

WOOD CARVING

GIBBONS-STYLE APPLIQUÉ PANEL

A step-by-step guide
to creating a classic
carved panel



PROJECTS TO CARVE Horse-head mask • Seed keeper • Fire-effect bowl rim
• Mirror frame • Cedar sculpture • Shallow-relief flower • Relief carved bowl
TECHNICAL ADVICE • Carving eyes • Pattern • Essential knife-carving grips

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Uncertain times



At the time of writing this, the coronavirus is necessitating many proactive measures in order to halt its spread and protect ourselves as much as we can. We are all affected by these measures

in numerous ways. I, and many others, come under the classification of being in a vulnerable group and currently in self-isolation at home. This means non-essential visits to places, people and events are a no-go. Many of the shows and events are being postponed till later on in the year or cancelled and most clubs are not meeting.

Isolation and the sense, or reality, of being cut off from something or somewhere is a potentially horrible thing. I know if I do not have meaningful interaction with people for any length of time, or cannot get out of the house even for a short while so I have a change of scenery, I become like a caged animal and get grumpy.

I have been receiving lots of calls from carvers about their situation and many are sharing that their phone bills have gone up a lot over their normal bills prior to the coronavirus outbreak. Also, a majority of callers are saying they are exploring, and using, online groups and resources more than they did before. Someone recently commented to me that there is only so much daytime TV one can watch. He rated it as bad and was thankful he had access to some online film and programme services, courtesy of his children, to provide a variety of things to watch. The gentleman also commented that he had a good network of friends to call and chat to, which he said was invaluable.

One person quipped that he always felt there were things that got in the way of him carving as much as he wanted to, but said now there was now no excuse not to carve and has been happily working on those things on the to do list. One person I was talking to said her club was not meeting per se physically, but had set up an online group where they could also see each other and talk about things. I have also received comments from people who have said that they are not meeting as a club physically but are calling each other and providing each other with encouragement and help.

I wish you all the very best in these uncertain times and am sure that many of you will have some time carving. As always, feel free to email me and I would love to see what you are making.

Mark

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

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PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK BAKER/GMC PUBLICATIONS

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Mark Gough carves a wall-mounted animal mask

Horse head wall hanging

Animal head masks have been made by many cultures throughout the world at one time or another and there are many fine examples in museums and books to refer to for inspiration. They were historically used in ritualistic dance to portray, among other things, a story of a hunt or fight. Animal masks are frequently seen in interior decoration, most commonly of the African style as they are of diverse subject matter, from antelope to elephant, lion, zebra and more.

In this article I have used a similar style of a slightly elongated head with a subject commonly seen in the UK and elsewhere. The upper section of the head has been hollowed out to fit around a human face, with the lower section either left solid or hollowed out for lightness, I have opted for the latter, but it is up to you if you decide to have a go.

I chose to use English elm, which has a really nice grain pattern that accentuates the contours of the head, and together with some staining makes for a striking example for a wall hanging. But of course other timbers can be used. It does not have to be a full-size mask, use whatever suitable blank you have to hand – a display of three miniature carving, for instance, in different woods would also look stunning.



Things you will need

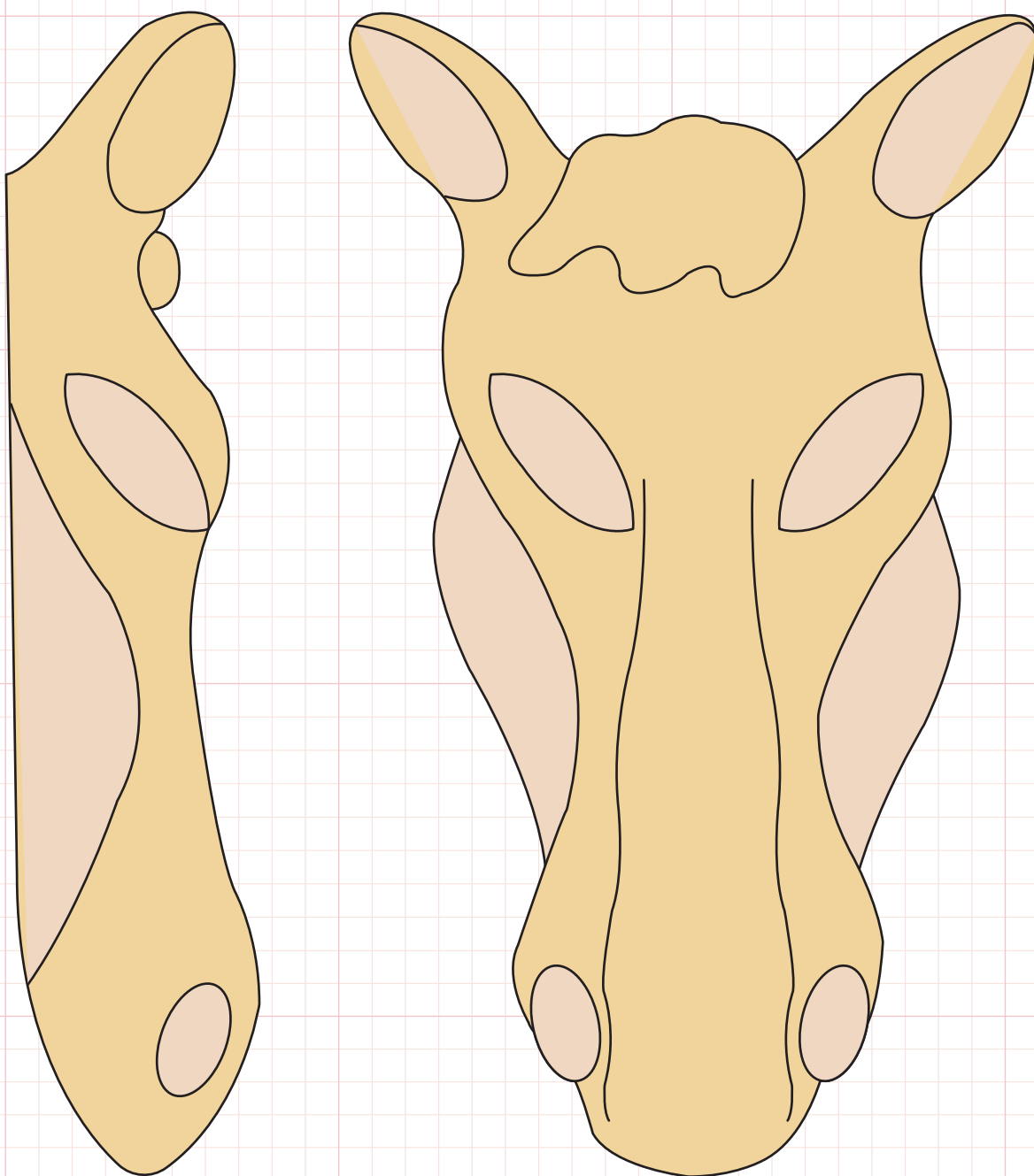
Tools:

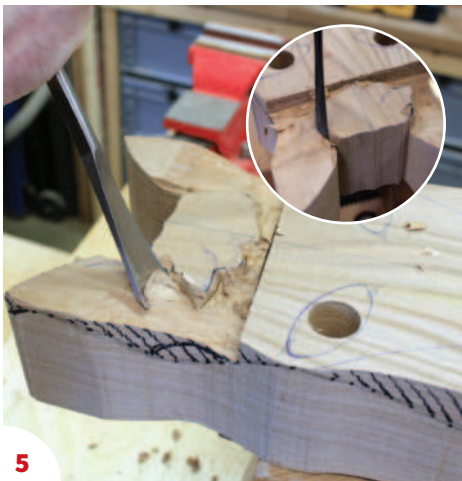
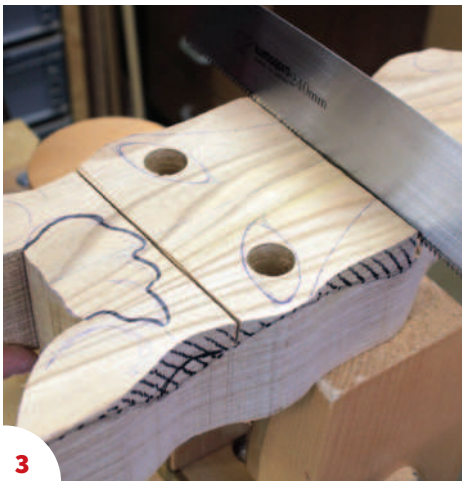
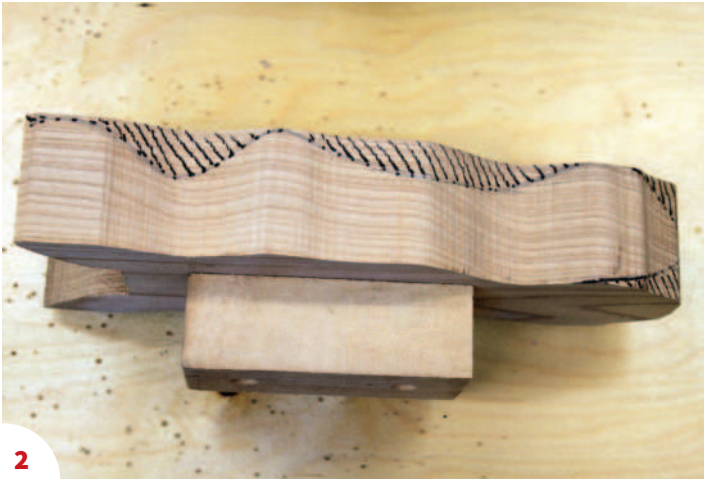
- Personal and respiratory protective equipment (PPE & RPE)
- Bandsaw
- Pillar drill
- Inflatable sanding attachment for power drill
- Suitable dust extraction
- Rotary power unit & hand piece
- 22mm flat bit
- Hand saw
- V-tool or veiner
- No.6, 22mm
- 12mm, 18mm & 24mm shallow fishtail gouges
- 12mm bent spoon gouge
- 13mm swan-neck gouge

- Saw rasp
- Wood rasps
- Hook knife
- Carving knife
- Wire brush
- Callipers
- Needle files and rasps

Materials:

- English elm (*Ulmus procera*)
- 80g, 120g, 180g, 240g sandpaper
- Black spirit stain
- Walnut spirit stain
- Danish oil
- Clear paste wax





Roughing the external form

1 The actual carving shown is slightly smaller than a full-size mask. If you want to make a full-size mask increase the dimensions of the plans by 15%. Start with a suitable blank measuring 380mm x 150mm x 70mm, and use the plans to mark and cut out the profile on a bandsaw or with a coping saw. Draw in the position of the eyes and drill 22mm hole in the centre, part way through the blank as shown.

2 Fix a clamping block and mark out the profile on both sides. You can also fix the blank to a backboard if you prefer. Here the carving is held in a vice for the initial shaping.

3 Clamp the work in a vice or on a work bench and use a hand saw to cut depth gauge slots at the deepest points of the profile lines, which will help when roughing out. You can make several cuts to make the removal of the waste easier if you wish.

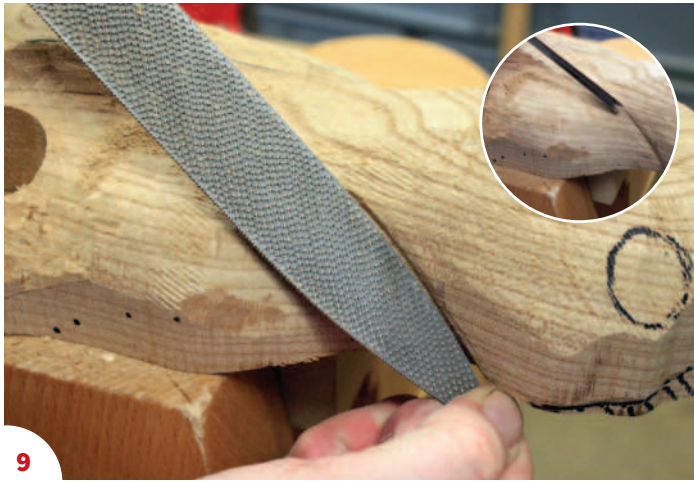
4 Start by outlining the forelock with a V-tool. This will be left proud to begin with and shaped later when the front of the mask has been completed. Note the curved mark on the side to show the height of the forelock.

5 Use something like a No.6, 22mm and begin to remove the waste around the forelock down to the profile line. Make downward parting cuts around the forelock as you cut away the waste to prevent splitting.

6 The level of the forelock can be reduced with a rasp or gouge at this stage and round over the top edge.

7 Continue to remove the waste down to the profile line then mark in the position of the eyes, nose, nostrils and cheeks.

8 Working from the centre start to round over the face to achieve the basic shape of the head and features. Replace the marks for the nostrils and eyes as you cut away the waste to retain their original positions. Smooth out the tool marks with a coarse rasp or file.



Refinement

9 Use a V-tool to separate and define the nose and cheeks then use a coarse rasp or gouge to round over the lower cheeks down to the bottom edge.

10 Use a shallow gouge to hollow out the inside of the ears and shape the outside. The inside of the ears will be hollowed out further with a rotary burr later on. The bottom of the ear can be transitioned into the brow line at the same time.

11 Turn your attention to the snout area and define the nostrils with a small shallow gouge. The height of the bridge of the nose has to be reduced slightly so that the nostrils sit closer to the top on each side, giving a more realistic appearance.

12 Hollow out the nostrils with a 12mm bent spoon gouge and cut back the outside all round to make the nostrils flare out and down. The sides of the nose are carved out and blended into the inner cheeks – aim for a smooth, contoured surface all round.

13 Select a gouge to match the curve of the eyes and make downward stop cuts around the outline, just enough to separate the fibres, not too deep to begin with. Now pare away the waste up to the stop cuts and repeat the process to achieve the basic shape of the eyes. There is no need to cut right through, the apertures will be opened up when the back of the mask is hollowed out and the final shaping of the eyes will be done then.

14 The outside of the eyes, bridge of the nose and brow line can be shaped with a round rotary burr or fluted gouge – again aim for a smooth transition into the other features. The whole mask will have a smooth, sanded finish.

15 The insides of the ears are carved out with a suitable gouge. Here a No.8. 13mm swan-neck has been used. They can be finished off with a round rotary burr to get deep inside the hollow.

16 The mask only includes the upper jaw line, and this can be shaped to curve away from the wall slightly either by chiselling or cutting away the waste and sanding the rear surface flat.



**17****18****19****20****21****22****23****24**

17 The same effect can be achieved to the back of the ears to make them curve away from the surface of the wall. First chisel the waste away to a flat surface then mark a centreline from the base up to the tip of the ear and round over each side to the front edges.

18 Reduce the level of the forelock so that it sits about 10mm proud of the forehead, then separate it into four sections with curved cuts using a V-tool and round over the edges slightly.

19 Mistakes happen and it is easy to chip an edge, especially on coarse grain woods, but they can be repaired. Mix some adhesive with a small amount of the same wood dust to form a thick paste, set the chip in place and allow to cure then sand back to the original shape.

20 The front of the mask can now be sanded down 80g, 120g, 180g & 240g paper and finally add extra detail to the forelock with a nail head rotary burr and a V-tool to achieve a realistic look. Clean the grooves out with a wire brush if necessary.

The back of the mask

21 Turn your attention to the back of the mask and secure it in a vice or clamp it to a workbench. Mark a line around the perimeter about 10mm in from the edge and start to carve out the bulk of the waste with a No.6, 22mm fishtail or similar. Work from the centre out toward the edge, keeping an eye on the wall thickness and using callipers to gauge it as you proceed.

22 A hook knife is a great tool for carving out the detailed areas around the eyes and nostrils, it is a good idea to wear protective gloves in case you slip. Take thin slivers to achieve a nice, even surface—you may have to alter direction to get the best cut, so try skewing the knife if you are cutting across grain for a smoother finish.

23 Once the carving is completed and the wall thickness has been checked all round it's time to sand the inside down to a smooth surface. For this it's best to use a bowl sanding attachment on a power drill to get into the recesses. Ease over the edge of the eyes with sandpaper on both the back and the front, it's not necessary to go down to 240g on the back, here I have just sanded down to 120g.

24 The inside of the mask fully sanded ready for finish. For this project the ears, nostrils and bridge of the nose have been stained black then the edges have been feathered back. The whole of the face has been finished with Danish oil with some walnut stain added, then polished with clear paste wax (see main image). ▶

News & events...

