the body but, similar to the forehand grip, there must be clear space in front and to the side when the knife exits the workpiece.

The knife should be held with the edge facing upwards towards the back of the hand. The workpiece is held in exactly the same fashion with the other hand. Our palms are up with both the workpiece and the knife-holding hand being supported with the stomach, abdomen or chest. The arms and the heels of both hands are rolled on our body while making the cut from the hilt to the tip of the knife. The hands are moved apart while the elbows tuck in but the heels of the hand remain firmly against the body. The cut is safe because our arms stay tucked against the body.

For finer work or on smaller items the thumb on the workpiece-holding hand can be used with a push on the back of the knife, transferring the fulcrum from our chest to the thumb. This variation also offers far greater control but with decreased power.

Reverse forehand grip

This is very much a planing cut and excels at producing long, clean facets along the length of the piece being worked. The knife is held in the hand, palm up, with the edge away from the body and the tip towards the body. A good way to ensure the knife is in the correct position in the hand is to hold it as you would for a forehand grip – grasp the spine of the blade with your holding hand and simply rotate your knife-holding hand from palm down to palm up. The piece being worked is supported on top of the thigh or the knee of the same side of the body as the knife holding hand, and then the cut is made as the knife-holding hand slides along the leg away from the body. The thumb or the index finger of the knife-holding hand is placed on or around the end of the handle, knife edge skewed with trailing tip, and the cut is made using the whole length of the blade from hilt to tip.



Chest lever – observer's view



Chest lever – carver's view



Chest lever – observer's view



Chest lever – carver's view



Reverse forehand – carver's view



Reverse forehand – observer's view



Reverse forehand finger – observer's view



Reverse forehand thumb – observer's view

Knee brace

This technique is performed exactly as the name says. The knife is held in a fist-like grip, much the same as in the forehand grip. The spine of the knife is then placed in front and against the knee of the leg opposite that of the knife-holding hand, thus ensuring that both the edge and the tip of the knife are pointing away from the body. Just below the kneecap of a bent leg there is a natural 'hollow' before the top of the shin bone starts. This is where the spine of the knife is placed. An easy safety check here is that if the tip of the knife is pointing towards a leg you are using the wrong knee. The piece being worked is then carved by moving the holding hand back along the side of the leg towards the body. A great deal of force can be generated as the workpiece moves while the knife remains braced and stationary, yet this cut can also be performed very slowly and deliberately, taking the finest of shavings.

Off the knee

Similar to the knee brace in that the knife remains stationary while the workpiece is drawn towards you, this cut is particularly suited to creating fine, straight bevels. Instead of bracing the knife against the front of the knee the knife-holding hand simply rests on top of the knee, the same knee as previously, and the workpiece is pulled by sliding the holding hand along the side of the leg. This cut is far less supported and is suited to much finer work.

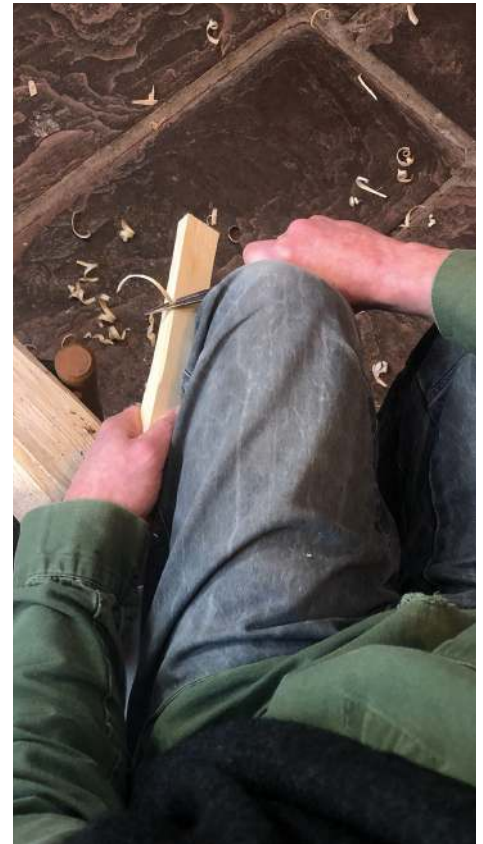
If you have enjoyed this article then I encourage you to source some nice, straight-grained hardwood, sharpen your knives and get practising. Alder, willow, aspen, poplar or birch are all great timbers for beginners to work with, and should be relatively easy to source while still green before they dry out and become more challenging to work.

And remember, all of these grips are safe to use when done correctly, if it feels awkward and unsafe that is usually an indication that something about your technique isn't quite spot on. Always be aware where the edge and the tip of your knife will end up once you've completed your intended cut, if there's something in the way then you need to consider what it is your body is doing to make it like that.

Be careful and safe, and next time we'll look at how we can work towards ourselves without cutting ourselves. ▀



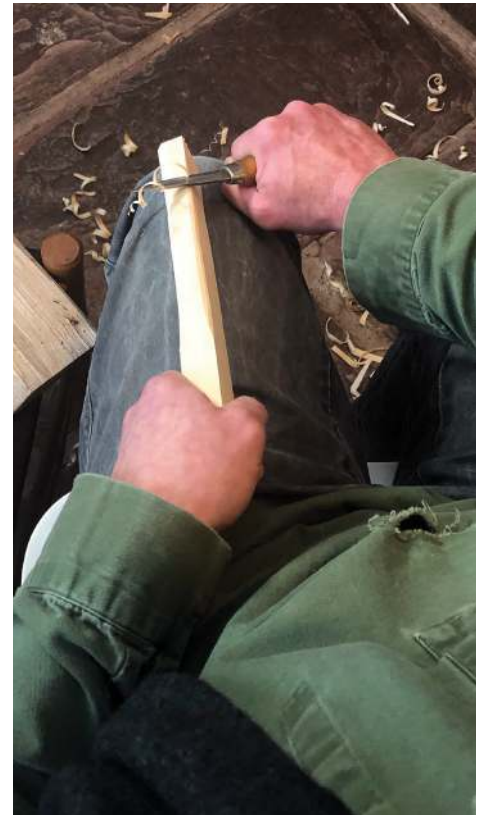
Knee brace – observer's view



Knee brace – carver's view



Off the knee – observer's view



Off the knee – carver's view



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

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

Creating a flower with very few tools

Renato Mazzucco uses the bas-relief technique to good effect



PHOTOGRAPHS BY RENATO MAZZUCCO

In this article we will see how to make a simple decoration, a bas-relief flower that could be used to adorn parts of a piece of furniture. Its design stems from a thrifty choice of the necessary tools, allowing even a beginner to approach this

technique without spending much on tools. Carving the simplest decoration is a compromise using the gouges available and the shapes in the design – inevitably you will end up adding more specific gouge shapes to your collection.

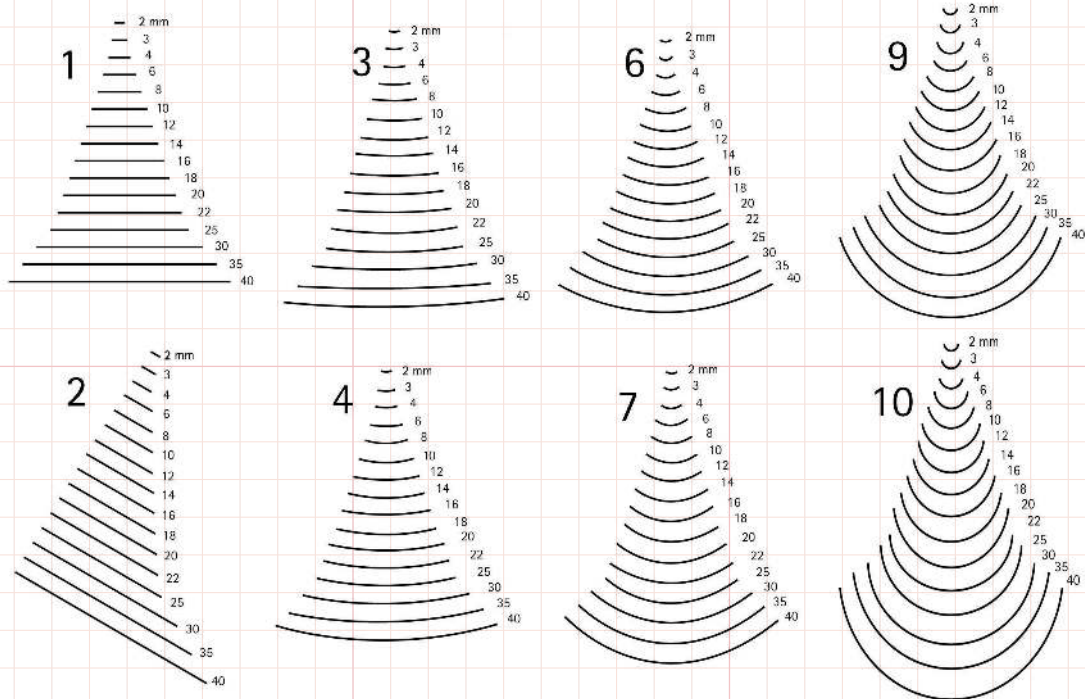
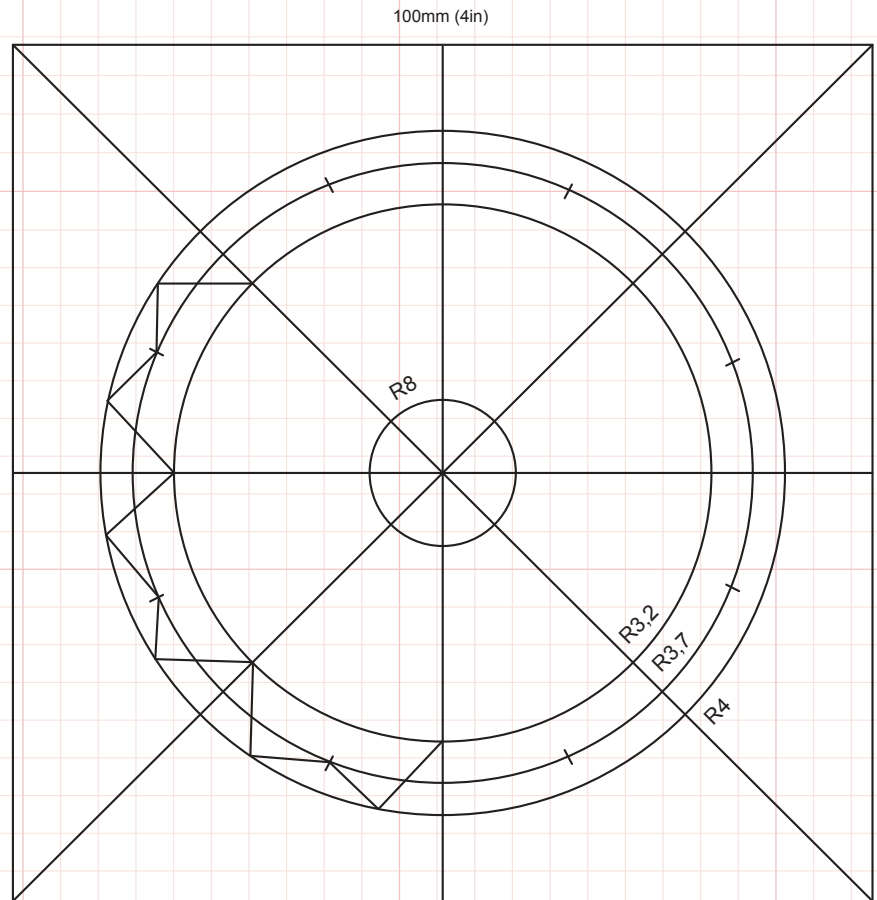
Things you will need