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

European Tree of the Year 2020

The Czech Republic's Guardian of the Flooded Village wins the title

The prestigious title of the European Tree of the Year is heading to the Czech Republic for 2020. The pine tree known as the Guardian of the Flooded Village left its rivals far behind in the public vote to take first place. The silver medal went to Croatia's Ginkgo From Daruvar, while Russia's Lonely Poplar was close behind in third place. The UK's finalist, the Allerton Oak in Liverpool's Calderstones Park, came seventh.

The 350-year-old Guardian of the Flooded Village grows on the rocky headland of a dam. Its story relates to the flooded village of Chudobín, which ceased to exist due to the construction of a dam. According to local legend, a devil sat under the pine in the night and played the violin. However, it is much more likely that the local people were hearing the strong winds blowing over the valley. This pine tree is not only an important landmark but also an impressive testament to its high resistance to climate change and human impact.

The announcement of the results, which traditionally takes place in the European Parliament in Brussels, went online this year due to the coronavirus and the subsequent closure of European borders. 'We wondered how to convey the joy of the results to 16 European communities. Finally, we combined the tree stories and personal



PHOTOGRAPH BY MAREK OLBRZYMEN/COURTESY OF TREE OF THE YEAR

The Guardian of the Flooded Village from the Czech Republic won the public vote and is the European Tree of the Year for 2020

testimonies of the first three finalists into a video that can now be watched and shared among tree fans across borders,' said Josef Jary from the Environmental Partnership Association, the contest organiser.

The contest was organised by the

Environmental Partnership Association and the European Landowners' Organisation under the auspices of MEPs Ludek Niedermayer and Michal Wiezik.

www.treeoftheyear.org.

PHOTOGRAPH BY PUBLIC INSTITUTION FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF PROTECTED AREAS OF NATURE IN THE COUNTY OF BIELOVAR-BILOGORA/COURTESY OF TREE OF THE YEAR



Croatia's Ginkgo from Daruvar took second place



PHOTOGRAPH BY NIKOLAY BOSHEV/COURTESY OF TREE OF THE YEAR

Russia's Lonely Poplar finished third

BDWCA NEWS

One of our constitutional aims is to promote interest in the art of bird carving both nationally and internationally, and our best opportunities to do this are when we are exhibiting at events that the public attend – primarily, as an Association, at the Rutland Birdfair in August and our Competition and Show at Bakewell in September each year.

We get a lot of interest in our bird carvings and, as I'm sure most of you won't be surprised to hear, we get asked certain questions over and over again. First place must go to 'What is it made of?', closely followed by 'How long

did it take to carve that bird?'. The answer to the former being, of course, 'wood', and to the latter, depending on the carver, probably 'How long is a piece of string?'. Most of us don't keep a record of how long we spend on any specific carving, probably because the reality would be too frightening, although there are exceptions, of course. Taking how long it takes to carve and paint a bird we are so very grateful to those carvers who have, over the years, kindly provided a bird that we can raffle at these events. This is especially popular at the Birdfair, probably

because the people who attend that event are, in the majority, keen birders. It is really interesting to hear the stories people tell us about where they have seen the 'raffle bird of the year', and to meet the same people year after year buying raffle tickets in the hope of winning the bird, including past winners who hope to win another one – they usually say it is to keep the other one company.

Contacts

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



PHOTOGRAPH BY PAM WILSON FOR THE BDWCA

Trio of Curlews by Anton Visser, 2019



PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID ASKEW FOR THE BDWCA

Azure Winged Magpie by David Askew, 2015



PHOTOGRAPH BY ROGER FRANCIS FOR THE BDWCA

Green Woodpecker by Roger Francis, 2016



PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVE TOHER FOR THE BDWCA

Waxwing by Steve Toher, 2017

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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Gibbons-style appliqué panel

Steve Bisco mounts limewood foliage on an oak panel, in the style of Grinling Gibbons



PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVE BISCO

When we think about the magnificent woodcarvings of the great 17th-century master Grinling Gibbons (1648-1721) we tend to think only of the limewood (*Tilia europea*) he used to carve the incredibly realistic and delicate swags of foliage, fowl and fruit. We tend to forget the other wood that performed a vital 'supporting role' in the composition. Gibbons' pale limewood swags and drops, which he left in their natural wood without any finish on them, were nearly always mounted on large panels of a contrasting wood, which in 17th-century England was usually oak (*Quercus robur*). This style of applying a feature in one wood onto the surface of another is known by the French name 'appliqué'.

Later, in the 19th century, the Victorians

decided that all wood should be dark brown, and the consequent staining and waxing of many Gibbons' carvings in that period means we rarely see them today as Gibbons intended them to be seen, with white limewood on new oak. When Gibbons' great overmantel surrounds were first installed in the 1690s and 1700s in the state rooms of Hampton Court, Windsor Castle, and many other grand buildings, they would have been light, bright and cheerful. Celia Fiennes, a noblewoman who kept a diary of her travels around England in the 1690s, describes seeing Gibbons' carvings at Windsor Castle when they were brand new: 'There is alsoe the most Exactest workmanship in the wood Carving, which is ... the masterpiece of all such work, both in ffigures, fruitages, beasts, birds, fflowers,

all sorts, soe thinn the wood, and all white natural wood without varnish.' It is a shame that visitors today can only see them as dark shapes on an equally dark background.

I've designed this project to show how a Gibbons carving would have looked when it was new, with creamy-white limewood on light-brown oak. The flowers I've used are based on actual Gibbons examples. For those of us whose homes can't accommodate a grand overmantel surround in an oak-panelled room, and for those who may not yet be ready to tackle a larger composition, I've kept this to a small scale. The limewood carving is left completely untreated, just as Gibbons left his, and the oak is finished with Danish oil to bring out the contrasting colour of the natural oak.



Things you will need

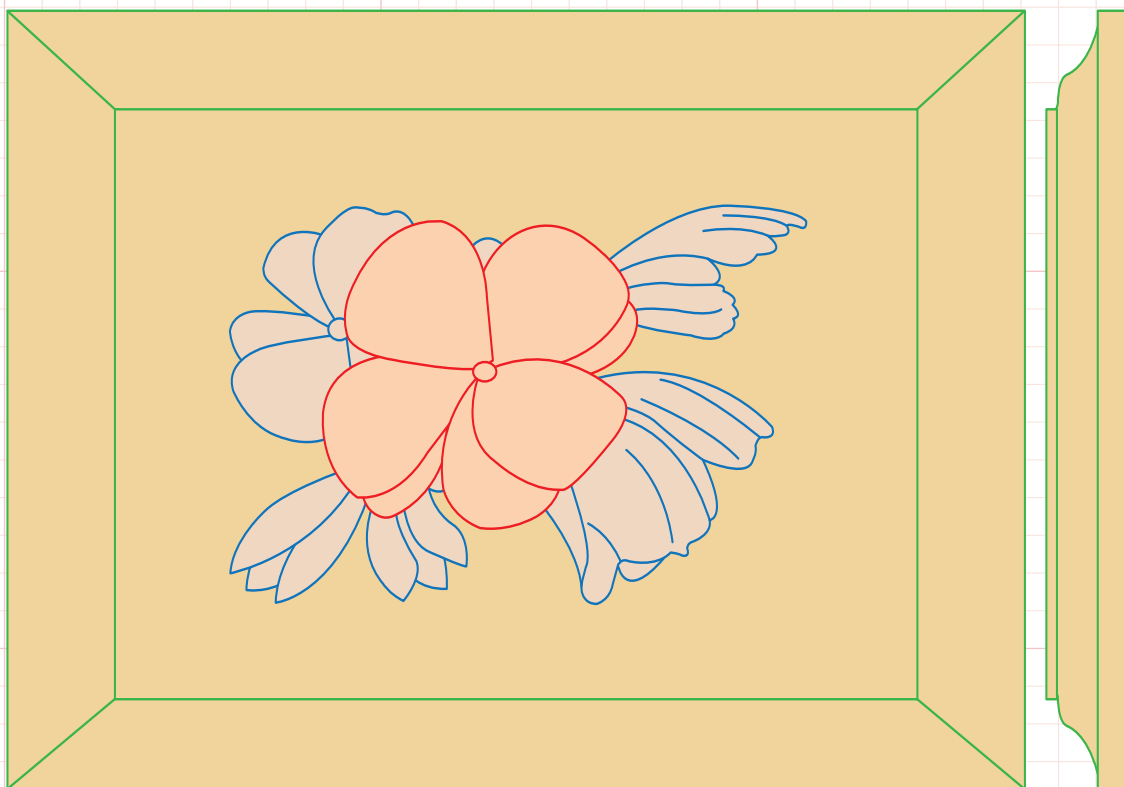
Tools:

- No.3, fishtail 10 & 18mm
- No.4, fishtail 6mm
- No.5, 3, 5 & 7mm
- No.7, 10mm
- No.8, 8mm & 8mm curved
- No.9, 3 & 20mm
- 18mm spoon bent gouge
- 10mm short bent gouge
- 10mm L & R skewed spoon gouges
- 12mm back-bentgouge
- 2 & 6mm straight & 4mm curved V-tools
- 2, 3, 6.6 & 20mm flat chisels
- 16mm hooked skew chisel 16mm
- Jigsaw/bandsaw/scrollsaw,
- 30mm convex moulding plane

- cabinet scrapers

Materials:

- Lime (*Tilia europea*)
250 x 130 x 50mm overall
- Oak (*Quercus robur*) 290 x 250 x 25mm
- Danish oil



Green = oak panel, blue = main flower bunch, red = forward flower

MAKING SMOOTH MOULDINGS

Woodcarving doesn't often require us to create dead-straight lines and smooth, linear mouldings, but the need arises when making panels with 'picture frame' borders. You can create mouldings with an electric router if you have the necessary skills and equipment - but if you prefer traditional hand tools, set yourself up with some moulding planes and cabinet scrapers.

MOULDING PLANES

Traditional wooden moulding planes are a useful addition to your toolkit to help you tackle borders, frames and linenfold panels. Try to build up a set of a few concave and convex profiles. They are a pleasure

to use (when sharpened), even though the adjustment (tapping the blade with a hammer) can be a bit tricky. You can buy second-hand ones quite cheaply at antique centres, and new and old ones online.

CABINET SCRAPERS

To get a fine finish on flat or moulded hardwood surfaces, use cabinet scrapers. These are small sheets of steel with straight or curved edges, usually sold in threes, which are pulled across the surface at an almost-vertical angle to scrape the wood to a smooth finish. On hardwoods such as oak they produce a glossier finish than abrasives.

Moulding planes

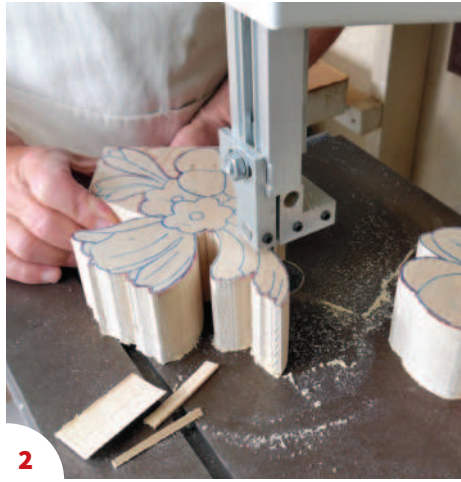


Cabinet scrapers





1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8

DID YOU KNOW?

To see Gibbons' carvings displayed in their natural colours, albeit with 300 years of ageing to the lime and oak, a good place to visit is the Wren Library at Trinity College, Cambridge (www.trin.cam.ac.uk/library/wren-library). Installed around 1695, the 'benefactor panels' and their accompanying swags and cherubs are some of the finest smaller-scale examples of Gibbons' work at its peak.

PREPARATIONS

1 Get a planed piece of oak 290 x 250 x 25mm for the mounting panel. The two levels of limewood flowers can be cut from a block 250 x 130 x 50mm overall. Make a full-size copy of the drawing and trace the flower pattern onto the limewood with carbon paper.

2 Cut out the lower and upper levels of flowers from the limewood block using a jigsaw, bandsaw, scrollsaw or coping saw.

MAKING THE OAK PANEL

3 Mark out a border area 30mm wide on the oak panel. Set up the panel on your bench using wooden strips to secure it, and carefully cut around the inside edge of the border with a V-tool to a depth not exceeding 3mm. Use a rebate plane or a flat chisel to reduce the border area to a depth of 3mm below the face of the panel and create a straight and vertical fillet.

4 Mark a line around the sides of the board at a level of 8mm from the back edge. Use a convex moulding plane of about 30mm width (see box) if you have one, or a broad No.6 gouge if you don't, to produce a concave moulding down to the 8mm mark.

5 Use the rebate plane and a broad No.3 gouge to shape a smooth and even 'cyma reversa' or 'ogee' moulding by rounding over a convex curve into the concave curve. Push the gouge along like a plane, controlling the cutting angle carefully with your hands. On the end grain, slide the gouge 'on the skew' to make slicing cuts.

6 To create a smooth and even surface on the mouldings and face of the panel, use cabinet scrapers (see box opposite) rather than abrasives as it will give a cleaner finish.

CARVING THE FLOWER BUNCH

7 Screw the main flower bunch to a backing board through from the back into the central parts of the bunch, and fix it to the bench. Rough out the levels and shape of the large dome-shaped flower in the bottom right, the curling acanthus leaf feature in the top right, and the two crocuses in the lower left.

8 These three features need to be hollowed out in a bench vice while there is still enough wall thickness to withstand the outward pressure. The flower is a foreshortened oval shape inside, hollowed with a spoon gouge. The crocus flowers can be hollowed by rotating an 8mm, No.8 gouge inside them. The acanthus leaf needs supporting while being scooped out with the spoon gouge.

9 Now rough out the sloping six-petal flower in the top left. The three simple flowers in the middle are layered to form a supporting structure holding the main elements together, and will provide a fixing platform for the forward flower. Redraw the pattern details with a wax pencil.

10 Return to the large domed flower and carve the outer detail on each of the petals with No.7 and No.8 gouges, and use a hooked skew chisel to create sharp edges and overlaps. Give the petals some curves, flicks and grooves, and carefully pare away the underside of the petal edges so they are thin and sharp.

11 There are gaps between some of the upper petals so the interior of the flower can be seen. Use a spoon gouge to refine the hollowing, and carve detail on the inside faces of the petals where they are visible with a curved V-tool and an 8mm No.8 curved gouge.

12 The half-unfurled acanthus leaf in the top right needs to be very thin. Give it some extra support while carving to avoid breaking the narrow stem. Carve prominent grooves and vein lines along it to emphasise the flow, and deeply indent the ends. Refine the hollowing and show some leaf details on the inside surfaces.

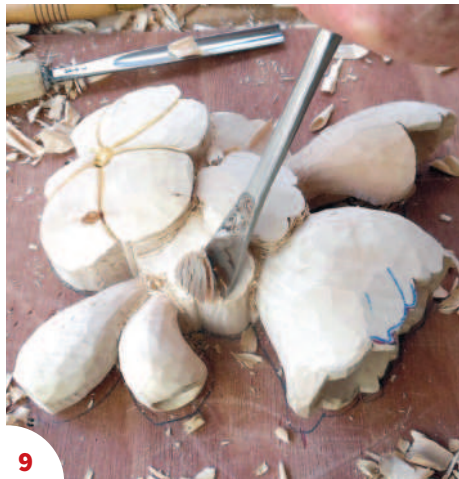
13 Carve the crocus flowers into separate petals with sharp overlapping edges and pointed ends. Refine the hollowing to create very thin edges at the ends. The flowers extend across the grain, so brace them while carving.

14 The six-petalled flower in the top left must slope steeply to the left, using most of the 50mm thickness of the wood. Give the petals plenty of curl and a slightly 'tooled' texture, with some quite deep channels made with an 8mm No.8 gouge, and just a hint of score lines made with the hooked skew chisel.

15 The three simple flat flowers must be layered between the other features and be given thin edges. Beneath them they will provide a base surface to be glued to the oak, and at the front they will provide a mounting platform for the forward flower. Undercut the flowers deeply and create a lower layer of rudimentary leaves where necessary to maintain a suitable gluing area at the base.

16 Remove the carving from the backing board, place it face down on a soft surface, and carefully undercut all the lower edges of the flowers and stems. Anything that can be seen from the front needs to be thin and natural, but with a flat gluing surface where it cannot be seen. Give the carving a light sanding to remove any stringy bits.

TOP TIP: When a carving is to have a bare wood finish, keep it clean as you work by wearing carving gloves. Only use wax pencils for marking – graphite makes the wood grubby.