Tools:

- No.5, 12mm, No.6, 12mm & No.11, 3mm
- 8mm and one slightly wider flat chisel
- Mallet

A schematic design of the flower allows us to reach the final shapes to suit the curvature and dimensions of the gouges available. When tracing out, mark which gouge will be used for each detail.

The flower design starts from a square divided into eight equal parts (according to the number of petals) and from four concentric circles with a radius of 8, 32, 37 and 40mm. The shape of the petals is geometrised among the three largest, while the central one identifies only the pistil of the flower. Countless variations could be made on this figure, the important thing is that in the end the result is aesthetically balanced.



The numbering of gouges

Carving gouges are tools reserved for a few enthusiasts and theirs is a niche market, which is why they are still handmade by a few specialist companies. Usually on their handle there are two numbers: the first refers to the curvature, and is always reprinted closer to the shank of the instrument, the second to its width expressed in millimetres. The most common shapes range from 2 to 11, where

the highest number corresponds to a more pronounced curvature. However, there is no real standard and by comparing the same number of curvature between different brands, you realise that the spokes are quite similar but almost never the same. For the bas-relief of this article, a slightly wider or narrower curvature will not change the final effect, while for other subjects it can be decisive for the success of the work.

The design must be used to transfer the shape of the flower on to the wood, and it is therefore advisable to make it on rigid cardboard. In this way it can be reused several times in the future.

I remember that once, in the old shops, the carving models were hung with nails along the walls, as if they were diplomas to be shown to their customers. They were usually made on recycled cardboard from old boxes or with thin plywood when it was known that they would be reused several times.

1 Today, everything is bought on the web and disposing of cardboard packaging has become a daily activity. Using it to make carving shapes is a good way to recycle.

Once the pencil drawing is finished, to precisely cut out the shape and respect all the points of the construction, we use the same gouges, varying their inclination to reflect the shapes well. If scissors or a cutter were used instead, the shape would tend to wrinkle and the lines would not be as precise.

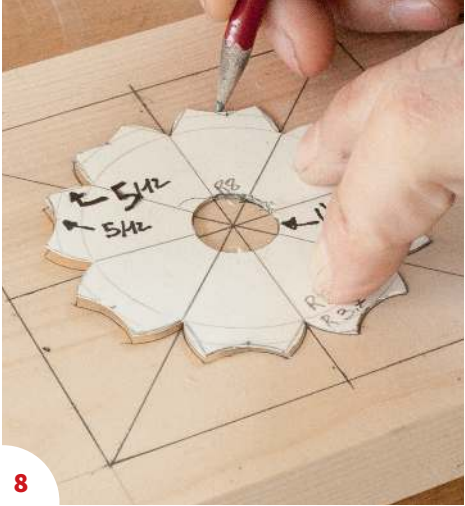
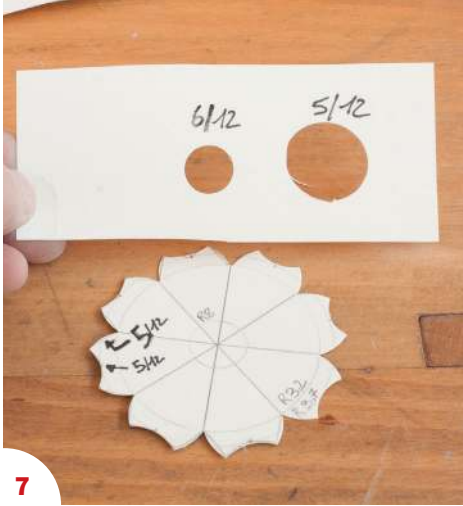
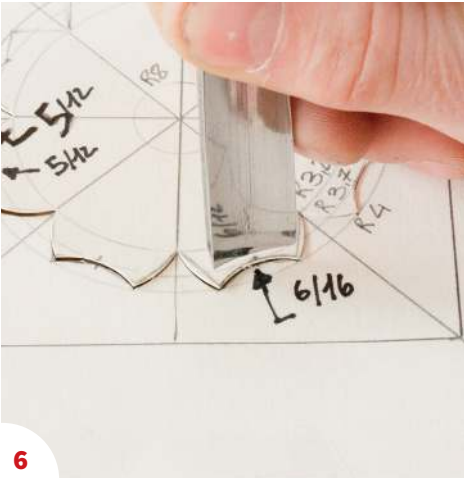
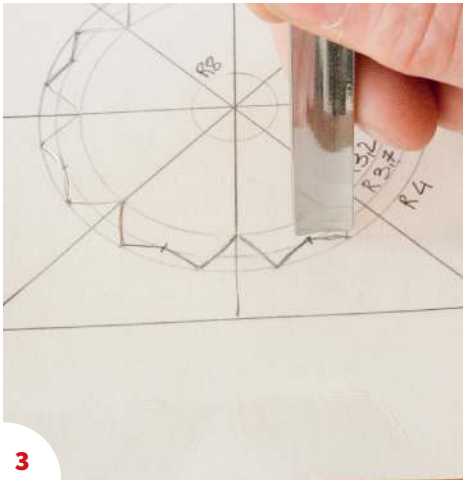
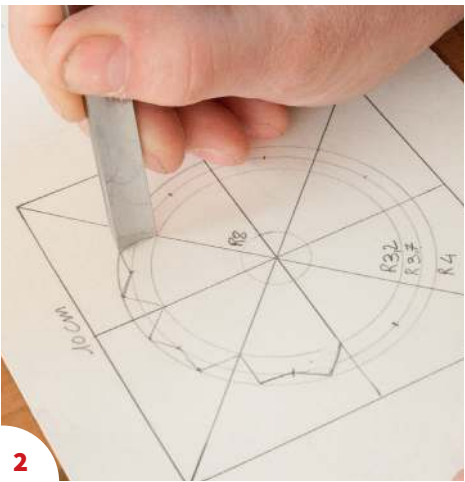
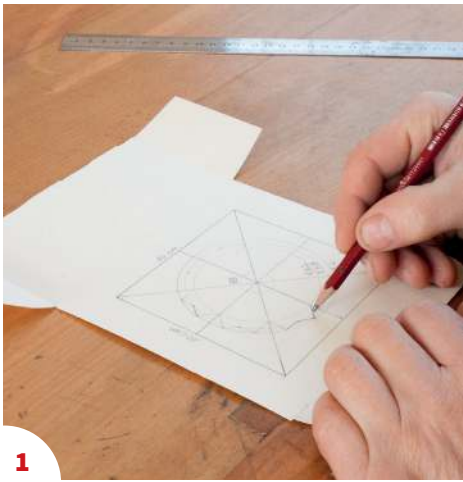
2,3,4 The most precise way to cut out the shape of the flower is to use the same gouges with which you will proceed with the carving. We start with the No.12, pointing it at the intersections of the four diagonals with the smaller circle and tilting it to touch the outermost circle, with a radius of 4cm. With the same gouge, the central curve of each sector is cut in two steps, giving rise to the concavity of the petal.

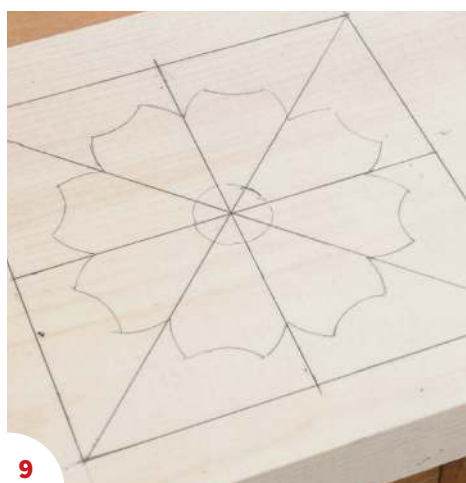
Finding the right gouge

5,6,7 It is not easy for beginners to find the right gouge for each cut. Our advice is to engrave the shape on cardboard and use the cutout shapes to make the design. By noting under each curve the numbering of the gouge, there will be no doubt when choosing the most suitable tool for each shape. You can also easily compare the variants and choose the best one at the end, as seen in the third image where the curve obtained with two No.5, 12mm cuts is compared with that coming from a single No.6, 16mm incision.

To create the shape, we prepare the tablet to be carved by drawing a square on it that represents the area to be lowered to bring out the flower. The square can be whatever size meets the end use of this decoration. We then divide the figure into eight equal sections by tracing the diagonals and the four bisectors of the angles that have formed in the centre.

8,9 After cutting out the small central circle that will give rise to the pistil with the No.6, 12mm, the shape is placed on the square drawn on the wood by matching diagonals and bisectors of one with those of the other.

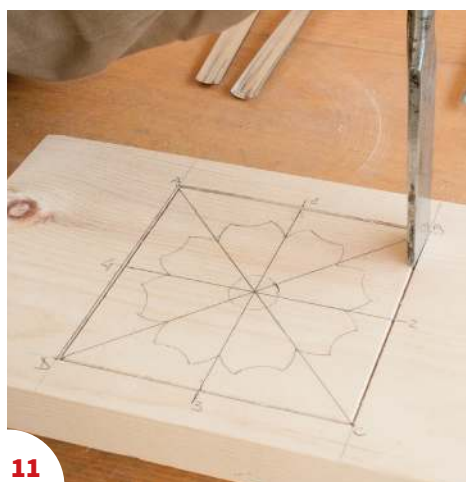




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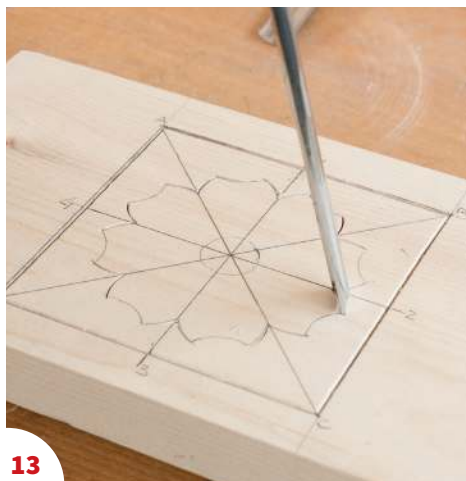
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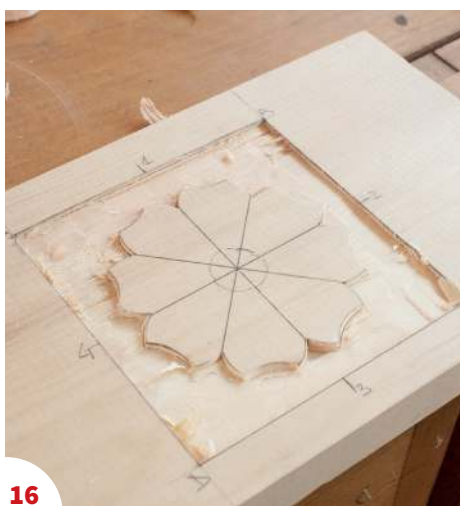
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THE LOWERED GROUNDWORK

Before starting, make sure your gouges and chisels are sharp –it is important for precision and working safely, especially on soft conifers such as the Swiss stone pine of this version. Having a good thread is essential to produce a clean cut and not to tear the wood fibers due to the pressure exerted on the instrument.

The first process consists of lowering the area of the square not covered by the flower design, and to do this we begin to engrave the four sides of the figure by working with the chisel placed perfectly vertically and the flat face facing outwards.

10,11 The chisel is used to engrave the four sides of the square. The more practised carvers can align the blade to the pencil mark, for beginners it is better to pre-engrave the sides with a marking knife and use the groove to guide the chisel edge.

When we move to work on the perimeter of the flower, instead of keeping the gouge perpendicular to the surface of the wood, tilt at an angle of about 80°slightly backwards, so the cut widens going down. The margin created by engraving the contour will be less sensitive to unintended damage while lowering the background.

Tricks of the trade

12,13 Working with the gouge slightly inclined backwards, the upper perimeter of the flower moves back from the area to be lowered. This reduces the possibility of chipping the margin with the tip of the chisel during the subsequent excavation phase.

To eliminate the wood between the two perimeter incisions use the chisel, keeping it resting on the bevel, as you chop further into the groundwork to create a lower surface of about 4mm. You will have to deepen the incisions to avoid tearing the fibres along the internal corners.

14,15,16 The final level of the lowering can be reached in two or three steps by sliding the bevel of the chisel on the wood fibers. During the descent it is essential to alternate this work with that on the incisions that must be made deeper hand in hand.

THE RELIEF

The carving of the flower starts from the incision of the central circle, using the No.6, 12mm, and turning the concave part of its cutting edge towards the centre, keeping the tool inclined as for the outline of the petals. Once the circle incision is complete, turn the gouge upside down and start working on the petals by moving it from the outside to the inside. You need to form a sort of funnel shape around the pistil, which places it in relief for 4 or 5mm.

17 The incision of the pistil precedes the carving of the petals which will bring it into relief exposing it to possible work damage. For this reason it is better to incline the gouge at about 70°.

18,19 Holding the gouge upside down on the bevel, dig all the way around the pistil to bring it into relief by 4 or 5 mm. This is the most delicate phase for newbies because the gouge tends to slip and it is easy to hit the central part, making it jump. If this happens pop the small piece back in place with a drop of PVA glue. In the second image you can see how repeated passes of the gouge leave the crests that correspond with the overlaps between the petals.

Finally give the pistil a rounded shape using the No.5, 12mm with the concavity facing down. Its action starts from the periphery and moves towards the centre, gradually lowering the perimeter to obtain a small dome at the end.

20, 21, 22 The dome shape of the pistil is obtained by lowering the margins of the circle with the No.5, 12mm, with an action that moving from the periphery ends in the centre. The gouge in this case should be used upside down.

The petals of the flower are characterised by a pronounced concavity that reduces towards the pistil. You need to outline the separation between the petals with pencil strokes, drawing a series of rays starting from the retracting vertices of the spacing up to the centre of the figure.

23 On the funnel surface draw the division of the petals, tracing a straight line that starts from the throats on the external contour reaching the centre of the flower.

With the No.6, 12mm sliding on the bevel, we create the concavities afterwards. The width of the cutting edge describes the attachment of the petals well, with the pistil but not the external edge where you will have to gradually widen the groove until it forms a thin crest with the adjacent petals.

24,25 The petals are characterised by a concavity that narrows towards the pistil; create the central excavation with the No.6, 12mm, then it will be necessary to gradually widen it outwards until it forms thin crests between one petal and the other.

The flower is now complete but its appearance is still too static and the decoration lacks a little three-dimensionality. To improve these characteristics there is a



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small trick, which consists of adding small ribs on each petal that make the whole more vibrant. To make them, mark two small radial lines at the attachment with the pistil which extend outwards for about an inch. It is better to not be too precise in marking out for a more natural appearance. To make the small grooves use the last of the three gouges, the one with the most closed shape, or No.11, 3mm.

26,27 To make the central ribs that give more dynamism to the decoration, use the gouge with the most closed shape, the No.11, 3mm, moving it from the outside towards the centre of the flower.

THE FINISHING

At this point, our decoration lacks a final finishing operation: the bush-hammering. It is a device that has always been used for this type of work, even when carried out on other materials such as stone or metals, with which a double effect is obtained: hiding the imperfections of one surface and highlighting another. For our flower we practise it in the background and on the pistil with the technique described below.

Bush-hammering

28,29,30,31 Bush-hammering consists of giving roughness to some surfaces (generally those at the bottom) to hide their irregularities and highlight others. The way the worked part reflects the light differently creates a contrast that highlights the whole relief or parts of it – in this case the petals of the flower. This is done without carving tools, a common nail and hammer is used instead. After rounding the tip with abrasive paper or a grinding wheel, it is used to tap the surfaces leaving shallow marks, a couple of millimetres or less. The nail should not be placed on the surface before tapping with the hammer, as you would for planting it, its tip should instead remain slightly raised. The mark it leaves in this way is softer and less regular. In the last two pictures you can see the flower before and after this process.

Whenever I am dealing with an aspiring carver, the fateful question I am asked is how to finish the surfaces. The first attempts are always wavy and rough in appearance. Sometimes you have to know how to wait for the result with patience, trusting in practice to get to the finish of smooth and well-finished objects. Traditionally, in order not to lose detail on carvings, surfaces were never sanded, instead they would have only been finished with gouges. The only exemptions historically concerned the use of broom brushes, those for washing clothes by hand, or, even earlier in time, dried thistle flowers, which with their thorns served as an abrasive. They were joined in groups of three or four and wrapped in a cloth so as not to prick your hands. As far as I'm concerned, I think today you can turn a blind eye and use paper, as long as you start with a fine grade and take care not to touch the margins that define the various figures. ▶

From the community

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

Novice carver

Hi Mark

I've been wondering about sending photos, as I am very much a novice, but what the hell. Here's a bit of background. About four years ago, my daughter had an ash and a cherry cut down so, as I have always done woodwork, I snaffled two big logs and some smaller ones, with the plan to make a rustic seat. Move on nearly two years to a chance chat with an acquaintance who was a carver. He had been to Zoë Gertner's workshop a few times, so I thought 'why not have a go at carving?'