9



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

TOP TIP: When layering a Gibbons-style carving, it is difficult to predict how much of the 'support platform' flowers on the base layer will be visible when the upper layer is added. It is best to carve them all to a good standard on the assumption that some of them may be visible from some angles.

CARVING THE FORWARD FLOWER

17 Attach the forward flower to a backing board by gluing it to a piece of card which is glued to the backing board. Rough out the shape so each petal forms a sort of dome. Bring the petals lower in the bottom left and top right to fit in with the levels of the elements on the main flower cluster.

18 Carve the detail on the petals, with 'corrugated' grooves and sharp edges where the petals overlap others. Undercut the overlaps deeply to show the thinness of the upper petals. Bring this flower to a smooth finish with abrasives.

19 Prise the flower off the card and place it face down on a soft surface for undercutting with a batten fixed across it, screwed to the bench at both ends, to hold it still. You will need to carve away much of the original 50mm thickness and create a flat platform underneath so it will sit in the right position on the flat flower platform of the main flower bunch. Undercut the edges of the petals so they are very thin and no surplus wood will be visible when mounted.

ASSEMBLY

20 Mask off the parts of the oak panel to which the limewood appliqué will be glued, to keep the gluing surface as bare wood. Give the rest of the panel two coats of Danish oil, front and back, to bring out the natural colour of the oak. Buff it up to a soft sheen but try to avoid a high gloss as this would not suit the bare limewood appliqué.

21 Now glue the main flower bunch to the oak panel with uPVA wood glue. Put a layer of glue on the 'unvarnished' areas of the oak panel, then position the main flower bunch carefully, press it down and move it slightly a couple of times until you feel the glue 'suck' it onto the oak. When the glue is set, drill out a 6mm hole through to the oak and glue in a 6mm dowel to give a long-term secure fixing.

22 'Bed-in' the forward flower into its position, then glue it in place. Put a good coating of glue where the main contact area is, then add dabs of glue to a few other points where the petals of the upper flower touch against the lower flowers.

23 The finished panel gives us a good impression in miniature of what a Gibbons limewood foliage overmantel would have looked like when it was new in the 1690s, with its white limewood mounted on new oak panelling. ▶

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Carving the eye

In the third part of *Practice Makes Perfect*, Peter Benson uses a carving stick to perfect the eyes

The one aspect of carving the face of a human being, or even an animal, that causes the most trouble to experienced and novice carvers alike is getting the eyes right. Even if the first one is acceptable it is highly unlikely that the carver will be equally successful with the second. Invariably, as carving realistic eyes is seen as virtually unachievable, they are left until the rest of the carving has been more or less completed, thereby causing incredible stress as the slightest mistake is likely to spoil the whole piece. As a result, many otherwise beautiful carvings are spoiled by messy holes where the eyes should be, or very hesitant attempts at producing something that is far from realistic.

My first bit of advice here is to never leave the difficult bits of a carving until the end. Tackle them as early as you can to avoid hours of wasted time on a piece that you may well reject as unsatisfactory.

My second piece of advice is to practise doing eyes before you start your project. The process of achieving a good or acceptable carved eye is not difficult if you understand exactly what you are trying to achieve.

I have carved hundreds of faces in my lifetime and yet I still practise carving the eyes on a piece of scrap wood to get the shape and expression right for each face I do. If you only carve half a dozen faces, and don't practise, you will only carve six right and six left eyes. How can you hope to get them right with this number of attempts, especially under stress?

The other problem with eyes is that you have to carve two of them in every face. Not only that, but they have to be a matching pair and, as they are on opposite sides of the face, you cannot carve the two of them in the same way unless you are completely ambidextrous.

Now I have outlined all the problems I am hoping that I can help you with the answers.

First of all, don't try to carve one eye and then match the second – they will rarely turn out the same. For each cut you make on the first eye do the same on the second, making sure it is as near the same as you can, before moving on.

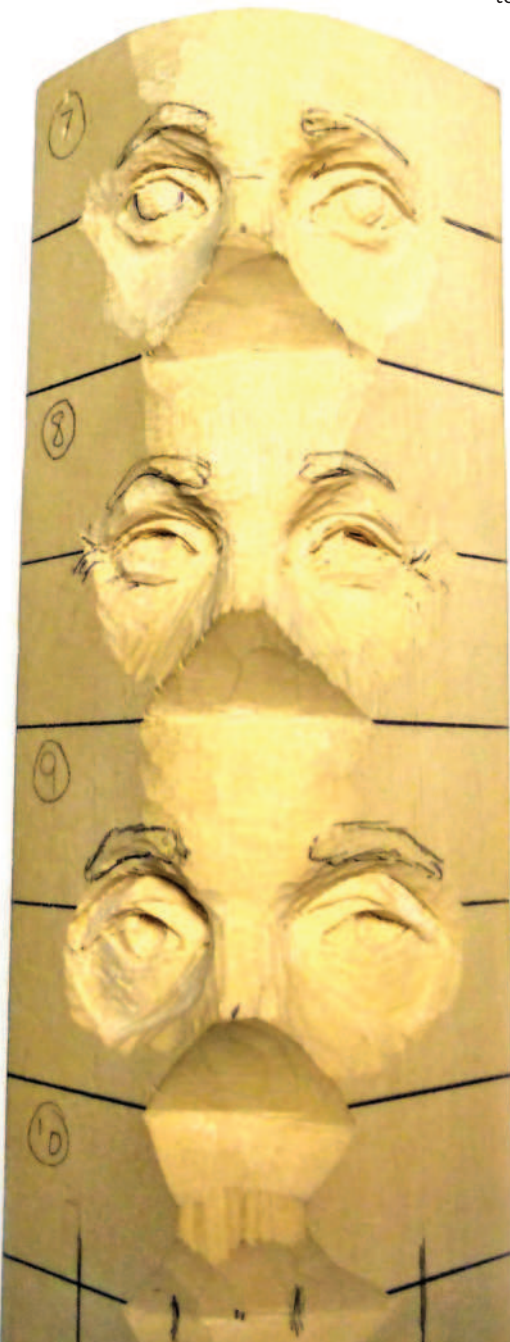
What, then, do you need to get started?

As you need to practise left and right eyes, the best way is to carve across the corner as we did with the nose and mouth. For ease of illustration I have used a 300mm length of 50mm square section jelutong (*Dyera costulata*) as this is easy to carve with a knife and it also holds fine detail, but you can use a piece whatever size you wish. You will need 10 x 50mm sections in all, so you will need to carve on opposite corners in order to get them all in. Alternatively, you could use two smaller pieces of wood – it is up to you. I wouldn't recommend that you go too much smaller for this exercise, as the smaller you go the more difficult the eyes are to carve and, invariably, much less detail and a different approach is needed for small

eyes – more about this later.

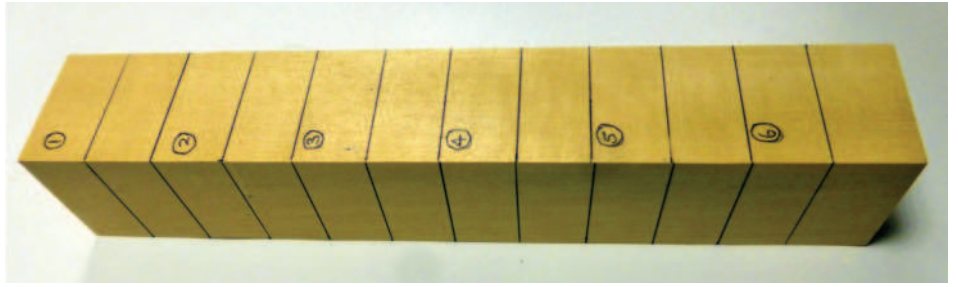
Much of the work can be done with a knife but you will also need a small gouge or block cutter around 3-4mm, No. 9 sweep.

One piece of information that will help is that the face at the eye line is five eyes wide – the two eyes, the gap between and the two spaces outside each eye.



STARTING OFF

Mark out your block into equal sections of between 30 and 50mm and draw another line approximately halfway down each one. I have used 10 x 50mm sections and each is divided in half with a line to represent the eye line. As these lines are to remain throughout the process I recommend that you use a ballpoint pen to avoid erasing the lines or smudging pencil lead all over the carving.



Mark out stick in required number of sections

Stage 1

Using your knife, remove wood from the corner to shape the bridge of the nose and the forehead as a profile. The deepest part of the bridge of the nose should be in line with the eye line you have drawn. Round off the forehead above where the eyebrows would be and redraw the part of the eye line you have removed. Cut away the lower part of the nose to clear the line separating the two sections. Check that you are happy with the profile before repeating on all following sections. Once you are satisfied with all the sections, move on to the next stage.

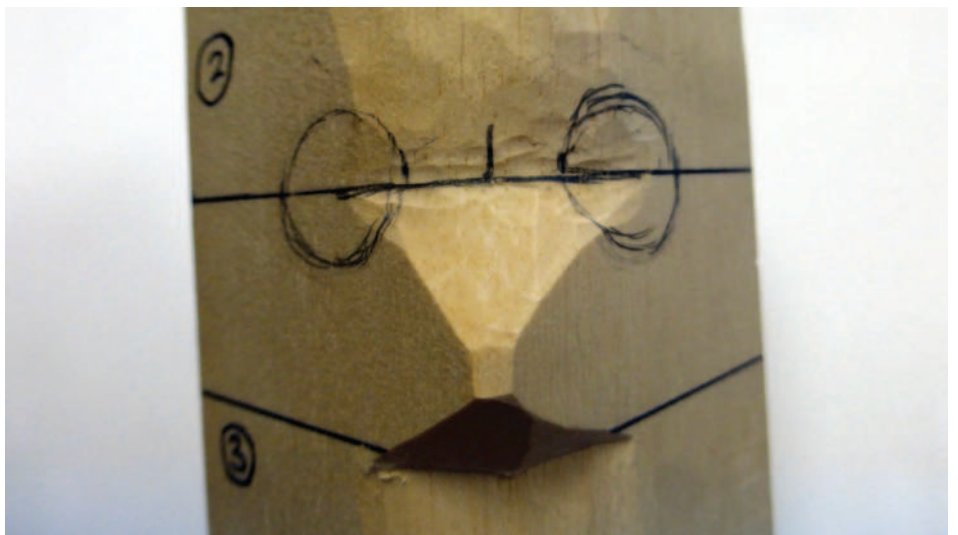


Cut back to the middle line to create nose slope, angle down to next section. Round off the corner as shown

Stage 2

If you look at a picture of the human face with a line drawn horizontally through the centre of both eyes, each eye and the space between is equal to one fifth of the total length, with the remainder outside of each eye.

I have divided the eye line into five equal parts, in this case 15mm each, and have drawn two circles for the eyes as shown. If you want the eyes to be larger there is no problem as long as you make the space between them the same size.



Divide eye line and draw eye circles

Stage 3

Using your small gouge make a hollow around 6mm deep at the inner edge of each eye circle. This represents the inner corner of the eye. The arrows in the picture on the right show the next five cuts that you need to make with your gouge. Note that no. 1 only goes from the centre of the top of the eye, leaving a full top outer quarter of the eye. This represents the fullness visible in a young or female eye. If the cut is taken right round the top it will make an old-looking eye.

Stage 4

Once you have completed the five cuts, blend them all together to form a circular mound forming the basic eyeball shape. You should not consider shaping the opening part of the eye until this and the next stage are completed satisfactorily.

Stage 5

You now need to draw the outline of both eyes, making sure you have a pair that match. The shapes of eyes can vary enormously, not only from person to person but also with the mood that each person may be in at any one time. A rounded eye can be a sign of astonishment or threat, whereas an eye with a flattened lower lid can be friendly or smiling. I recommend you find an eye shape that gives you what you want, perhaps from a magazine or the internet, and copy the shape onto your carving. If you are not confident that you can draw both eyes the same you might like to



Direction of the five cuts to be made with your gouge



Circular mound formed after shaping

draw one, trace the shape and then reverse it for the other eye. Check that the eyes are the correct distance apart and along the eye line and you are ready to cut them out.

Stage 6

Before removing any wood from the surface of the eyeball you will need to cut the outline of each eye with your knife. Carefully cut along the lines you have drawn, doing both top lines and then both bottom lines. This way you will minimise the possibility of producing two different shapes. Using your knife (or gouge if you prefer) remove the wood from inside the outlines you have cut to a depth of around 1mm all over. The dome shape you started with is similar to part of an orange and what you are doing is similar to removing an eye-shaped section of the peel, exposing an area of the flesh beneath. Take care that the surface of the eyeball resembles part of a sphere and is not almond shaped (which can happen if you go too deep at the top and bottom.)

Stage 7

You can now add the top eyelid and any bags or wrinkles in the bottom eyelid. Draw these on carefully but bear in mind that this may not be possible with small eyes. When carving the top eyelid cut upwards under the line drawn before you cut the line of the lid as, if you do it the other way round, you can lose the top lid completely.

Having reached this stage on your carving you will need to decide whether you want any detail of the pupil or iris of the eye. This can be painted if you wish (this is what would have been done with all the classical statues) or you can carve the detail. There are advantages and disadvantages with both methods. In the picture on the right the iris has been outlined, which is probably the simplest option.

Stage 8

If you wish you can experiment here with different effects. Here I have flattened the lower eyelid to give the effect of an eye that is smiling or laughing. In general, it is rare that an eye is seen as round unless the subject is frightened, threatening or amazed. I have also shown the iris as a deep hollow. You might prefer this to the iris being outlined.

Stage 9

As I had some spare sections I have tried to show an older eye. To do this the hollow above the eye needs to go right round the top without the pronounced bulge over the outer corner. The top eyelid is cut right over the top.

NOTE: I should stress that this exercise is purely to practise carving eyes, so you don't need to pay attention to the nose area or the outside of the eyes. Nor do you need to spend a large amount of time on quality of finish as you will, no doubt, be going over your work several times to get the results you require. You need to feel relaxed for this kind of exercise, not stressed.

The next study stick will be carving the ear and then we will produce the final one with the whole face. Don't try to add detail to small eyes- you will have problems. Often a simple cut along the eye line is better than trying to carve an open eye. ▶



Draw in the eye shape



Remove the area between the eyelids to an even depth



Cut in the eyelids with care



Finished eye with slightly raised iris



Iris hollowed and bottom lid raised to make more cheerful eye



Older eye with deeper top lid and sagging below

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Relief panel

Terry Nokes carves a pink quill



The pink quill (*Tillandsia cyanea*) belongs to the bromeliad family of air plants and is native to the rainforests of Ecuador. These have the most amazing pink bracts, which can flower violet blue petals in the spring or autumn. This relief project in lime (*Tilia x europaea*) was carved into a 25mm board. The design is from a photograph of a recently purchased plant, the only modification being the removal of some of the leaves.

Often in carving there are many ways to complete a given task. With respect to outlining the leaves I chose to make basic stop cuts using a carving knife. My original planning thoughts were to make one cut on the top of each leaf only, then carve and blend the other bottom leaf edge into the background.

But as carving progressed and being wall mounted, additional knife stop

cuts were made on both sides, to enhance the shadows created from overhead lighting. This takes a lot of care, especially when carving across the grain. Sharp knife cuts need to be made with gentle, shallow passes, as deep cuts could wedge wood fibres apart which would make the thin leaves quite fragile.

Some carvers might look into wood stabilising these areas first. Perhaps trial making the leaves outline with a small U-shaped tool (veiner) instead, or experiment with other tools you own and practise on some scrap lime wood first. Finishing is a personal choice, and I might still paint this project or darken the background. If this is something you wish to carve yourself, it might be beneficial to read the entire article first, before you proceed.