I took my log down there and had an enjoyable time under Zoë's expert tuition, learning how to do the basics first, of course.

The first job started off as a green man, but after I got home, I thought it looked more like a mediaeval guy, so I gave him a beard and a hood and some leaves, and a name; Alfred (king). He's 460mm tall and weighs 13kg. I went back to Zoë to start my Yorkshire rose.

I had a few health problems in the past year, so only managed a few things, like the butter knife, scoops and a few spoons. Also I did that lovely butterfly on a leaf. Then my daughter asked me for one, so I did it differently; I did the butterfly in lime, then used some old mahogany for the leaf, then screwed together from underneath.

As you see, the oak tray is ongoing along with four other things;

I do the same with my watercolours and pastels, as I am a mood worker.

I hope you don't mind this long saga, and don't be too hard on me, at 81 I'm delicate (joking). Regards,

Allen Swallow



New carving group

Hi Mark

I have been carving on and off for 40 years, more off than on. Andrew Fitzgerald has recently set up a group of carvers in Spilsby, Lincolnshire. Members are mostly newcomers to carving, he acts as leader of the group and shows the basics of tool handling and carving. Andrew mostly carves Welsh lovespoons. I help the members who have progressed to 3D work.

Andrew has almost single-handedly promoted the group in the local area.

I thought I would write to you to see if you would publish this letter in your magazine and therefore promote the club even further. It would be invaluable to see if there are any carvers in the vicinity who would like to join us and pass on their expertise to others. We are a friendly, small group that is growing in numbers.

As yet we haven't formed a committee or are affiliated to the BWA but we hope that the group will grow in the not too distant future. Being a member of this group has certainly improved my productivity as I was a lone carver.

For further information about the new carving club contact: Andrew Fitzgerald, email: s.dwoodcarvers@gmail.com.

I attach a couple of carvings that I have done recently. With Cleopatra I adorned the necklace with semi-precious stones that were prevalent in Egypt at that time. My next carving is Ceres, the goddess of the harvest. Only women were allowed to go to the festival and they all wore white robes – this was achieved by bleaching the wood. I am an avid reader of your magazine and enjoy all the tips from fellow carvers.

Irene Arliss



FROM THE FORUM

Here we share with you some pieces that readers have posted on our *Woodcarving* forum.

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

Asymmetrical horse head

<https://bit.ly/ztISVwB>

Alberdcor posted: I've seen a good quality of carvings here, my apologies for this carving since this is not very good. For me, a level of detail in which you can see and distinguish the muzzles, ears, mouth, eyes and hair is acceptable and enough. I've had experience with clay before and I think that carving in wood adds an extra difficulty. This is the first time I have tried the image of a part of a horse.

The block from which I started was a cherry crotch and it was fragile, difficult to work with. The two good branches that extended at the top of it, on the grow direction, gave me the idea of carving the ears non symmetrical, as the figure was settled with the neck along the grow direction of the tree, to avoid cracking. I have taken advantage of those branches, placing both ears there so that they came in different directions and achieving the maximum scale, I think that this scale must

be 1:2 from the natural, it's somewhat like the size of a foal head but a little one, I have tried on it a foal's bridle and it's too big for it.

I have followed the steps of a post from here that shows how to carve a horse head and this is the result.

I have finished it with wax and I have found it very useful to work with a hand electrical sander from a multiple-function machine with a sway movement, which is also used for cutting inside the wood little voids, and this has allowed me to achieve a smooth finish on an uneven surface like this.

Other machines have served me as well working with a fragile wood because it just roughs out the wood and doesn't break so easily the wood like a damaged gouge could.

I would have preferred to represent a Spanish breed but this wasn't possible because I did notice lately that Spanish

horses (Andalusian) have a convex face all the way from the front to underneath the mouth without turning points, and that is not the case of this carving so it's a pity, this one has a concave face with a low point in the middle of the muzzle.

Critical comments are welcomed. Thank you.

Jack-In-The-Green-1 commented: Hello Alberto and welcome to the carving forum. A great carving – well done!

You certainly didn't make life easy for yourself, carving that head from such a knotty piece of cherry. It must have been a very hard carve, has it started to crack in places? It look a very good depiction of an Arab horse with the concave nose.

Kind regards, David



Bouquet of flowers

Dave Western shows how to create an interesting floral display with few tools



For many years now I have found a wonderfully simple and engaging way to embellish many of my lovespoons, as well as to dress up plain bits of woodwork such as jewellery boxes or serving boards, is to decorate them with some flowers. Occasionally, I'll study some textbooks or photos and render them with biological accuracy, but most often I just enjoy freehand drawing little collections of blossoms and blooms, which may or may not have a basis in reality. Frequently, they hint at a certain flower such as a daisy or sunflower, but I seldom sweat about getting little details such as the number or length of petals absolutely correct. What I am after is achieving the 'feeling' and look of flowers in a way that can

be quickly and simply rendered and which doesn't bog me down with the science of it all. Most of all, I want them to have a cheerful and spontaneous look that isn't contrived or too mechanical,

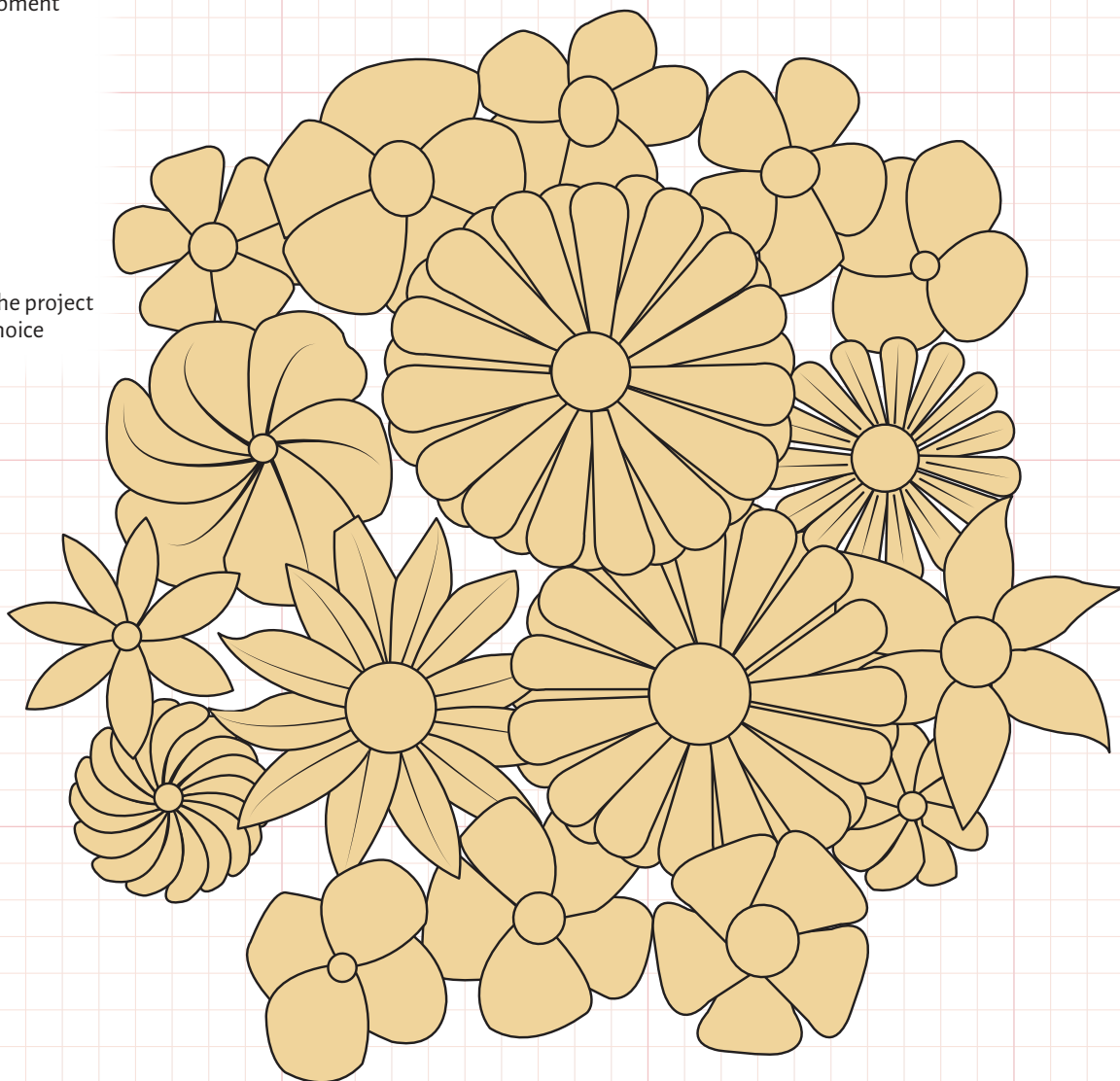
For this project, I have used a small offcut of basswood (*Tilia americana*) that was precariously poised to fall into the burn bin. It seemed a shame to waste it, so I freehand sketched a little bouquet that would fit its confines. I took care to draw the bouquet in such a way that it could be utilised on a round, square or rectangular piece of timber. I think it would look lovely on a jewellery box or an urn, but even if it doesn't get put to work in a design, it is a great way to use up a scrap of wood and to practise carving both with and across grain.