Inspiration for the project

PHOTOGRAPHS BY TERRY NOKES

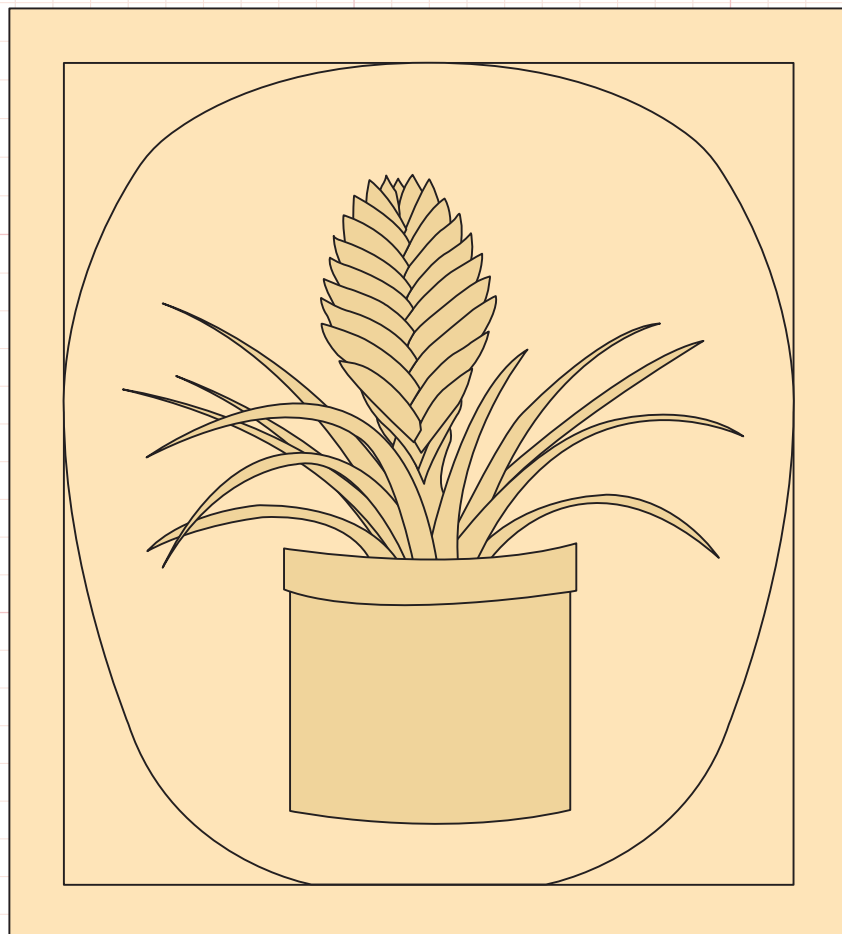
Things you will need

Tools:

- Ashley Iles No.3,4,5 fishtails in various widths
- Ashley Iles No.4, 7.5mm Left corner skew gouge
- Ashley Iles No.4, 7.5mm Right corner skew gouge
- Pfeil No.1, 25mm fishtail double bevel
- Pfeil No.3, 12mm fishtail
- Pfeil No.5, 14mm fishtail
- Pfeil No.8, 18mm deep gouge
- Carving knife
- F-speed clamp
- Anti-slip mat
- Square/rule
- Carvers punch
- Cabinet scrapers (optional)
- Cut-resistant gloves
- Dust mask
- Disposable nitrile gloves

Materials:

- Lime 250 x 225 x 25mm
- Carbon copying paper
- Foam-backed abrasives, grades down to 400 grit
- Danish oil
- Paint brush



1 Prepare a blank 250x225x25mm. Decide which side will be the front. When looking at the sides, is your blank straight-grained or sloping off in one direction? Orient the board so when carving downwards it will give you the best cuts. Pencil in the word 'top' on the carving front. Now, draw a 25mm border all round to create a frame area and pencil mark a centreline on the top and bottom.

2 Size the supplied template to fit inside your framed area. This needs to be centred by either folding paper in half to indicate the centreline or just by eye centring the outer oval. When happy, attach the top with masking tape. At this time, we are just roughing out our project, so transferring the whole design at this stage isn't necessary. Leave a safety margin around the pink quill as shown in red and transfer this and the outer oval design with carbon paper.

3 Mark the centre, and note carving directions in red. With handling and carving of our workpiece the pencil frame line might disappear, so make light cuts all round with a No.1 fishtail by hand.

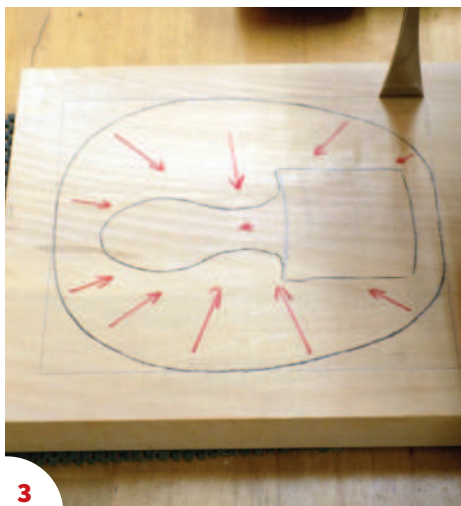
4 These are some of my first tools ever purchased. They are called fishtails and originally designed by Glyn Mould and made by Ashley Iles. The sweeps and widths are: No.4, 6mm, No.3, 13mm and No.5, 10mm. With the combination of the three profiles, a lot can be achieved on smaller projects. On this occasion, these fishtails were used around the quill to make all the stop cuts, as between them all, they fit most curved and wavy lines.



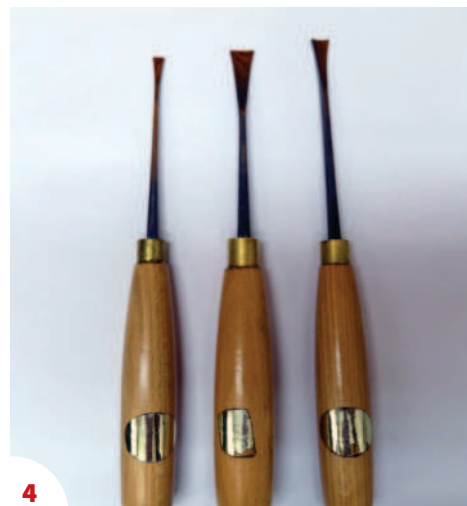
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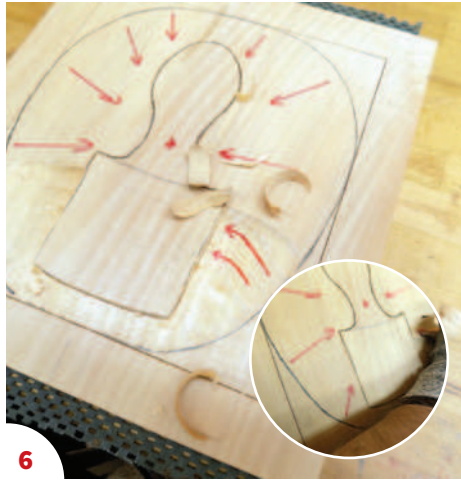
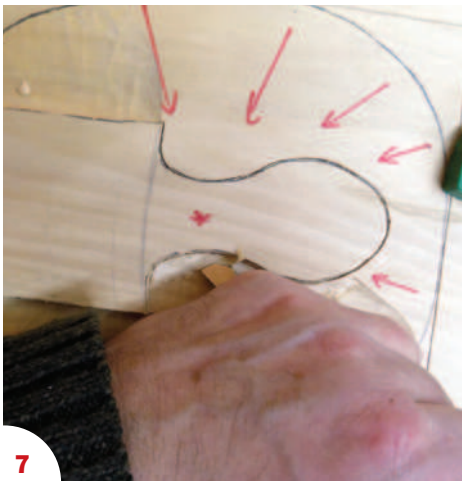
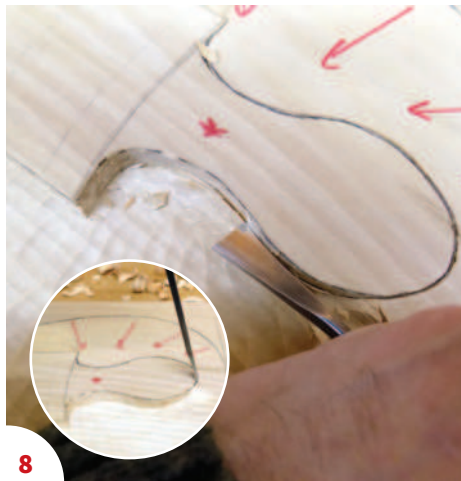
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3



4

**5****6****7****8****9****10****11****12**

5 Using various fishtails and/or a carving knife, make stop cuts all around the quill and pot. Remember to create vertical stop cuts, lean the tool back slightly as the cut follows the tool bevel and not the tool's flute. Note inset picture in step 8. Remember, it is good practice to stop carving tools frequently to maintain the cutting edge.

6 Secure the workpiece on an anti-slip mat with clamps then, with a deep gouge, remove waste in the arrow direction. Towards the end of the cut swing the tool round to meet your stop cut squarely so chips fall away.

7 In this concave area, try sweeping one tip of a shallow fishtail or a gouge along the stop cut. Although the tool tip isn't visible under the surface, with experience this can be achieved quite accurately.

8 Again, on concave and convex stop cuts, try aligning the side of the tool with cut as shown. Remember to make accurate vertical cuts by leaning the tool handle back slightly to avoid undercutting. Caution: these vertical stop cuts are in a wanted area later – do not make them too deep as it will affect the depth for your background.

9 Progress so far. Repeat previous steps to create a depth somewhere between halfway and two-thirds (12mm – 16mm). Again, as you near your desired depth it's so important take great care on your final stop cut pass around the quill, as any deep cuts might mean removing a lot of waste all round again. Strive to get the stop cuts to meet the side waste removal exactly. For new carvers, perhaps follow my example and stop halfway, just in case something goes wrong later so you still have material left to go deeper and make good again. Use a depth gauge or rule to ensure equal depths either side of the red star. Note: around the plant pot the background follows the same curvature as the sides, meaning the stop cut at the bottom of the pot isn't as deep.

10 With a No.3 gouge or fishtail smooth over the ridges left behind from the large gouge. Tidy up oval sides as well if required.

11 Now that our background has been removed, transfer the leaves design with carbon paper. For ease, cut paper template around the red outline from earlier.

12 Remove material from the quill. The bulbous centre looks like the back of a spoon and is approximately 5mm high, shown here, the sides are about 1mm. Then, draw in pencil the rest of the leaves over the quill base. Now make knife stop cuts between the leaves and the quill area.



13

13 Remove waste with a shallow No.3 fishtail.



14

14 Cut quill from paper template and transfer its design with carbon paper.



15

15 Next with a knife, cut around the outside of the Quill as shown.

16 With a fishtail remove the background waste around the outside. Again, here it displays how important it was not to cut too deeply around the quill in the earlier steps. Inset - An excellent tool choice for this task is the Ashley Iles corner skew gouge designed by Peter Benson, they are made with both left and right sided skews.



16



17

17 Once all the outside is carved and blended into the background, the next step is to cut all the bract lines on the Quill.

18 Run the side of a shallow fishtail or gouge along the knife cut and across the wood grain as shown in picture 8, or clean up the cut if need be, by carefully carving towards the cut square on, as displayed.



18



19

19 Progress so far. Note there is no undercutting around the quill perimeter, here. If you wish, gently sand the quill with upward passes only.

20 To maintain strength in the thin leaves, make shallow knife cuts along the top edge only, on all the individual leaves. Ensure your knife point is sharp, and remember to leather strop the blade if and when required.



20



21

21 With a No.3 sweep tool blend all areas between the leaves into the background. Inset: note the arrows for carving direction on the lowest leaf.

**22****23**

22 Progress so far. All the top leaf edges are now carved.

23 Next, on the bottom of each leaf make another shallow knife cut but tilt the knife blade away slightly from the leaf as shown, and again remove and blend in background waste.

24 With the No.3 fishtail chamfer the bottom of each leaf towards the background.

25 Note the overlapping leaves have equal share of the available material height. The inset picture is another fragile part in this project – the acute angle where these leaves intercept.

**24****25**

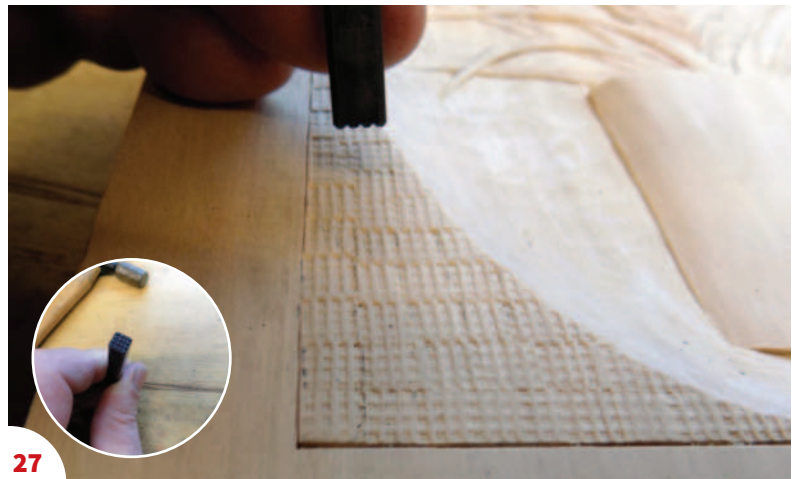
26 Round over the sides of the plant pot. Here the pot bottom is combined with the curved background area. A good finish can also be achieved with miniature cabinet scrapers.

27 The inner frame corners. Either carve away 1-2mm of material and/or texture the surface with a woodcarver's punch. When punching try to ensure each hammer strike has even pressure.

28 The piece ready for finishing.

29 Sign and date your plaque and apply finish of choice. This example has been coated with Danish oil. Just an idea, once dried, mask up the stamped textured area and apply wax to the outer frame only.

30 The piece mounted on a wall. ▶

**26****27****28****29****30**

Knife grips for carving wood

Adrian Lloyd shares the second in a series of articles exploring traditional carving techniques

In this series of articles we are focusing on some simple, and most importantly, safe knife grips and cuts for carving wood. For this issue we will build upon the powerful wasting strokes discussed in the last article and explore some finer cuts and techniques that are useful for refining the shape of the piece being worked. Again, these follow on nicely from our article about using skewing and slicing to increase the efficiency of the cutting action. This article in particular will be focused on grips that are designed for more detailed work and involve techniques that are designed to safely cut towards the body, leaving the final article of the series for demonstrating the use of smaller knives to make finishing cuts and add decorative details.

We have deliberately reproduced some text from the first article here as it remains relevant. It would be unsafe to assume that all who read this also enjoyed reading the first in the series, so to include some of the original context and safety notes seems eminently sensible.

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 this article is a prototype Hewn & Hone Sloyd carving knife hand forged from O1 tool steel. It has been hollow ground using the Hewn & Hone Sloyd 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.

In contrast to the previous issue, this article in particular will show how we can use a different set of groups of muscles in more considered, subtle ways to refine the roughed-out shape created with the powerful wasting strokes from the previous stage. A well-maintained sharp knife is essential for these cuts, not only from a position of safety but to ensure that the finishing cuts being made leave a series of flat facets with an almost mirror-like quality to the surface. We are aiming for these cuts to produce the final finish on the piece being worked upon rather than accepting that our final finish will be achieved by working through a range of abrasives.

There are a range of different knife grips or grasps that we use when carving, ranging from powerful wasting strokes away from the body to more precise cuts made towards the body. Done correctly



PHOTOGRAPHS BY MEACHAN LLOYD

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 when used correctly but 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 glove

on their workpiece-holding hand to protect against a slicing cut. These will not protect from a stab cut. I feel wearing a glove restricts your feel for what you are doing and can lead to complacency and the development of poor technique. But it is important to work safely and it is up to you if you use safety gloves.

For cuts towards the chest, some choose to wear an apron or protective bib. 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. Have a first aid kit to hand with different-sized plasters and Steri-strips/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 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.

Carving towards yourself

The powerful wasting strokes discussed in the previous article are effective and efficient and allow the roughing out of a project quickly, but refining a finished shape becomes hard to achieve if we only cut away from ourselves. Final contours and details are where we must begin to use some knife grips that are designed to safely carve towards ourselves. To many this will sound unsafe, however, through careful use, all of these cuts are designed with a natural stop – either because the sharp edge never leaves the piece of material being carved or the specific position of our hands, forearms and elbows against our body prevents the blade from reaching us.

The simple pull stroke

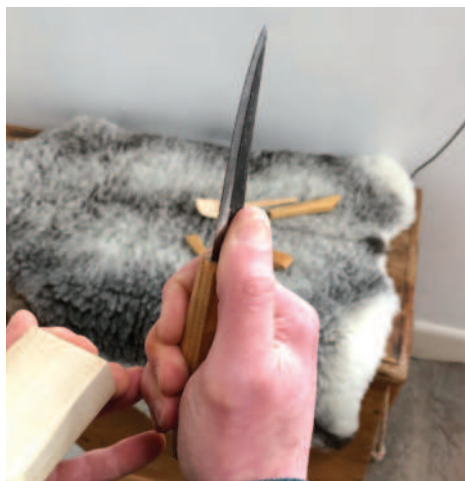
The workpiece is held between the thumb and index finger of the supporting hand and braced against the sternum or upper

abdomen, ensuring that the thumb and fingers of the holding hand are kept back from the path of travel of the knife.