Things you will need**Tools:**

- Personal and respiratory protective equipment (PPE & RPE)
- Knife
- No.9 gouge
- Deep gouge
- Shallow gouge
- Straight chisel
- Bandsaw
- Disc sander

Materials:

- Timber to suit the project
- Finish of your choice



1 I drew this design to fit this scrap of wood. You could place it on a small piece as a full design or on a larger piece as a feature.

2 There's absolutely nothing wrong with carving on a flat surface, but I have found that doming the wood slightly gives the finished bouquet more visual excitement and makes it feel a bit larger and fuller than it actually is. I cut off waste to raise the centre and then cleaned up the surface with a block plane and scraper. You can clean it up with a random orbit sander, which is a quick and simple method of smoothing out.

Once smooth you can lay out your drawing or photocopy. I aim for a healthy 3-4mm rise from the edge of the piece to the centre.

**1****2**

3 When the surface is prepared to your satisfaction, glue a photocopy of the design directly to the wood with a common glue stick or transfer it by tracing the drawing through carbon paper. Be aware that gluing paper to a domed surface will result in a few crimps in the paper. Glue from the centre high spot outwards and try to sneak any folds into areas where they won't cause any problems.



4 With the drawing in place, scribe a 3mm-deep vertical cut around the outside edge of the drawing with a small, straight knife. You can use the knife to cut the whole outline or use it and a range of gouges to cut the curves you encounter. Either way, it is important to keep the cut as vertical as possible.



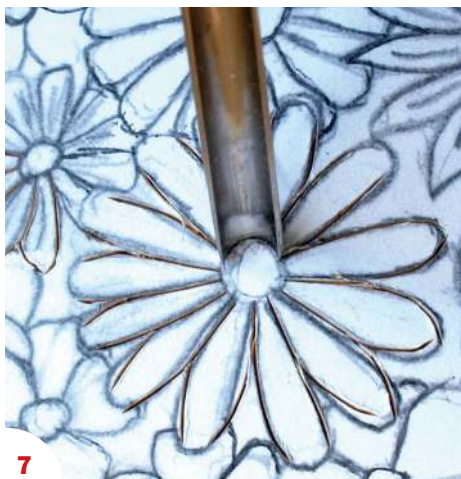
5 Once the outline has been scribed, use gouges to dig a trough around the outer edge, which will raise the flower pattern. Aim to excavate to a depth of about 3mm so that the gouge meets up cleanly with your scribed cut. Most of the unwanted material should break away neatly, but if not, and you are left with some rough areas, use the straight knife to re-scribe until the material is all cleared away. Once all the unwanted material has been dealt with, you can return later to smooth and tidy the area with flatter gouges.



6 Next, take some time to scribe the flower petals and the interior sections of the design. You can easily complete one section at a time from scribing through to final carving, but I like to scribe the entire piece before I begin any detail work. Scribing everything lets me reinforce the design in my mind and helps to clearly delineate different sections from one another. It's worth taking the time this requires as it pays dividends later in the carving.



7 Use gouges that mimic the curves of the various central discs of the flowers to ensure nice, fair lines. You can freehand your way around these circles with a straight knife, but it is tricky and inevitably results in a line that is much less fair than that made by a gouge. Be careful not to dig too deep or to lever the gouge at this stage or there is a very real danger than you could pop the centre out.



8 With the flower scribed and the central disc outlined, use a gouge to excavate some material around the disc, cutting to a depth of about 3mm to create a nicely raised disc. Be gentle as even the slightest slip could result in splitting the centre out. Keep the tool sharp as you will be cutting both with and across the grain and it is easy to tear the timber.



9 & 10 You will, without doubt, find that there are a number of awkward little areas where no decorative carving will be undertaken. Instead, material needs to be removed in a way that doesn't detract from the carving. For small and narrow sections, a simple chip-carved clearance will work. When the space is larger, a flat surface or a slightly raised central section will work. Sometimes all three can be useful but I have opted for chip cuts on the small sections and a flat bottom on the larger one





11



12

11 & 12 Before you get started with shaping the petals, ensure all the flowers are scribed, and you have cleared all the 'waste' sections between them. This will help you see the design more clearly and will make mistakes less likely. I began this project thinking I would use the raised centre method to deal with the waste sections, but quickly realised that it was visually too busy and clashed with the design. I then opted to flatten all the waste areas and draw the attention back toward the flowers



13



14

13 Once all the scribing, excavating and central disc shaping is done, it's time to start shaping the petals. There are myriad ways of undertaking this, ranging from highly stylised to extremely realistic, angled or flat. When angling the petals, it is very important to cut forward toward thick stock rather than backward past already shaped wood. Cutting into the thick stock ensures you are less likely to snap off the high point of a previously shaped petal. Cutting behind a previously shaped petal is always risky as a knife slip can easily remove a substantial chip.

14 If you opt for flat or domed petals, you don't need to worry so much about the knife tip splitting off other petals. You will, however, want to ensure you achieve crisply cut and good, straight lines between each petal. Take your time and don't risk the knife wandering by cutting too deeply.



15

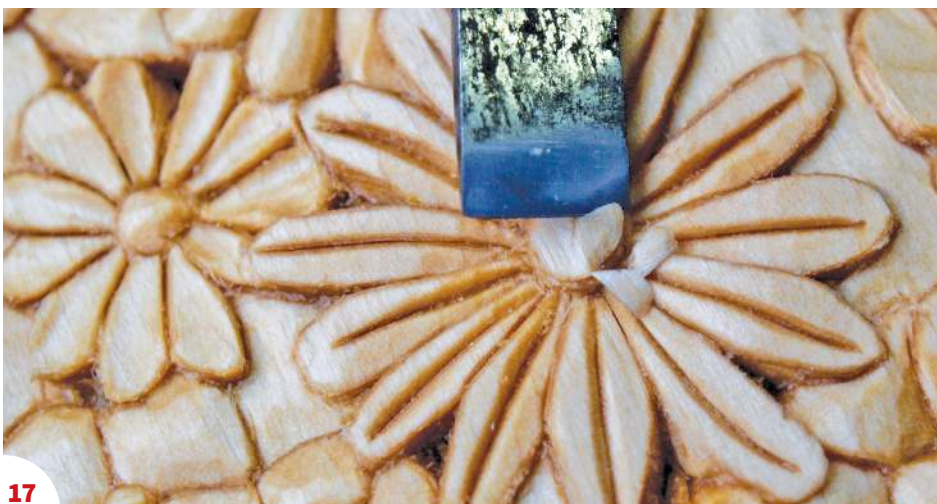


16

15 Many petals can be finish shaped by following out the original disc clearing cuts. Use the gouge to create gently curved and flowing petals, but be aware that in cross grain areas it can be tricky to keep the wood from tearing. Keep the cuts relatively shallow and don't push too hard. Narrow, steep gouges are great for removing stock quickly with the broader, shallower gouges working well for cleaning and final shaping nice, elegant curves.

16 With the petals shaped, I will sometimes go back and detail them a little bit. This might range from long, shallow lines along the petal, to brief gouge textures near the central disc. At this point, it is largely a matter of personal taste and you may prefer to leave things largely unadorned.

17 Next, you can shape the central disc. Use a good, sharp flat gouge or chisel to take light, doming cuts until you have a nice, softly raised central section to your flower. I generally leave my discs unadorned, but they can be further decorated with patterning if you wish.



17

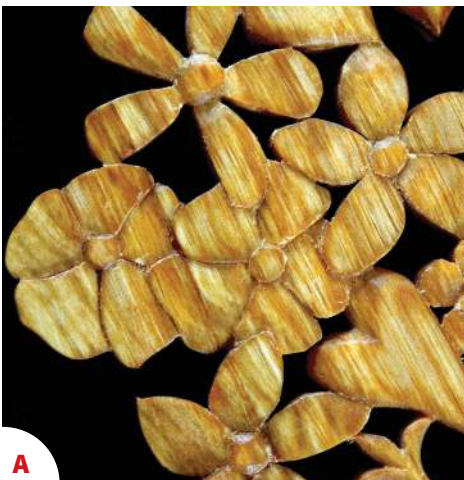
18 & 19 Take some time to do any final cleaning up you might feel is necessary. Often, the areas around the discs need a bit of crisping up and some of the petals might require a final light shaving or two.

20 At this point, the carving is ready for finishing. It can most certainly be left in a raw state if you prefer that look, although pale woods like lime, sycamore and maple will often pick up dirt and will discolour quite rapidly. A quick coat or two of a light penetrating oil such as Danish oil or Tung oil will both bring up the wood's colour and figure and will afford it some protection from dust and dirty hands.

21 After the first coat of oil has dried, I will often return to the carving to tidy up any rough bits I hadn't previously noticed and to shave off any fuzzy bits. I try not to get too carried away, but it's definitely worth giving the whole piece a quick pass with the tools before applying the last few coats.