The edge is facing the body with the spine away from the body, and quite often the thumb of the knife-holding hand is placed against the side of the blade for additional support and guidance. This is an easy cut to control because the arms are well supported against the side of the body and the thumb on the side of the blade provides additional control for the angle of cut being made.

Long, clean facets are possible by making sure the cuts begin close to the knife handle and follow the entire length of the blade to the tip. The cut ends either just before a natural stop in the workpiece – for example the end of the neck of a spoon where the handle meets the bowl – or when the heel of the knife-holding hand comes to rest against the ribs.

If the cut is made with the tip of the knife trailing, not only will you achieve an effective skewing cut but it will be impossible for the knife to come into contact with any part of the body.



Simple Pull Stroke – knife position



Simple pull stroke – carver's view



Simple pull stroke – observer's view



Reinforced pull stroke – on spine of knife



Reinforced pull stroke – carver's view



Reinforced pull stroke – observer's view

The reinforced pull stroke

This grip is essentially the same as the simple pull stroke above, except that the piece being worked is only held by the index finger and thumb of the supporting hand while leaving three fingers free to add further control to the cut. These free fingers push against the back of either the fingers or the hand of the knife-holding hand. This not only allows extra power to the cut if this is required but also

affords additional control over both the speed and the direction of the cut. Our arms continue to be pressed tightly to the sides of our body and our work-holding hand is largely locked in position, therefore making long cuts is not possible with this grip. Remember to make sure both your index finger and your thumb of the work-holding hand are kept well out of the way of the cutting edge.



The draw grip

This is a particularly good grip for doing detailed, intricate, fine carving and once mastered will help to achieve excellent results on your workpieces.

The back of the knife is held by cradling it in the four fingers of the knife-holding hand, sometimes with the spine of the blade creeping up into the fingers also. The thumb of the knife-holding hand

is placed on the end or the back of the workpiece, while the supporting hand holds the work as in the pull strokes.

Making sure that the thumb of the knife-holding hand is out of the direction of travel of the blade the hand is squeezed, drawing the edge of the blade towards the thumb. When the hand is fully closed, or makes a fist, then the cut is finished. With practice this cut can be made with the thumb right

at the bottom of the blank. Due to the high level of control with this grip the cut it makes can be stopped wherever needed.

This technique can be performed both by using a hilt-to-tip action and a tip to hilt action, both resulting in really effective, controlled slicing cuts. Just always make sure your knife-holding hand thumb is outside the path of the cut.



Draw grip – carver's view



Draw grip – observer's view



Draw grip – observer's view from different angle



Thumb joint grip – observer's view



Thumb joint grip – carver's view from tip



Thumb joint grip – carver's view from hilt

The thumb joint grip

This grip is a really effective one for making cuts across the grain or on end grain and when done correctly can leave a really shiny, almost polished finish to the ends of your project.

If we go back to the draw grip you will remember that the workpiece is held at the tip of the thumb and index finger. For this thumb joint grip allow the workpiece to slide down somewhat to rest slightly below the joint of the thumb.

For this grip the knife handle is not held in the palm of the hand

but is cradled across the finger joints with the edge towards you and the spine of the blade at right angles to the back of the hand.

The thumb of the knife-holding hand is hooked over the edge of the workpiece and the cut is made in one direction only, from the tip of the blade to the hilt. As the knife-holding hand is clenched to form a fist, the edge travels in an arc and as the fingers tighten the knife rolls so that the blade comes to cut alongside the thumb.

The cut ends safely, provided you have managed to keep your thumb out of the path of knife, when the index finger meets the back of the workpiece.

Reinforced thumb joint grip

Much like the pull stroke, the thumb joint grip also has a reinforced version, as indeed do all the thumb grips. The fingers of the workpiece-holding hand can be used to effectively push on either the back of the fingers or the back of the hand holding the knife, sometimes even on the back of the knife itself.

As before, use of the reinforced grip allows you to provide power and direction to your cut with both hands. It can be a more powerful cut yet at the same time increasing your control and speed of cut.

If you have enjoyed this second article in the series then I encourage you to source some nice, straight-grained hardwood and 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 that your body is doing to make it like that.

Be careful and safe, and next time we'll look at some simple finishing cuts and smoothing strokes, including choking up on the blade. We'll also be considering some cuts and techniques to add detail to our finished projects, including some basic chip carving and Kolrosing methods.



Reinforced thumb joint grip – carver's view



Reinforced thumb joint grip – observer'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 kusa carver; and Adrian Lloyd, a UK-based full-time craftsman, teacher and toolmaker.

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Gradual evolution

Pam Wilson shares with Mark Baker the story of how she came into carving and how she has progressed



PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAMELA WILSON

I came into woodcarving from a strange, possibly even unique, direction. I was working all hours as a self-employed computer consultant and wanted to try to cut back on all the travelling, so back in 2006 was looking for different ways of earning some money working from home. I explored the option of writing an e-book and selling it on the internet, but what to write about?

Some years before, while working in the US, I had seen, and fallen in love with, some beautiful carved ducks. I really couldn't believe

that they were carved from wood. I wondered if this could be the subject, and started my research with a view to writing from the aspect of a Beginner's Guide to Carving a Decoy Duck. Although most of the information I found was in the US, I did finally find an association in the UK – the BDWCA – and a carver reasonably local to where I lived who offered a three-day course carving and painting a decoy duck. Could I do that, I wondered. Well, I wouldn't know unless I tried, so I signed up to carve an antique-style mallard drake, did the course, and was hooked.



Since then, and through my decoy carving friends in the US, I have experienced and learned the tricks of carving decoys. They don't just have to look good but also float correctly. Another skill I had to learn was hollowing out the bird then testing and fine-tuning the flotation. I carved a few mini 'trader' decoys, a competition category where the bird is no more than 6in long, must float correctly, and the competitors take another decoy home with them, but not their own.

Thanks to having friends who also entered the same competition, I do actually have two of my mine, and subsequently I did



My first carving, an antique-style mallard drake

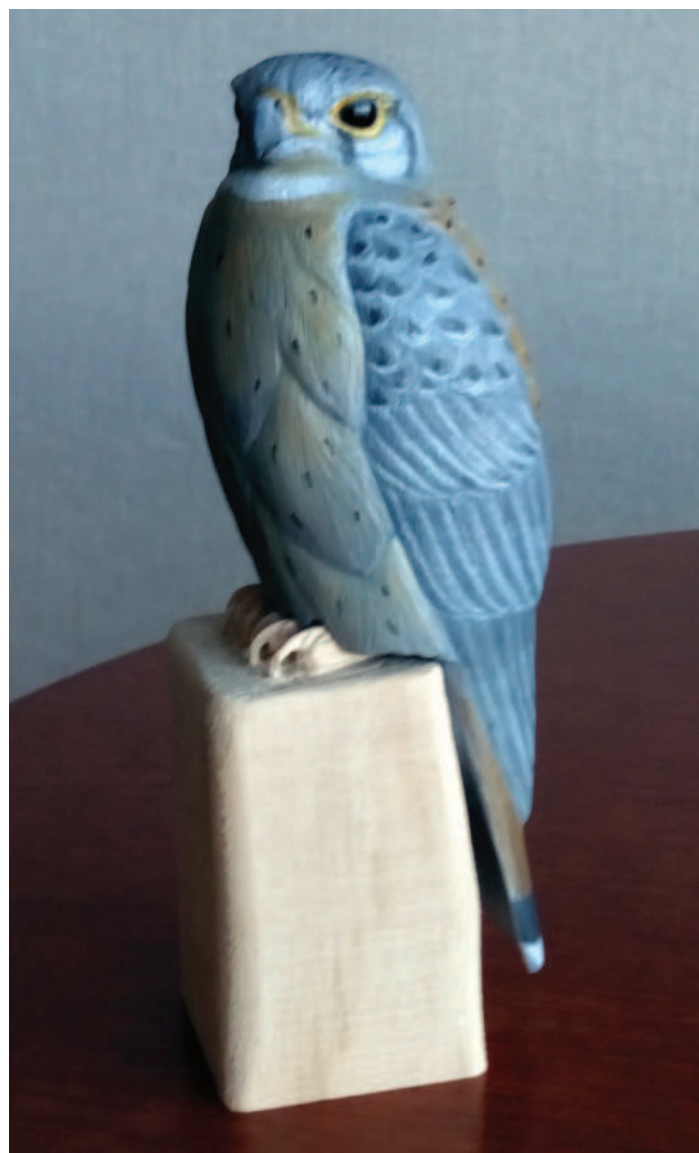
carve a full-size ruddy duck drake, which, although simply painted – a skill I still have to learn – did float really well.

I feel I really started carving twice, because initially I had very little time to spare, but in 2014 I made the decision to learn more about working with wood and was lucky enough to find a course that was run by the sculptor Dick Onians.

Dick introduced me to working with gouges, and I have attended every course with him that I could ever since. Having learned the basics my first carving was a leaf-shaped bowl in teak.



Leaf-shaped bowl in teak



An American kestrel carved and painted in oils on a course while at the 'Worlds'

Busy times

Although most people would probably say that I am a bird carver, and birds do manage to sneak into many of my carvings (but not all), I just love the beauty of wood, and most of my carving these days is interpretive style in natural wood.

I am a committee member of the British Decoy & Wildfowl Carvers Association (BDWCA), the editor of our membership magazine, *Wingspan*, have been writing the BDWCA page in this magazine since 2007, and am heavily involved in promoting the association and the running of our annual show in Bakewell each September.

I have made many friends in the carving world, not only in the UK and through the BDWCA but also in the US, Canada and Australia. I am a regular visitor to the Ward World Bird Carving Championships in Ocean City, Maryland, US (the 'Worlds'), and have attended – and often worked at – other bird carving shows in the US.

I'm a strong believer that you never stop learning, and will take advantage of as many opportunities as possible to study with



This picture of my workshop shows it 'taken over' by one of my granddaughter's carvings

master carvers. I also carve each week with a group of like-minded people – its good to see what other people are carving and exchange experiences.

Carving can be a very solitary occupation, but for me competing with some of my carvings – and getting critiques from the judges – is important and beneficial. You also then get the opportunity to meet with other carvers.

Influences and challenges

Many people have influenced my work, but if I had to restrict this to just two I would have to say Dick Onians and the Canadian interpretive bird carver Lynn Branson, while birds, their shapes and behaviour, continue to give me new ideas.

Have I made any mistakes? I wouldn't say mistakes, more just the way my carving has evolved, and at some time I really need to rationalise what I have at the moment – but that would take time away from carving and all the other things I do. To explain, I don't have a workshop – well, certainly not as most people would picture it.

When I started carving I was only doing small birds, and infrequently at that, and my garage had long since been converted to my office, but I did have a small area just outside the office door, so I set up there. But when I started doing larger interpretive carvings this was not suitable as the space is now regularly taken over by my 'carving granddaughter' when she comes to me to work on her latest bird carving.

The answer was to make use of the loft where I had two Velux windows fitted and converted an existing large table into a workbench. It is ideal for larger pieces and power carving but there are limitations,



Flames in elm (when I see the face it is on the front but I couldn't manage to trap it in a picture)



primarily getting things up the ladder.

Development and experiences

In my opinion I still have a lot to learn so hope that I can continue to improve. While I think my first love will remain interpretive natural wood carvings, I came into this because I saw those beautiful fully textured and painted ducks and I would still like to be able to achieve that effect.

I can never resist an interesting piece of wood, and bought a piece of elm burl. The shape and pattern of the grain made me think of flames so I worked to emphasise the grain and was pleased with the result. It was sitting in front of a window and one day I looked at it and saw a face with

a beard, quite a shock. It seems to depend on the light, sometimes I can see it and sometimes I can't, but then people do talk about seeing pictures in the flames.

When I went to the 'Worlds' for the first time in 2015 I was fascinated by the interpretive carvings, both in the show and from past winners of the top award on exhibition in the Ward Museum, and I came home and started on my first interpretive, a pair of courting great crested grebes. In 2016 I entered them in the show at intermediate level and was awarded the Blue Ribbon (1st place). Then they also won gold at the BDWCA show in the September. I was over the moon.



Courting great crested grebes in steamed pear on a laburnum 'lake'

Quick-fire questions

Best carving advice received?

Birds are round.

Have you ever given up on a project?

I haven't given up on a project – yet – but I do have one which is still evolving. I think I can see a bird hiding in it now – so we will have to see how it goes.

What is your favourite type of woodcarving?

I feel that I'm still exploring the world of woodcarving, and probably will be for a while yet, and currently I'm just enjoying everything I do. As I was writing this I thought about what I have in work at the moment and realised that there are two interpretive abstracts, a lovespoon, and a kingfisher, which will be textured and painted, and more than one future project going round in my mind.

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

I don't feel I have been carving for long enough yet to answer this question.

What is your favourite piece of equipment?

My favourite piece of equipment has to be my Foredom portable micromotor. It has travelled round the world with me quite a few times now, as well as to various places in the UK. With it I am able to power carve anywhere I want without a power supply and I have, in locations as varied as on the beach in Australia and in the middle of a field at a show in the UK.

What would you like to happen in the future?

If we want our art form to continue we need to encourage young people to carve. I would like to see every carver taking some time to teach others.

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

I have met so many great people since I started woodcarving and yet it is still something that I can enjoy doing on my own. I just like it all. Not a dislike really, just a bit of an annoyance, how difficult it is to find larger, interesting, pieces of wood.

What helpful advice do you have for others carving?

Don't be scared to ask others for their opinion, they may well see something you don't because you are too close to your work.

Top tip?

Take photographs from all angles regularly and then study them away from your carving – it's marvellous what you see. Also, if you can, position what you consider to be the finished work somewhere where you can see it and leave it there for a while. Does it look right or do you see something you could do that would improve it? ▶



Two mini trader decoys



First lovespoon carved to celebrate another granddaughter's 18th birthday five years ago



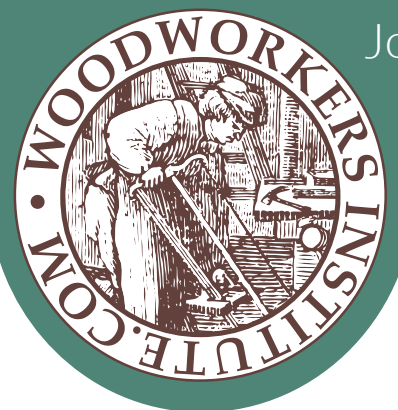
Bird leaving the water in lime



Peacock in lacewood sitting on a tiger oak branch

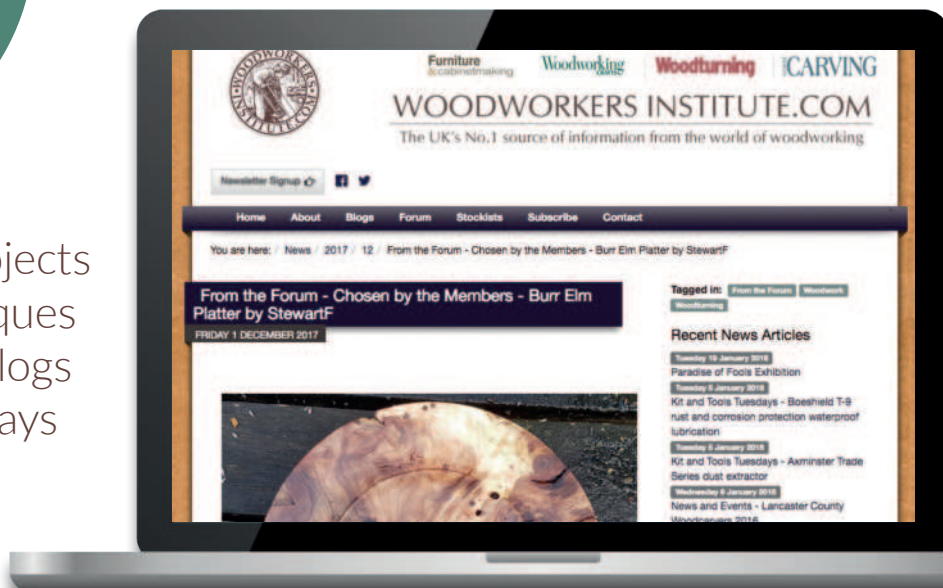


Ruddy drake decoy



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'Tree of life' seed keeper

Glenda Bennett shows how to create an ornamented seed holder



Trees held particular significance for the Celts, with their branches reaching heavenward and their roots firmly planted in Mother Earth. Trees represented not only a link between the upper and lower world, but were also a reminder of the eternal cycle of the seasons.

The 'tree-of-life' motif is found in both pagan and Christian art, and stands as a symbol of balance and unification of the two realms. In order to incorporate the 'tree of life' into manuscript decoration, the design was often made to emerge from a pot, which symbolized Mother Earth. The tree itself was mostly portrayed as the vine and grapes, a symbol associated with Christ, which represents the resurrection and his eternal life.

The motif appears in *The Book of Kells* several times, the 'Arrest of Christ', folio 114 recto, being a good example. The vine and grapes appears on either side of the head of Christ as well as on the columns at either side of the picture.

Grapes frequently appear in threes, which is an important number in Celtic mythology, as it represents the trinity. Thus in this one, apparently simple motif,

many layers of symbolism exist.

The 'tree-of-life' motif has been used as the basis of this project, which is designed to store seeds gathered at harvest time and preserved in the dark and dry, ready for spring planting. There are two designs to choose from, one of which is headed 'Seeds', the other 'Dochas', which translates from the Irish into 'Hope'. I chose the word because I feel that when we plant new seeds, we plant hope for the future, continuing the circle of life. Both designs are made in the same way apart from changing the letters.

For the project shown here, I used lime wood (basswood). The film canisters used are black so that the seeds can remain in the dark over winter. If preferred, they can be painted on the outside, but in that case leave the area where the lid snaps on unpainted, to ensure a good fit.

The project can easily be adapted for other storage uses, such as paper clips, push pins, sewing pins, golf tees, or even 35mm films. For some of these it would be useful to use clear plastic film canisters and in any case you would, of course, need to choose a more appropriate word than 'seeds' to identify the contents.

Things you will need

Tools:

- Scrollsaw or fretsaw
- Router (optional)
- Chisels and gouges
- Drill with bit to match brass screws
- Countersink bit
- 32mm (1¼in) flat wood bit for hole cutting
- Craft knife or chip knife

Materials:

- Photocopy of the templates overleaf, enlarged by 125%
- Suitable timber measuring 270 x 160 x 12mm for backboard (10₅/₈ x 6₁/₄ x 1₁/₂in) (lime)
- Matching timber 270 x 60 x 12mm for shelf (10₅/₈ x 2₃/₈ x 1₁/₂in)
- Carbon paper
- Repositionable spray adhesive
- 2 brass screws
- Wood glue
- 5 empty 35mm film canisters, preferably black, for seed storage
- Wax or varnish finish of choice
- 2 picture hangers

1 Place carbon paper between template A and the largest piece of timber and trace the design onto it. Cut round the outside lines.

2 Carefully reduce all the background from around the 'tree-of-life' design to a depth of 5–6mm ($\frac{1}{6}$ – $\frac{1}{4}$ in). I used a router fitted with a 7mm ($\frac{9}{32}$ in) straight cutter for most of the waste removal, then used a 2mm ($\frac{1}{8}$ in) cutter to get to the smaller areas. If you don't have a router, the waste can be removed using chisels and gouges.

3 Next, trim along the pattern lines to produce clean vertical sides to all the branches, leaves and grapes. This will ensure that you have a good even design to work with when you round the branches. I used a chip knife to score along the lines, and then cleared the waste away using small chisels and gouges. Trim along the inside of the raised border in the same way.

4 Shape the pot from which the tree grows by rounding the sides and bowl.

5 Begin shaping the branches, starting at the point where they emerge from the pot, and working towards the ends. This way you can gradually reduce the branch depth as you go along.

6 At the point where branches weave under and over, score along the lines that cross, then use the chisel at right angles to grade down the material to give the appearance of weaving under. Only round the sides after you are satisfied with the depth of the weave.

7 As you come to a leaf, reduce the depth of it by about half, and shape the stem into it, forming an inverted 'V' where it meets the leaf.

8 As you come to a bunch of grapes, reduce the depth by only 1–2mm ($\frac{1}{16}$ – $\frac{1}{8}$ in) and re-draw the three circles. Cut out the small triangle formed at the centre of the circles using a chip knife or craft knife then round each of them over to form a ball shape. Again, shape the stem into the grapes. The grapes can be made to look more realistic by undercutting them slightly, using a small gouge to remove a little of the material all round the base of each cluster of grapes.

9 Mark the curved lines on each leaf, using a small gouge held vertically.

10 Tidy up the lettering, making sure that the sides are vertical. I have kept the letters at their full depth, but you can reduce them if you prefer.

11 Next, make the shelf to hold the canisters. Stick template B onto the smaller piece of timber, using spray adhesive, and cut to size.

12 Using the flat bit, cut out the five holes as shown. The largest flat bit available is 32mm ($1\frac{1}{4}$ in), which is just slightly too small for the 34mm ($1\frac{1}{2}$ in) diameter canisters, so sand them back to size after cutting. This is



easily done with a small sanding drum.

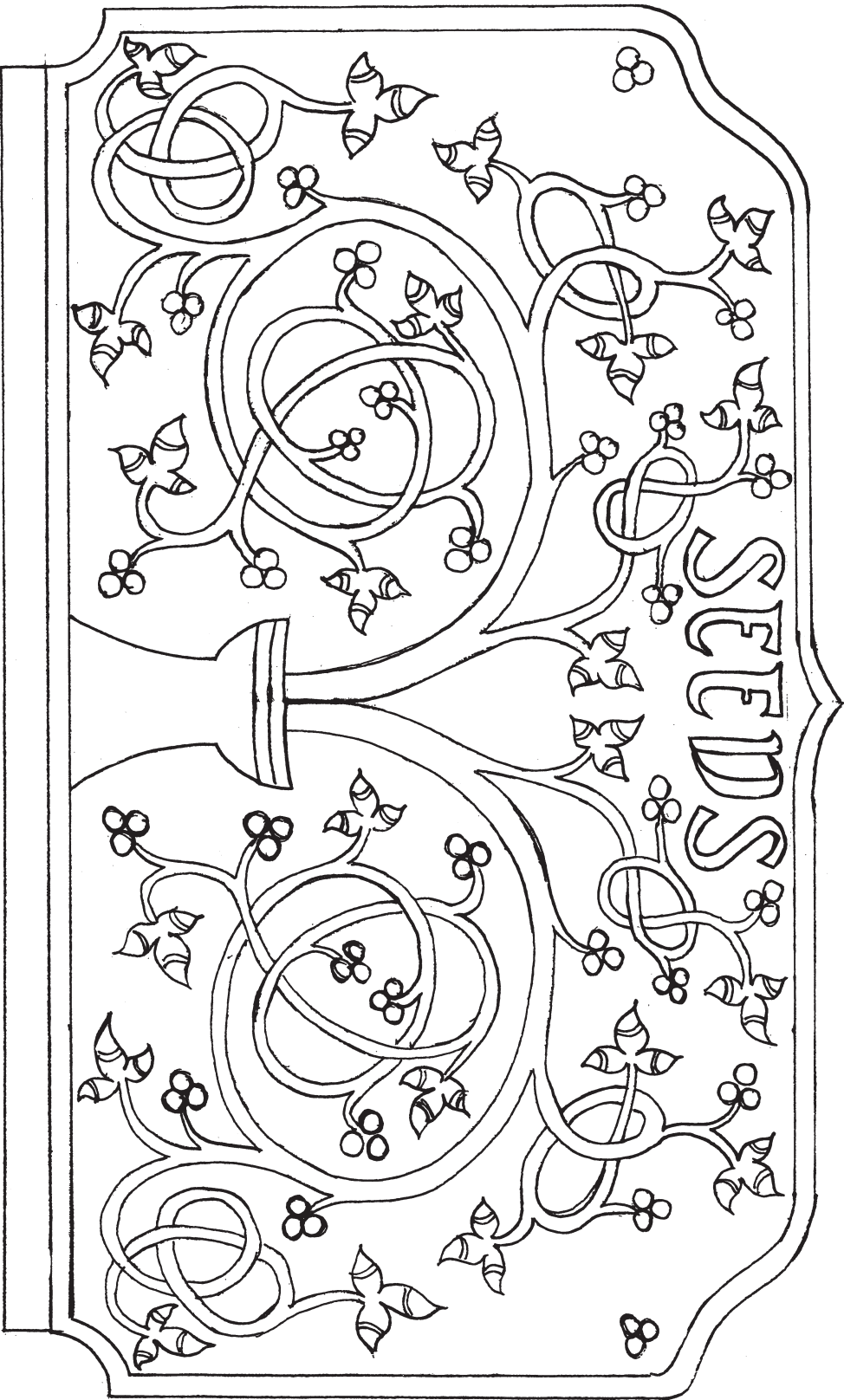
13 The shelf, ready for joining to the backboard, is shown above. Check the holes for size.

14 With the shelf held at right angles to the bottom of the backboard, where indicated on the template, drill two pilot holes for the screws. Use a countersink bit on the back of the backboard so that the screws can sit flush with the back. Hold the shelf in place in a workbench or vice, apply a layer of wood glue along the edge, then screw the backboard to it.

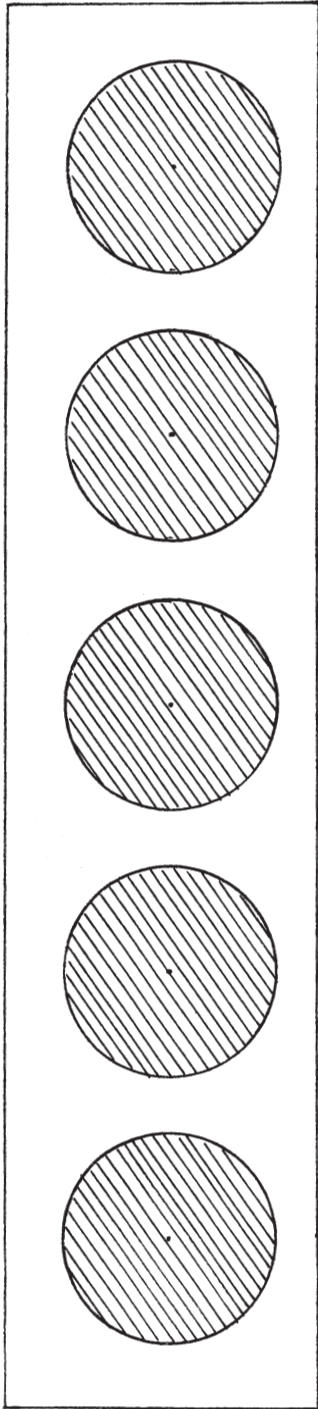
15 Finish the piece using either wax or varnish. If the seed keeper is going to be hung in an outbuilding, a waterproof varnish would be the most suitable finish. Attach two picture hangers to the back of the seed keeper, to ensure that it hangs firmly as the canisters are taken in and out.

16 Make a set of labels for the canisters to identify the contents of each, and stick them onto the canisters near the bottom, where they can be more easily read. ■

A



B



Template needs to be enlarged by 125%

Oriental mirror

Alan Denham shares how he created a mirror inspired by the Far East



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALAN DENHAM

Sometimes I carve mirror frames. When I tell people that, I can see their eyes glaze over. Wrong. When I carve a mirror frame, it isn't just a decorative border. The frame is a picture, and I always try to use the mirror as a part of the effect. Let me explain.

The mirror in this article results from a friend saying he wanted an oval mirror remounted because he was fed up with the stainless steel frame it had come in. Now I don't often work with oval mirrors – I tend to use round, or occasionally rectangular. But I thought about it, and couldn't see why not.

After a little bit of discussion he declared an interest in oriental art – and that really started me thinking. I hit the internet and

found some examples of Chinese and Japanese styles of landscape. And I remembered a few of my old mirror frames where I had used a round mirror to hint at a full moon; so I set about designing a mirror frame inspired by the images I had seen, but creating various sketches that represented what I would like to have in the design.

Then I wrapped them around the oval shape of the mirror, took a long, hard look at the result, and then re-drew it again, more than once.

The final result is shown in sketch A. The dotted line is the actual outline of the mirror, the solid oval (and other shapes) inside it mark the visible part. It could, of course, have been done equally well with a rectangular mirror, with a lot of it hidden behind the frame.

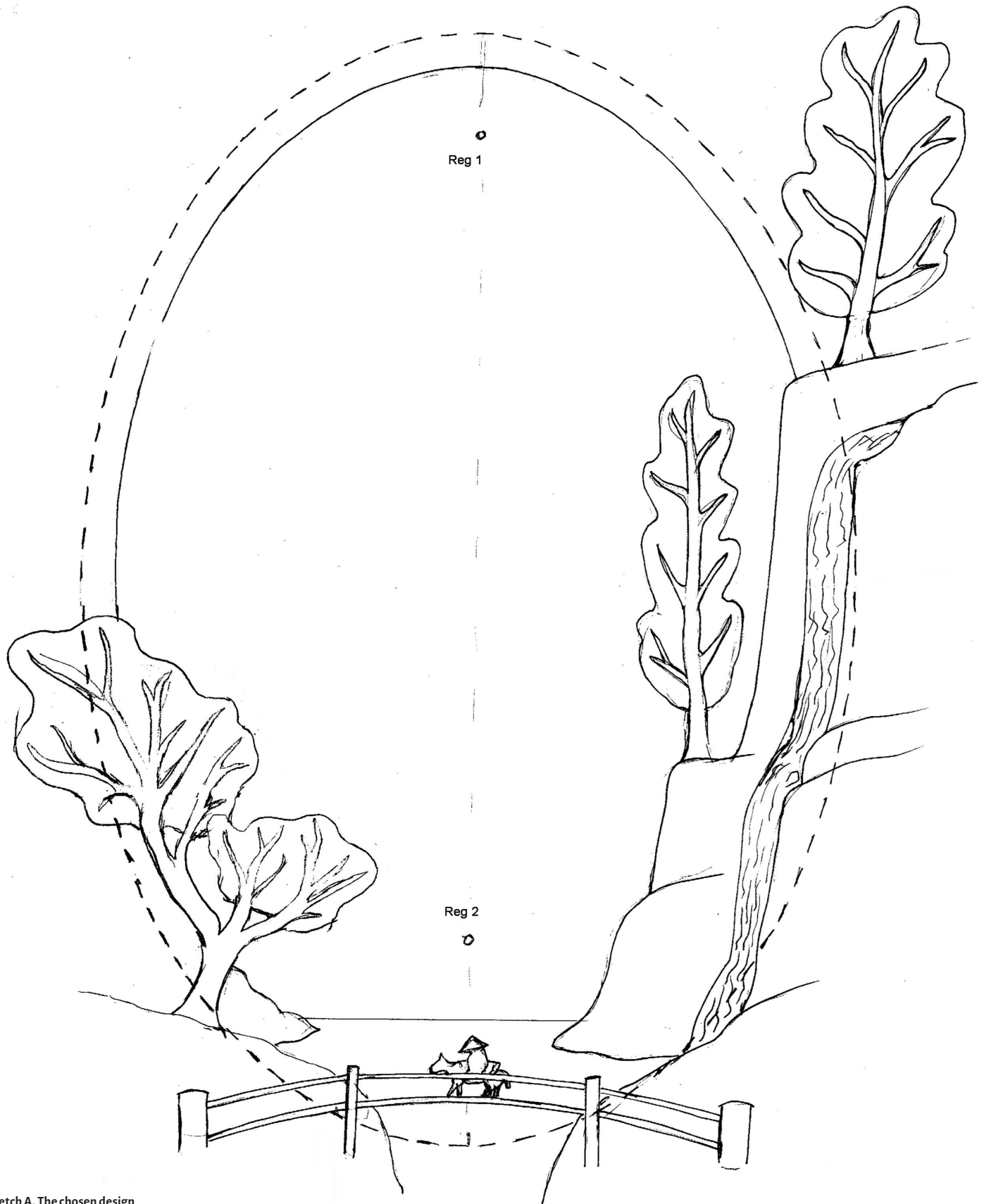
A word about the design

First, the original mirror size and shape was a given. This is not that first version, it is a direct descendant. I was free to tweak the design and make minor alterations to ratios, but only minor adjustments were appropriate. The mirror is 225 x 325 mm, the wood frame is rather larger at 330 x 440mm.

The trees are stylised, almost symbolic. But the key factor here is 'what the eye of the

beholder will accept'. That is always true of drawing, and of low relief, so here goes. The stylisation – or maybe call it symbolism – is developed far beyond the 'lollipop trees' so familiar to junior school art teachers. The symbolism of branches superimposed on a foliage outline works well enough – more realism is just not achievable on this scale with the wood I had available and, more importantly, this style is

consistent with some classic pieces of oriental landscape art. And available wood is always a point to bear in mind – I had access to some rather nice mahogany. Sadly, it was only 18mm thick, but that is enough for this job. It was also rather dark, which means detail does not always show up well – this would be better done in a lighter wood, e.g. lime, which would also be easier to carve.