Alternative designs

A-E While I have tried to include a wide variety of flower and petal types in this design, I'm also including a few pictures of some other flower styles to give you as wide an array of approaches as I can within the confines of a brief article. I hope you'll have some fun with this pattern and that it will inspire to improve it with your own ideas and ways of shaping the flowers. ▶





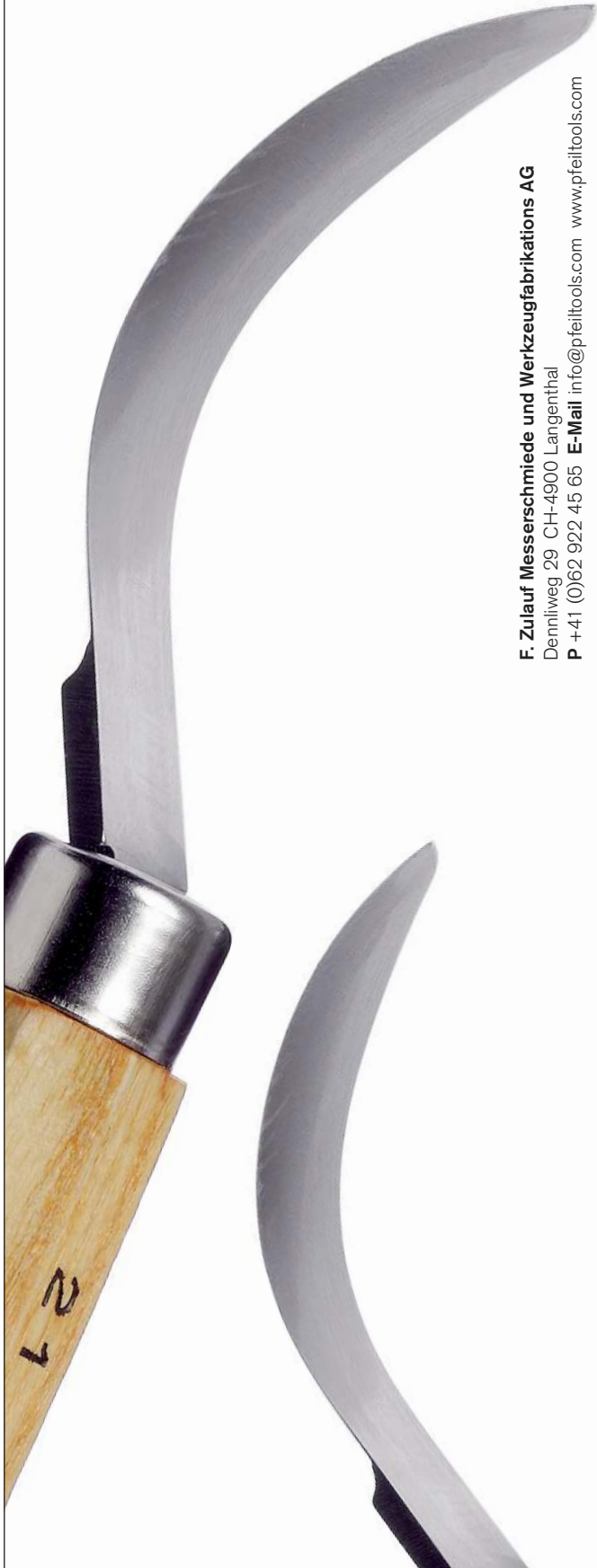
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Carving bowls

Murray Taylor looks at different methods of working on and decorating small bowls



PHOTOGRAPHS BY MURRAY TAYLOR

While visiting a festival of wood recently I was drawn to a couple of second-hand tool stands. As a self-confessed tool collector – or an ‘addict’ according to my wife – I did buy an old gouge that I obviously ‘could not live without’. Looking around at a plethora of old tools, some of quality, some not, I got into conversation with a novice carver who had selected a handful of old

chisels and gouges. ‘Have you got a big project in mind?’ I asked. ‘No,’ he replied, ‘but they probably will come in useful one day.’

His reply put me in mind of the number of times I have told students only to buy tools as they need them, and there I was with an old $\frac{3}{4}$ in No.11 curved gouge which I obviously needed, so the idea to write this article came to mind.

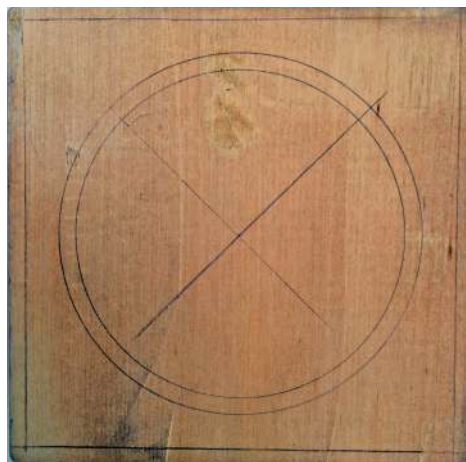


Making the bowl

As with all my articles the projects are open ended – you can adapt the principles to your requirements or copy my example if you so wish.

I decided to work from a square block rather than make a round bowl as this would leave the corners to take some form of decoration.

For this example, the lime block I have used measures 160mm x 160mm x 35mm. Having found centre I scribed two circles, one of 116mm and the other of 128mm diameter, and drew a 4mm wide border round the edge of the block.



The block marked up for carving



Roughing out the bowl with the old No.11 gouge that I didn't know I needed



Refining the deep gouge marks with a No.6 bent gouge

CARVER'S TIP: It is important to hold the workpiece securely when working with a mallet and gouge. I have used a standard woodworker's vice, but if you do not have access to one you could make a simple jig to hold the bowl



Carving out the bowl in a simple jig made from the scrap box



Shaping the side of the bowl using an old wooden smoothing plane bought at a car boot sale



Rounding off the edges using an old wooden spokeshave



Chip carving the corners of the bowl



The completed bowl finished with sanding sealer to which a little spirit colour was added

The photographs are more or less self-explanatory. Use the deeper gouge to rough out the bowl to the desired depth, in this case about half the thickness of the block, then remove the deeper gouge

marks with a succession of shallower gouges. In both these examples I have left some tool marks in the bowl as I think it gives a more handmade effect as opposed to the smooth finish of a turned bowl.

Producing a smoother finish

If you want to produce a smoother finish, there are several other tools in the carver's armoury.

You could use a scorp, which has a curved blade that is pulled not pushed, or a small pull plane with a curved blade. The other alternative, of course, is elbow grease and sandpaper, but I think this gives a false finish and I prefer to see some tool marks.



The scorp (above) and the pull plane (below)



Using the scorp



Smoothing the bowl with a curved blade pull plane

An alternative method of carving bowls – the curved knife

If you don't have a selection of curved gouges you might consider using curved knives. I became interested in these knives when I saw them being used in America, but they were hard to find in the UK at the time, so I started by making my own, but these days various makes are available. The photograph shows some of the curved knives I use today.



Three knives by Nic Westermann. They are supplied unhandled and I have made protective boxes to protect the blades



The knives in their protective boxes



The protective covers in the closed position



Three curved knives by American company Cape Forge, showing a much simpler method of protection – just a little piece of plastic hose



Four knives by Ben Orford, two right-hand and two left-hand, or push and pull as I prefer to call them



Two Mora knives from Sweden. The one on the left needs to be used with great care as it is sharp on both sides



Starting the bowl with a deep curve knife



Using a shallower curved blade to smooth out the bowl

Safety with a curved knife

Besides being a most useful tool, the curved knife can also be very dangerous to use, especially when working on a hand held piece such as a spoon bowl. If you are a right hander using a pull knife it is easy to bring the blade out of the bowl and hit the thumb – to avoid this you should always wear some sort of hand protector, a Kevlar glove or perhaps something a little stronger. I use a thumb stall made from an

old leather glove to which I have attached a curved aluminium sheet.

A small hole is drilled in the four corners of the sheet and it is then beaten into the swage block along with a piece of 20mm dowel. The protective sheet is then sewn on to the thumb piece of the glove using waxed twine, which is available from yacht chandlers and is called whipped twine.



Curving the aluminium sheet in a swage block made from wood



The homemade thumb stall



A spoon bowl being carved using the homemade protective stall and resting on a cushion

WORKSHOP TIP: A swage block is usually made of steel with semi-circular depressions into which you beat a piece of sheet metal. To make the thumb protector you can make a swage block by drilling a couple of holes in a block of wood and then cutting the block in half to give you a forming tool



The drilled timber ready for splitting to make a simple swage block

Further ideas for bowls

Looking for unusual ideas for decorating bowls or, in fact, any other carvings, I began to think outside the box and remembered some chopstick rests that I had bought in Japan some years ago with the idea of using them in some decorative way. The rests are made of an unidentified hardwood with what looks like a fruitwood inlay and I thought they would be ideal for the project. I realise that you are not likely to have some wooden chopstick rests in your bits and pieces box, but I hope it will give you some ideas for using unusual objects to decorate your work.



A selection of the inlaid chopstick rests



Setting in the recess with a knife



Removing the bulk of the recess with a shallow gouge



Using a small hand router known as an 'old woman's tooth' to level the base of the recess



The completed bowl with the four inserts and four hardwood bead feet

Thinking further out of the box

In my working life as a jeweller I used to make all sorts of unusual window displays and this brought me to think about using a bowl as a jewellery holder for a dressing table, it is also known as a jewellery tree. You could, of course, carve an abstract tree design, or as in this example, I have made some simple turned pieces which form the central stem and then drilled holes in the four corners to hold earrings. As always this is just an idea which you can adapt in any way you wish.



The basic construction of the jewellery tree



The jewellery tree with a collection of amber jewellery

Conclusion

You could make your bowls of any shape, I quite like very irregular shapes in order to use unusual offcuts or large slices which you can find in some timber yards. If you are going to use your bowls for any food items, you must use a food-safe wood such as sycamore, which was traditionally used for butchers' blocks.

I once went passed an old butcher's shop, which was being demolished, and saw a chopping block in a skip. A quick word with the foreman and the block was mine. Similarly I managed to acquire some

Victorian mahogany pieces from an auction house that was closing down and some teak boards from a small landing stage that was being refurbished. Keep your eyes open and you will be surprised what is about, but remember to ask permission before going 'skip diving'.