Sketch A. The chosen design

Making the mirror frame

First, identify a suitable piece of wood, and obtain a suitable mirror. My dimensions are given above, scale the picture to suit yourself – but bear in mind that making the mirror any smaller may make life difficult for your glazier (oval cutting machines sometimes have minimum size limits close to the figures above) and making it any larger means thinking hard about how the wood may warp when hung on a wall in a centrally heated house.

Then make copies of the image at the right size. Choose which side of the blank will be front, which will be back, and cut a recess for the mirror. This can be done with V-tools etc, but is far easier done with a router. It is a good idea at this point to drill a couple of 'register holes'. Suggested points are marked 'Reg' in sketch A in the scrap area where the mirror will go – you will need to keep front and back carefully aligned in the early stages.

Unless you went to some trouble to obtain thin mirror, you will need a recess 4mm deep. Notice that the rim has been cut, but the main body not cleared – there is no need, the next job is cutting out that central area.

Prepare a reverse print of the template, or very carefully align a paper copy on the front. Glue it on and cut out with a scrollsaw, or coping saw, or whatever you have that will do the job.



The back of the mirror routed out to take a 4mm thick mirror



The pattern affixed to the front face of the mirror frame



Using a scrollsaw to cut out the internal waste section

Carving

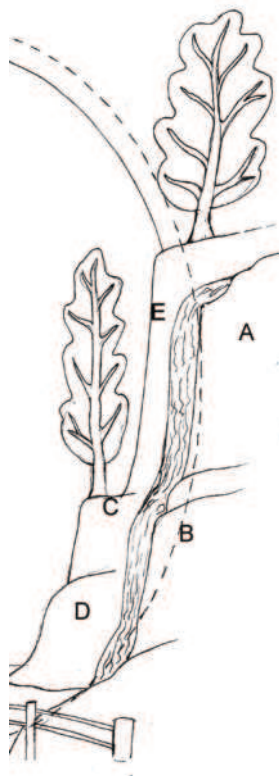
Now to the actual carving. I didn't have much thickness to play with – only 14mm in theory, after cutting the recess for the mirror – but that is enough (just).

I started by going up the right-hand side, marking the main lines with a V-tool (No.12, 4mm).

The reason for this was to get a feeling for the depths I had available, to really understand what could stand proud, what had to be cut deep. For anyone who has not cut low relief before, remember the key phrase: 'What the eye will accept.'

Consider point A on Sketch B. It needs to stand fairly proud – but must give the impression of being behind point B. Similarly, point C must be behind point D, which in turn must be (or appear to be) behind B – but C must still be high enough to allow sufficient thickness for strength of the free-standing tree. And if the tree can come forward then its back will show in the mirror, and that will add interest and cover unwanted reflections of the cliff between C and E. It gets complicated.

Fortunately, the eye will accept some tricks. A and B can actually be on the same thickness of wood, provided it slopes gently between them and 'looks' as if the points are at different depths. Similarly, C can come forward a bit –



Sketch B

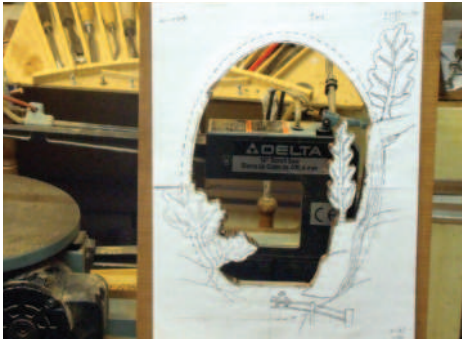
not right up to B, but certainly very close to D. But it's still not that simple. Cliff faces near E, C and D should not be left perpendicular to the mirror – they will show unwanted reflections. They need to be angled back – but doing so brings them unpleasantly close to the base of the tree.

So start at the base of the upper tree. This is the point where you can hack around a bit, and mistakes are easier to rectify here than almost anywhere else. The deeper you cut it, the easier the cliffs will be later – but not too far, you still have to accommodate the curve of the plain frame edge.

Where the edge of the mirror has no decoration, the wood needs to curve down towards it or the top centre of the frame.

This can be a bit awkward where the plain edge meets a tree or other item – but the eye will accept what is presented, don't try to get too complicated. I then cut the branches in the tree outline. On a light-coloured wood these would show up well, but on this relatively dark mahogany they will have to be re-cut rather deeper than this, then the branch edges will need to be rounded.

I continued down the right-hand side – cut the cliff back to allow room for the waterfall, which must also be cut back a bit to allow for the rock formations in front of it and sketch B again.



The cut-out internal section



Rounding over the inner edge and progress on the relief-carved tree

The lower carved sections

Remember point A (sketch B) needs to be high, but the waterfall needs a certain thickness of wood, so do points B, C & D – so cliff E can drop a fair way back, provided that it still allows for the roots of the top tree. Dropping it back also allows for some angling away from the mirror, to reduce unwanted reflections – though the free-standing tree will help to mask those. When I had finished this, point E was 11mm thick – and to be honest, I should have cut it just a little thinner.

Then look at the bridge, and the lake, and the peasant and donkey. This is the hard part.

The ideal you are aiming for is the appearance of a lake (or sea) horizon – so the horizon line must be flat, and must not reflect, but as it comes forward it must curve down, leading into the river below the bridge. But the bridge can not be cut free, to hang in mid-air. Even if you have the skills to cut it (and I don't) it would be absurdly weak and vulnerable to damage. So you are looking for a section much like Sketch D.

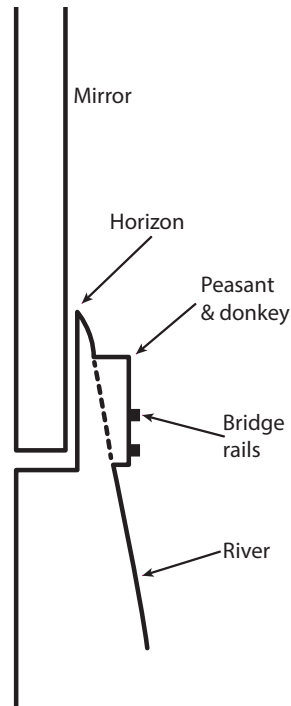
Using a V-tool, mark out the river banks and the underside of the bridge (not too deep), and the supporting posts. Develop the curve of the water surface, then cut the outline of the peasant. Cut as much detail as you are happy with, according to your own skills and the wood you are using.

Now for the little tree on the left, cut from the scrollsaw – with a slightly burned face, because the scrollsaw is not really designed for wood this thick, and I had broken my skip-tooth blade, so the one I had left was getting hot. This can be a bit of a problem – the burn colour will show unless you do lot of sandpapering!

Refinement

Don't sandpaper it yet – there is a lot of knife-and-gouge work first. Begin by dropping the trunk of the tree back slightly. Then pause and think. Keeping it as far forward as possible will enable the back to be seen – extra work carving branches etc., but a lot of extra interest to the finished piece. Pushing it back limits visibility, though just behind the edges will always show. Remember, the image is as far behind the mirror as the object is in front of it – and the measurement is taken from the silver of the mirror, which is probably behind 4mm of glass. Thinner mirror is available if you search hard enough.

Thickness is also worth considering – depending what type of wood you use, you



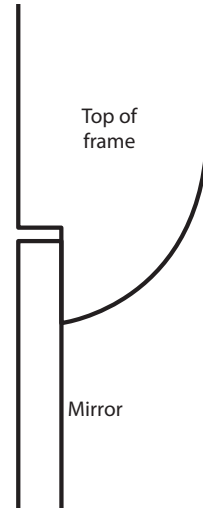
Sketch D. Cross-section of the peasant and donkey and bridge

will probably need 4-6 mm thickness of wood to give it sufficient strength for carving and subsequent use. Once that decision is made, cut round the branches with a knife, scalpel or the tip of a skew, then cut the background away with a flatish gouge – a No.3 or maybe No.5. Adding a leaf effect by repeated stabbing with the tip of a small (or very small) U-gouge is worth the effort. On this piece, most of that was done with a 3mm tool, though I also have a smaller one, homemade from an old darning needle, just under 1mm, for getting into smaller corners.

Round the edges, then thin down from the back and put a similar effect on the area that will be visible. Cut the trunk of the tree from the mirror side and allow the ground to rise behind it. Now is the time to sandpaper any remaining burn marks on the edges. If you have rounded the edges well, there won't be much of that to do. Now do the same to the middle tree.

Cut a suitable effect onto the waterfall – it's those fine U-gouges again, or a very small V-tool. Curl the wriggly bits gently over the tops of the falls, but I don't know of any way to adequately show the spray at the bottom. Just let it flow into the lake.

Nearly finished. Slip the mirror



Sketch C. A cross-section of the mirror frame with rebate and glass in the rebate



Side view of peasant and donkey to illustrate depth of cuts



Creating the tree and branches

temporarily into its space and check the appearance of all the edges and the backs of the trees, then brace yourself for a lot of sandpapering. Finish with whatever you prefer – I used hard wax oil. ▶



The finished mirror

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Sheep by Ray Mann



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Fire platter

Neil Turner gives solid form to flames through the carved design that decorates this striking rimmed piece



Recently I was asked to make a piece that incorporated a fire-form rim embellishment. The client and I decided to make a platter with a carved fire-form rim. After making some sketches, I arrived at one that I felt would fulfil the brief and, after further consultation, we agreed on a suitable profile and design. The outside of the bowl had a subtle curve running to a gently elevated rim, and I wanted the rim slightly undercut to give the piece a more dynamic look. After inspecting the available blanks, I selected a piece of 350mm wide x 75mm diameter jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*) with a small amount of grain figure.

I had never carved the fire-form design on a platter before. There were some issues when drawing the design on the rim: short grain on two sides of the bowl. Drawing a little further in from the edge and near the rim, the material was quite thick, meaning a lot of material would need to be removed

when piercing the form away from the lip. However, I found I enjoyed working within the parameters imposed by the design. The placement of the fire form on the rim needed to achieve a balanced look. I presented some options to my client and we arrived at a layout. The work gives a nice illusion of movement – something I strive for in these pieces. I feel the piece achieved a good balance between the natural figure in the wood and the design, giving this a nice sense of movement and life.

Top tips

- 1** If you have trouble with the bowl gouge skating across the surface, use the point of the skew to make an area for the bevel of the gouge to rub on to start the edge of the bowl.
- 2** Use the scraper in the bottom of the bowl to take out any ridges.
- 3** Select good-quality timber for this project as it requires a lot of work to embellish and carve the desired shape.
- 4** Be careful when choosing timbers and ensure the piece you choose is free of defects. Examine the timber thoroughly before deciding to use it.
- 5** Take care when using the burrs in tight spaces – they are designed to cut on one side only. If the burr catches on the other side as well; it will shudder violently, often leaving a larger hole than you require. Check the speed that the burr is designed to run at as they do vary. Ask the supplier and always read the instructions carefully before you begin.
- 6** If you don't have access to a riffler, a wedge-shaped thin piece of wood – such as a lollipop stick – or steel with double-sided tape and normal sandpaper would achieve the same result.
- 7** If you don't have access to a flap sander, rolling up sanding grits to the size of the hole that requires sanding or wrapping around a piece of suitably sized steel would suffice and will allow you to achieve a similar result.

Things you will need

Tools:

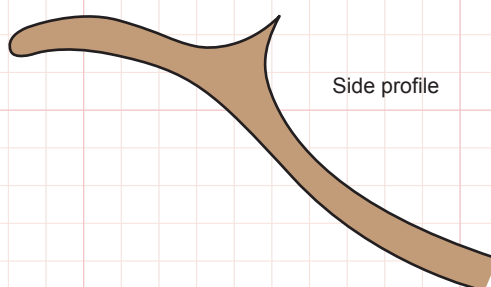
- 16mm deep-fluted bowl gouge
- 30mm round skew chisel
- 150mm Vicmarc chuck
- Merlin Lancelot disc
- Mini carver
- Osada Success 40
- 3mm round burr cutter
- 2.5mm square CCR cutter
- 6mm barrel cutter
- Wedge-shaped riffler
- 3mm parallel-sided emery mandrel sander
- Hot-melt glue

- Abrasives from 120-400 grit
- Pencil
- Hook-and-loop abrasive
- Carbide rubber polisher
- PPE: facemask, respirator/dust mask and extraction

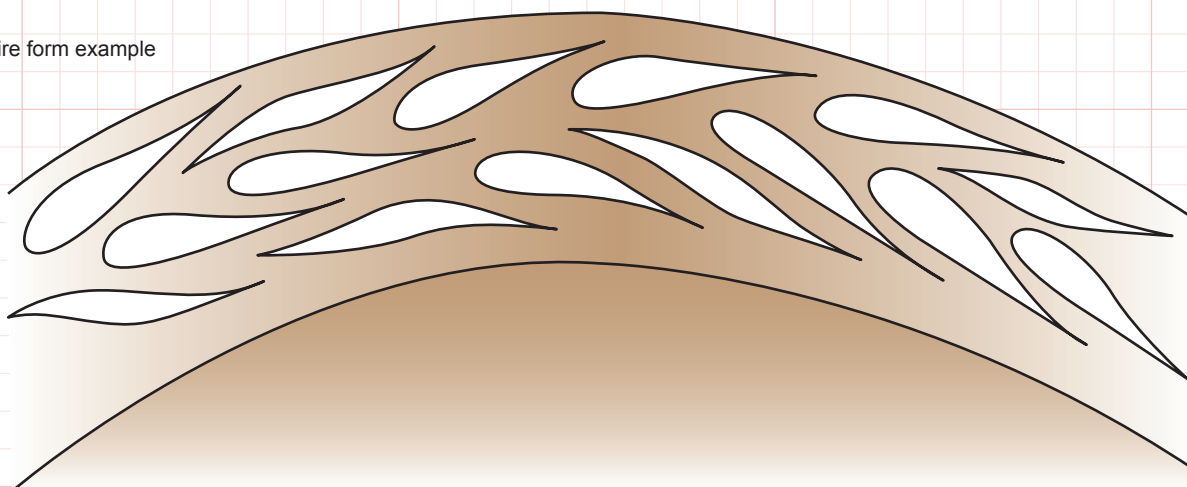
Note: Burrs, cutters and sanding attachments mentioned in this article can be acquired from jewellery suppliers.

Materials:

- 350 x 75mm jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*) or woods with similar moderately coarse texture such as maple (*Acer campestre*), oak (*Quercus robur*) or ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*)
- 5mm ply



Fire form example



1 After assessing the blank and establishing what will be the bottom, the first step is to glue a piece of 5mm ply, with hot-melt glue, to the centre of the blank. This is so you don't have the spur centre mark in the wood when you initially turn it between centres. When I made my platter, I had only just enough depth of timber in the blank



**2****3****4****5****6****7**

2 Rough the piece into round, making the spigot for the chuck, and true up the face. With the blank still between centres, start to shape the outside curve, leaving some wood at the bottom for the base so you can carve three small feet. Leave extra wood on the top to shape the top of the platter.

3 Place the blank in a chuck – I used a Vicmarc – and proceed to shape the 50mm rim, profile and bowl of the platter. I had to turn it this way so I could finalise the top of the platter. The rim has to be sharp. Careful use of a small bowl gouge can create a crisp edge and moving the handle of the chisel across the bed of the lathe will improve the attack angle to start the rim and avoid skating. The same effect can be achieved with a small round-nose chisel. Leave plenty of wood in the bottom of the bowl to support the turning of the underneath shape of the rim.

4 Turn the outside of the bowl and underside profile of the rim. Work downhill at all times, checking wall and rim thickness regularly. I wanted the rim thickness to be even – 5mm – as the carving will be completed here.

5 Remove excess wood from the bowl with a bowl gouge and fine-tune with a round skew chisel. Sand the rim and inside of the bowl to 400 grit.

6 Draw the fire-form design onto the rim of the platter.

7 Remove the platter and place a friction drive in the chuck, reverse the platter and hold in place with the tailstock. Fine-tune the outside shape and the ring for the base.





8 Mark the position of the three feet and carve away the waste, making sure you leave enough material for sanding. I used a Merlin Lancelot disc attached to a mini carver for this. Turn off as much of the chuck spigot as you can then sand the outside of the bowl to 400 grit. Remove any remaining centre using a mini carver or by sanding.