When you are looking for ideas for unusual designs don't forget your local library, museums and art galleries—you will find all sorts of things to inspire you. As always, carve in good light, strop regularly and practice, practice, practice. ▶

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Dragonfly

Zoë Gertner shows how to create an attractive relief carving



One of the pleasures of having a pond in the garden is the variety of wildlife which seems to arrive from nowhere, our long, hot summer spell bringing many insects, including beautiful dragonflies dancing and darting over the water – a lovely subject for carving in relief. This is an easy relief carving project for beginners and one I later carved

inside one of a number of old turned bowls that I have waiting for decoration.

For the demonstration I used a 25mm-thick piece of oak about 125mm square, originally part of a drawer front from some recycled furniture. One of the advantages of using such a piece is that not only is it being recycled to good use, but usually it is well seasoned and

its existing surface finish, often a dark varnish, enables fresh cuts to be seen very clearly as you carve it.

You could also use any straight-grained uniform timber such as lime (*Tilia* spp.) or sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*). Do, however, bear in mind that a lighter-coloured wood will show detail more clearly than a darker one.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ZOË GERTNER

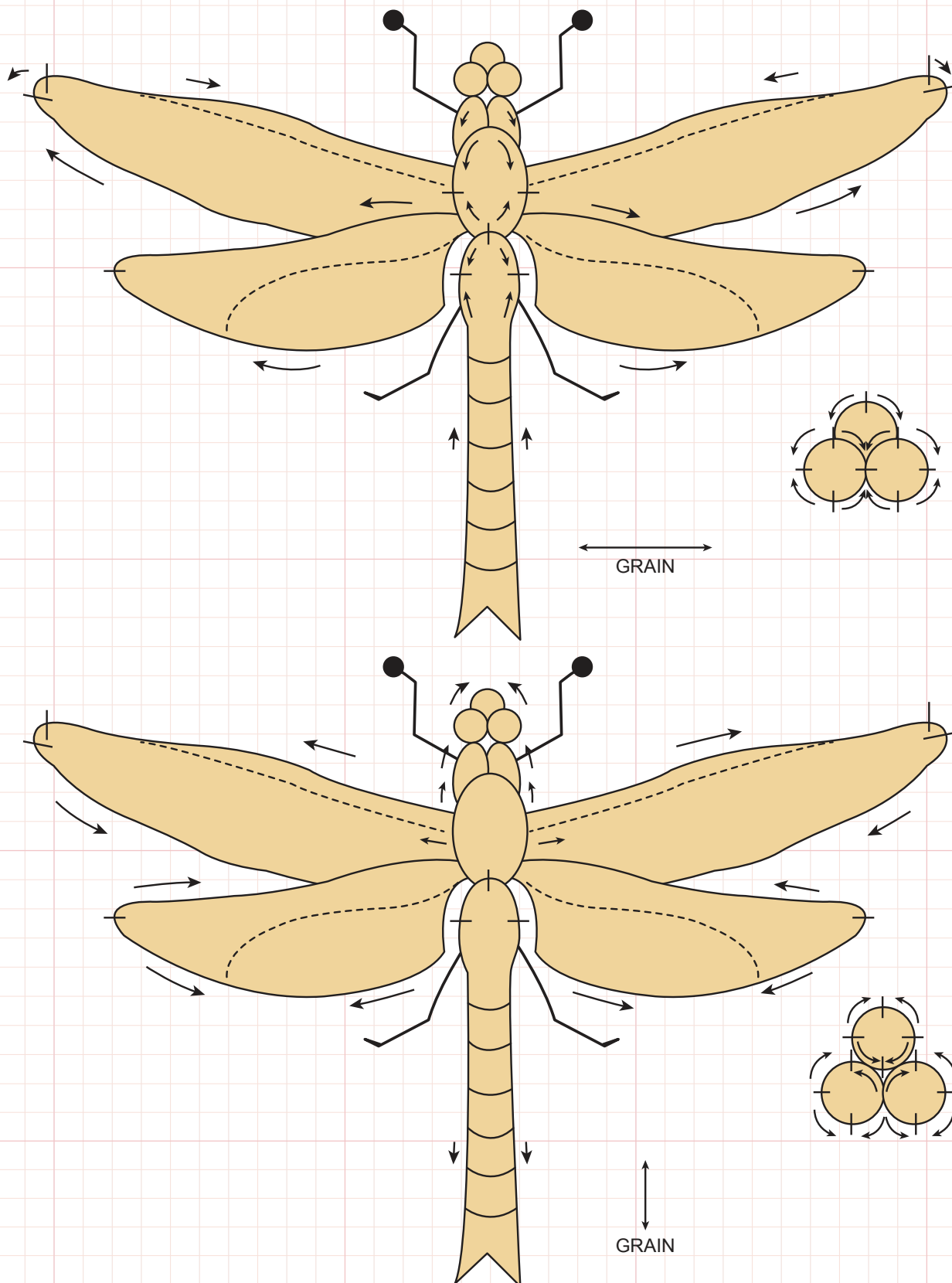
Things you will need

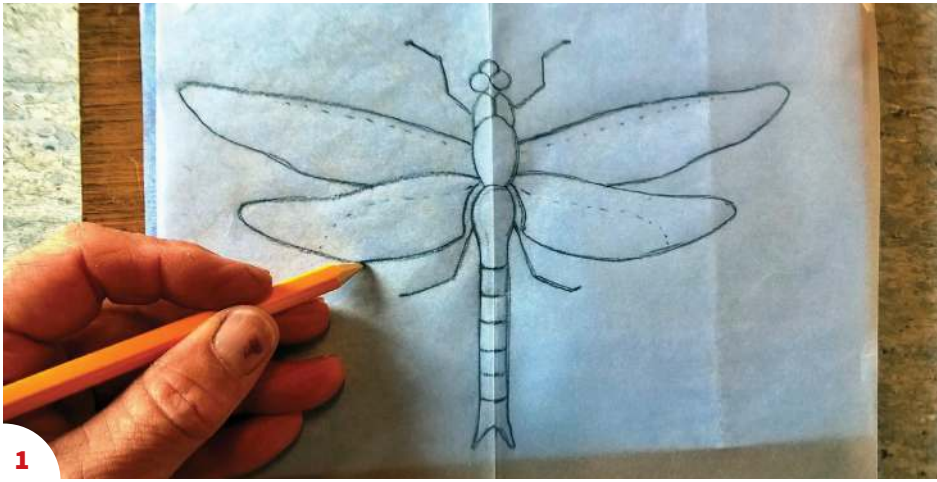
Tools:

- No.3 gouges 3-20mm
- No.5, 10 or 13mm
- No.2, 6mm skew chisel
- 60° V-tool 3 & 6mm
- Light hammer
- Transfer paper

Materials:

- Masking tape
- Mallet
- Coarse and fine punch
- Old toothbrush
- Wax polish
- Lint-free duster





1

1 On paper, draw your own version of the dragonfly, or trace/copy my drawing to fit your wood. The grain direction of the wood can be either horizontal or vertical, as you wish. Place your drawing on your wood, fixing it at the corner with masking tape, and slip some transfer/ carbon paper beneath the drawing.

Sandwich a piece of white paper between the drawing and the transfer papers – this will enable you to see the outline more clearly – then draw around the dragonfly using a different coloured pencil/biro so that any missed lines will be evident. Remove the drawing and transfer papers and, on the surface of the wood, redraw over the transferred outline with pencil so it can be seen clearly.



2

Starting the carving

2 Cut round the outline using a mallet with a V-tool. Work by cutting in the direction in which you produce a clean edge along the outline, changing direction as necessary. Pencil in, but do not cut the legs – they will be shown later on the fresh surface when the background has been removed. The directions in which to cut with the V-tool will depend upon the grain orientation of your wood, whether horizontal or vertical, shown in the diagrams.



3

3 The next stage is to deepen and widen that V-channel around the outline by making opposing cuts using a selection of widths of No.3 gouges, which will match the shape of the outline. The first set of cuts is made by resting the No.3 gouge cutting edge against the inner slope within that V-channel around it. Cut downwards and outwards, thus away from the dragonfly, following the same angle as the V-cut, all around the outline. At curves it is important to turn the gouge so it corresponds with the shape of the outline channel. Where there are tighter curves, narrower No.3 gouges should fit, otherwise use the widest gouge that fits. The purpose of this initial set of cuts is to protect the outline of the dragonfly before you make the opposing cuts to deepen and widen the V-tooled channel. When you have made the first set of cuts outwards round the outline then the second set of opposing cuts towards them can be made.



4

4 The opposing cuts are always made using the gouge with its bevel down, i.e. beneath its cutting edge. If, by mistake, the gouge is turned with its bevel upwards your cuts cannot meet up with the first ones cleanly because the tool corners will sink downwards into the surface. Start your cuts from a short distance away, angle the gouge cutting edge downwards and towards the V-shaped channel to the depth of the first cuts, thus deepening and widening the original V-channel around the outline. Aim for a cleanly cut meeting point at the bottom of the enlarged channel. If need be, adjust the angle of your cuts so that they can meet together tidily.



5 At the wing tips where the channel curves along the grain, alternate your cuts from side to side as shown to cut the channel cleanly without splitting the wood.

6 Using a $\frac{3}{8}$ in or $\frac{1}{2}$ in No.3 or No.5 gouge with your mallet, make extended overlapping cuts from the enlarged V-channel around the dragonfly outwards, but always cutting towards the dragonfly as you do so. Start your cuts at the outer edge of the V and cut towards its outline, dropping your hand and scooping out the chips along the outer edge of the channel.

Make a second, longer row overlapping the first row, thus producing a gentle slope towards the dragonfly from its adjacent background. Taking care not to slip or damage the outline as you approach it, continue with a further four overlapping rows until the dragonfly stands proud with a gentle slope up towards the outer areas of your wood.

While cutting, never bury the gouge deeply into the wood – both upper corners, known as the horns, should always be above the surface otherwise the wood will split, or worse, you could damage the delicate tool edge. Around the dragonfly I chalked a line to an approximate border and worked outwards with the background as far as this.

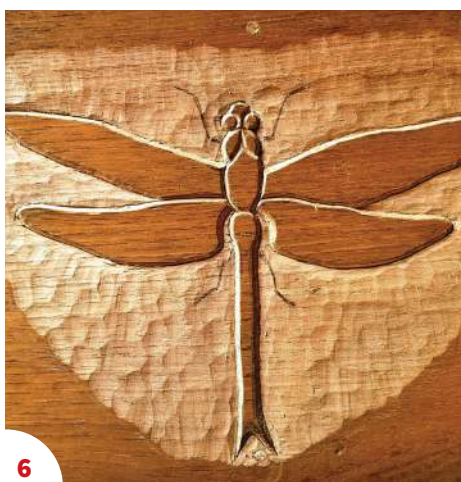
Carving the detail

7 Having removed the background around the dragonfly, redraw the legs on the fresh surface. Round over the edges of the abdomen and thorax using a No.3 gouge and cutting outwards from the middle, ie the highest point, along the length of the abdomen, lifting your gouge hand over each side to round over their edges down to the background. Repeat the above to round over the thorax. Then redraw the lines of the abdomen segments on its newly convex surface.

Next, round over the eyes and head by inverting the No.3, 3 or 6mm and shaving over the edges by cutting outwards and away from the middle until this is the highest point of each one. As a guide it may be helpful to mark the highest point on each before you start. To cut them cleanly where the convexities converge, tilt the gouge sideways and cut with its corner, or use the point of a No.2, 6mm skew chisel to access the converging surfaces at their deepest.

8 The upper wings. With a No.3, 6m, reduce the lower edges of the upper wings (marked white) so that they lie beneath the edge of the lower wings. Carefully shave their surfaces smooth, ready for texturing later on.

9 Now reduce the lower edges of both lower wings and shave their surfaces smooth, ready for texturing later on. If necessary, deepen the triangular areas between the wings, each side.





10



11

10 Draw the segments at intervals along the tail. If the grain of your wood lies horizontally you can use the $\frac{1}{8}$ in V-tool to cut the striations across it, along its length. Start the V-cuts at the middle, the highest point of the rounded surface, and cut outwards from there, over each side. Lift your tool hand as you cut over them, taking care not to cut downwards and into the surface of the background adjacent to it. However, if the grain of your wood lies vertically, a V-tool may tear when cutting across it, so with the 6mm gouge inverted and tilted at a slight angle, roll its cutting edge to cut across and over from one side to the other, then from the opposite side in the same way and the V-channels for each striation can be cut cleanly and safely.

11 Having cut the striations, where the V-channels meet the background each side use the corner of a No.3, 3 or 6mm, or the point of a skew chisel and remove the tiny triangular area both sides of each channel to finish their ends cleanly into the background.

12 Check that the surface of the background adjacent to the dragonfly is clean and smooth then draw on the legs and incise them using the 3 or 6mm V-tool.

Patterning the wings

13 Across each wing draw the curving lines of the main veins then, using a light hammer and a selection of punches, texture their surfaces, following the drawn curves over each wing. To make a contrast in the texturing I used a coarser punch within the upper sections and a finer one below these. To finish tidily, at the outer edge of each wing slightly tilt the punch over the edge, but be careful not to mark the adjacent background inadvertently.

14 Erase any remaining pencil marks and check all meeting edges are cut cleanly. Carefully paring with a No.3 gouge, remove any digs or deep cuts remaining in the background, especially adjacent to the dragonfly and its wings. There are many ways to finish your carving, the easiest being to apply a coat of clear wax polish with a redundant toothbrush, leaving it overnight and polishing it to a nice sheen using a lint-free duster.

15 Thinking about how to use the carving differently, here is a dragonfly I carved inside one of my old, turned cherry wood bowls. ▀



12



13



14



15

WOOD CARVING

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

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK BAKER/CMC PUBLICATIONS LTD

Rotary Chisel test

Mark Baker gets to grips with this range of solid carbide head rotary chisels

I have long been an advocate of both hand and power carving and use both methods readily. I love the hand carving techniques as much as I love the power carving processes.

On a trip to the AAW symposium last year there was a Rotary Chisel stand with an array of goodies on display. Me being me, I was drawn to it to see what was available. After a lengthy chat with Jeff and Tanya, who were fielding questions from many people on the stand, I went away with three cutters to try out: a half-round, a V-cut and a W-cut. There are four profiles in the range, and the cutter I did not try was the square cut. All the cutters feature a solid carbide head.

On close inspection I have to say the tools are beautifully made and, in addition to the four cutting profiles available, the range includes four head sizes for each profile. The extra-small range of cutters features a $\frac{1}{8}$ in diameter head attached to a $\frac{1}{8}$ in shaft. The small range of cutters feature a $\frac{1}{4}$ in diameter head attached to a $\frac{1}{8}$ in/3mm shaft, the medium cutters feature a $\frac{3}{8}$ in diameter head and this is attached to a $\frac{1}{4}$ in shaft, the large cutters feature a 1in diameter head in a $\frac{1}{2}$ in shaft and the extra-large cutter heads feature $1\frac{1}{2}$ in diameter heads on a $\frac{3}{4}$ in shaft.

So, the extra-small and small sizes are for small and fine detail work, hence the $\frac{1}{8}$ in shaft and small head sizes and the medium, large and extra-large heads on $\frac{1}{4}$ in shafts are for faster, bigger work. I noticed on the website that Rotary Chisel comments: 'They

cut cleaner and faster than any other chisel currently available. This tool cuts smooth and clean on the hardest woods, marble, limestone, steatite, alabaster, bronze, aluminum and even stainless steel.'

In use

I tried the cutters in a drop-down, flexi-shaft pendant motor system, a hand-held Dremel unit and a rotary micro-motor unit and found all of them perfectly balanced with no sense of wobble at all and are easy to use. I tried them on various pieces of work, but to show how subtle and useful they can be, I created a few textured details with them on the rim of a hollow form. They are just as useful on carved work too.

The W-cut is a delight and I love the texture it can create. The half-round is a breeze to use for detail and waste removal and if you get the speed and pressure right you can create a scorched detail with the cutters too.

The V-cut cutter is one you can create the most delicate of lines with, be they for feather detail, quill detail striations or block patterns etc. But, again, it is capable of delicate waste removal and shaping. Now, since these cutters come in different sizes depending on the cutter profile, you have more options regarding waste removal, shaping and detail options with the cutters in the range.

I loved the cutters and found that they are very well made and easy to use. They kept



Creating various textured detail with the small cutters

their edge and didn't present any problems whatsoever. I can see myriad uses for these on cabinetry, turned and carved work.

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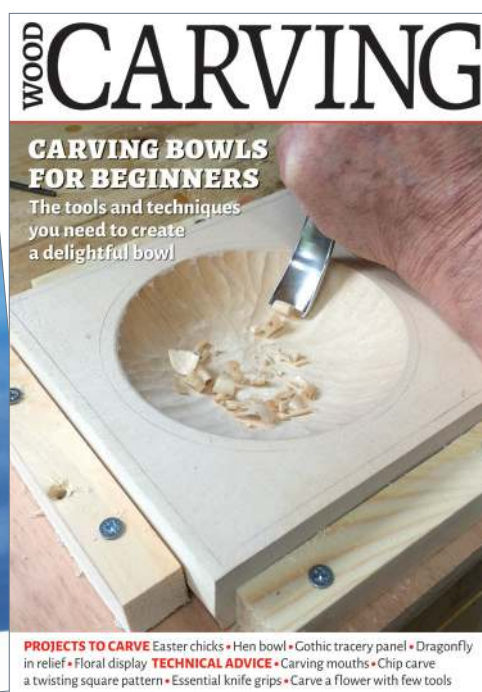
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If you're looking for a parting tool that cuts clean each and every time you pick it up, and never needs sharpening, Ultra-Shear's Parting Tool-Ci is for you.



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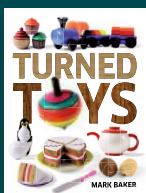
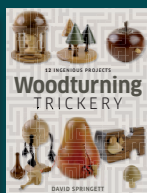
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The Sanctuary of Truth

This month we admire the traditional carving skills on show at this remarkable site in Pattaya, Thailand



Like Gaudí's Sagrada Família in Barcelona, the Sanctuary of Truth in Pattaya, Thailand, is an ongoing construction project. This unique building – part temple, part palace, part art and heritage museum – was the brainchild of a wealthy local businessman, Lek Viriyaphant, who wanted to preserve ancient building techniques and artistic skills. His aim was for the Sanctuary to become a place to appreciate art, culture and faith, without being tied to one particular religion.

Work began on the site in 1981. The entire structure is made

entirely from handcarved teak, no metal elements were used in the construction. The teak was left untreated and unprotected, meaning that parts wear out and need to be replaced over the years. This ongoing work helps to preserve traditional skills.

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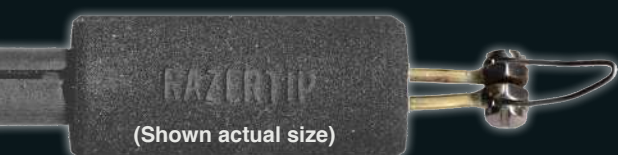
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