9 The next task is to carve the fire-form rim using a Dremel or similar high-speed air tool or micromotor machine. I use an Osada Success 40 micromotor because it is lightweight, makes very little noise and no vibration, and sits in my hand very well. For initial piercing I use a 3mm round burr at 30,000rpm, removing as much material as I can at this stage.

10 Refine the fire shapes using a 2.5mm square CCR cutter.

11 Elongate the fire shapes to create the illusion of flow. For this, I used the 3mm round burr cutter again.

12 Use a 6mm barrel cutter to create an interconnected flow of movement and interaction between the holes of the fire forms.

13 Refine the fire-form tips using a 2.5mm square CCR cutter.



**14****15****16**

14 Use a wedge-shaped riffler to sharpen up the detail of the fire-form tips. Take care with this as you may have some tear-out on the underneath.

15 The rifflers I used for this project are made by Renzo Milani. I adapt these by attaching hook-and-loop abrasive to them and find them very good for sanding internal shapes. This is what I used to sand the internal shapes of my fire forms, but you can use other similar tools.

16 Sand and shape the flatter areas. For this, I made a 13mm disc sander from a carbide rubber polisher with hook-and-loop abrasive attached. Reduce the speed to 8,000rpm or slower.

**17**

17 The next step is to sand the bottom of the fire form with a 3mm parallel-sided emery mandrel sander. Be careful not to get it caught in the work as you can easily break a piece off and potentially spoil all your hard work. Work down through the grits to 400.

18 You can now carve the underneath using the same process as before. This gives a nice, unexpected stimulation for the hands as you can't see the carved forms when you pick it up. It is then time to refine the three feet with the 6mm barrel burr then sand to final shape, which should be a small square. Remove the tailstock centre with a carving chisel or 6mm burr, then sand to finish.

19 The completed fire platter should look something like this. ▶

**18****19**

Our contributors



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From the community

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

Woodcarving and Turning Club



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF ALAN LEAGAS

In the late summer of 2013 a small group of wood carvers led by Alan Leagas came together to start a 'local' woodcarving club for the Lymington area, as at that time there was no nearby facility which suited their specific needs.

Commencing with Tuesday evening meetings in community association workshops, with hope that enough interest could be generated by the end of the year to enable us to cover rental costs, Alan Leagas, Tony Denham and myself (John Creton) took the plunge. This very much depended on the other two, both experienced carvers, as my entry level was based on the fact that I could sharpen a pencil with a kitchen knife and make a good cup of tea.

The club survived and prospered over the coming months as membership grew apace, a wonderful mixture of experienced and novice carvers as word went around of our presence, and it was amazing to watch the development of all aspects of the club. Each new individual who came helped to develop the club, often by bringing in additional abilities, and that spirit continues today where all these skills are willingly shared among the members. We welcomed people who just wanted to try something different, or even had a one-off project they wanted to complete where the necessary tools and knowledge could assist them. Some stayed, some moved on to other interests, but the initial financial targets were all met and the club prospered to a level where it was running two evenings a week.

Unfortunately the Lymington facility

was withdrawn and, having decided that there was enough long-term interest in the club we found a new home in a recently developed site opposite Sway Tower, which, incidentally is a good landmark for locating the club. Again under Alan's leadership a committee was formed, leases were signed and equipment was installed, including heating for the winter months, enabling us to develop our current independent workshop, which now includes a woodturning facility.

As from the start we have a broad level of membership, from very experienced to 'pencil sharpeners', and we continue to share our knowledge and enjoy the friendship of working with wood and chatting over tea and biscuits. Much of the work produced can be seen, for example at the annual display in St Thomas church hall in August every year, and we are proud to say that items of our work have won Best in Show on a couple of occasions.

For further information contact: Alan Leagas. Email: alan.leagas99@gmail.com



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.

Koala

<https://bit.ly/2wkhls6>



Claude posted: This is an Australian Koala. Carved from basswood and painted with acrylics, it stands about 200mm tall and is mounted on a small base.

Jac-In-Thee-Green-1 commented: Hello again Claude, I trust you are well. I think this is a great carving—I love the positioning in the tree and the expression of the Koala! A lot of work has gone into this piece with all the separations/hollowing from the tree to the bear.



Métis

Dave Western shows how to create a sculpture in red cedar

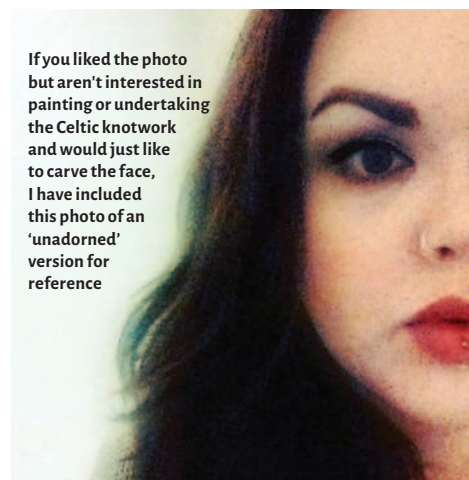


A number of years back; I rescued a pair of stunning red cedar boards from a campground firewood pile. Each piece had the perfectly straight, extremely tight grain which can only be found in old growth cedar and fir. Although short at 355mm long, they were substantial chunks at 225mm wide and about 100mm thick. Without doubt, it would have been an absolute crime if they had wound up being burned in someone's campfire. While they dried in my woodshed, I contemplated using them to make some ukulele soundboards or tone drums, but years passed and I never quite got around to getting back to them.

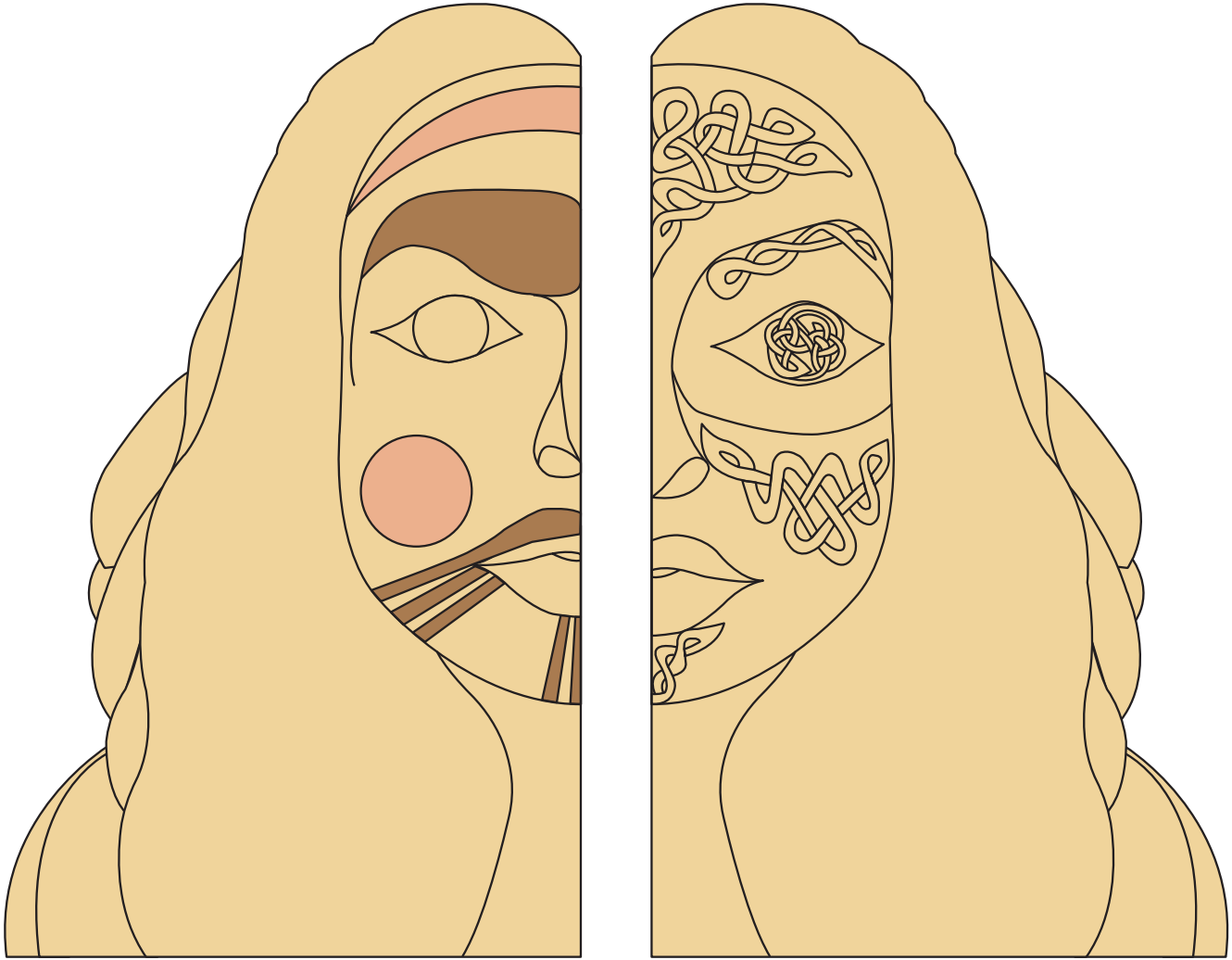
Recently, however, my friend Savannah posted an artistic photograph of herself on

her Facebook feed, which triggered inspiration for a sculpture that would make great use of the two pieces. Savannah is Métis (which by Canadian definition is a person of mixed indigenous and Euro-American descent) and I thought the blending of the two very rich and vibrant cultures represented in her heritage would make an intriguing artwork. Because I had two lengths of timber and didn't want to glue them together, I decided to represent her indigenous origins on one half of the carving and her European origins on the other. I did want the piece to be joined into a unified whole though, so have connected the halves with a length of maple, which has been let into the side of each timber leaving approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ in exposed between the two pieces.

If you liked the photo but aren't interested in painting or undertaking the Celtic knotwork and would just like to carve the face, I have included this photo of an 'unadorned' version for reference



PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVE WESTERN



Drawing measurements per side: length 350mm x width 225mm x total depth 100mm

Depth cuts

I began the sculpture by quickly and fairly roughly separating the three main 'layers' of the carving. I wanted the face to remain the tallest part with a step down to the level of the hair and finally down to the background level. I used a hand-held circular saw – battery or electric versions can be used – to make some cuts to define the various levels and then knocked/cut the material out with a 25mm-wide chisel.

The circular saw helps to make clearing the area near the top of the head much quicker by dividing up the waste area into smaller, more easily removed sections. Again, a wide chisel will knock this material out very quickly.

If you lack a circular saw but have access to a handsaw, you can saw this section of waste away without too much effort. The handsaw can also be used to clear some of the other waste sections, but it's probably harder work than chiselling the material out.

Here, the wood has been removed to the background level, but clearing hasn't started on the hair level. On this side of the sculpture I cleared the bulk of the waste material with two passes on the tablesaw and two passes with the handsaw.

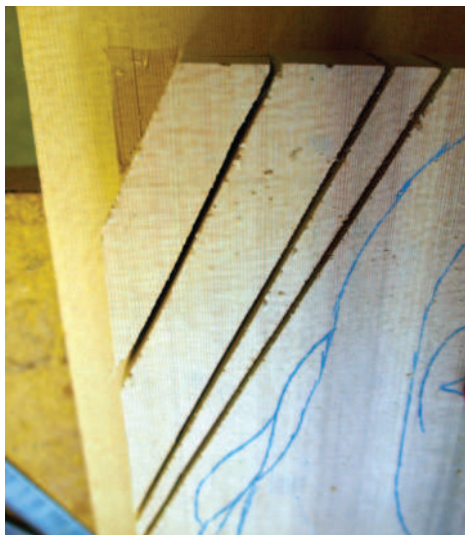
Using a small square, I transferred several lines from the face to the side of the piece as reference points when deciding the depth of the profile cuts. The nose, lips, chin, eyes and forehead were the key areas where I wanted to be particularly careful to get my cuts spot on.

Once I knew the depth of cut at several points along the face, I used the hand-held circular saw to cut accurate slots that both helped to make waste removal easier and gave me a depth guide when gouging out the waste stock started happening.

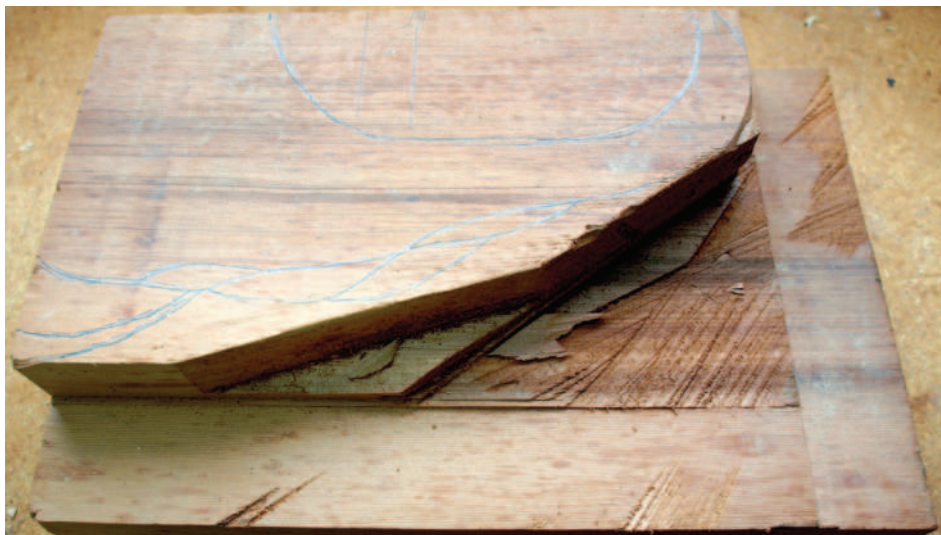
The tip of the nose is the highest point of the face so all the waste removal occurs from there down. You can see how I have followed both the flow of my pencil drawing on the side face of the timber and the depth guides provided by my saw cuts.



With the aid of a circular saw you can cut in the background levels



Saw cuts to help define the levels



Cut away the waste to level



Draw in the profile detail



Cut to depth on the edge



Extend the depth cuts across the width of the section to be cut

Shaping

With the face depths roughly cut, some work can commence clearing the hair section down to size. I used a No.5, 25mm gouge to quickly and smoothly remove the stock in this area and started cleaning the join area where the face and hair planes meet.

In several areas, the depth between one level and the next can be pronounced. I made use of a large No.1, 25mm chisel to roughly remove stock as close to my drawn lines as possible. I left about 3mm of material to the line and then used a very sharp, straight knife to clean the stock back to the line, leaving a nice, smooth, vertical surface.

I made use of the same wide gouge to clean the area where the background and the hair meet. It's easy to get a lot of rough material in that area and it all needs to be removed with slow and careful cutting. Take your time with this as achieving a nice, tidy junction makes for a much more professional-looking piece than one with knife marks and fuzzy wood.

At this point I've taken a photo of one finished side beside the in-progress side.

It clearly shows the various levels of the face and depth differences between the background, the hair and the face. As you can see, a substantial amount of waste material remains to be removed around the chin.



Cut away to the marked facial outline



Clean up the background as you go

Refinement and background

Once the face area has been roughed out and finishing cutting can commence, the hair and background area can be finish carved as well. Use a straight knife to mark the lines of the hair and then use the same knife to shape the areas around the outer edge of the hair. Use a straight chisel or

flattish No.1-type gouge to achieve a smooth but undulating surface in the hair area.

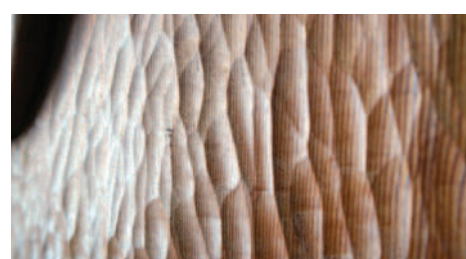
I opted to give the background an adzed-type finish, which I achieved with the same No.5 gouge I undertook the roughing out work with. To get a clean adzed look with no chipping, travel in the direction of any run-out and work beginning at one end of the carving and working toward the other. Take short, sweeping cuts that don't remove too much stock. You can also use an actual adze or a bent knife to achieve this distinctive textured look, but a gouge works perfectly well if that's all you have on hand.



Making sure the overall dimensions match



Start shaping the depths of the face profile



Textured background

Face detail

Use a 13mm-wide chisel, or, use a small, straight knife to finish carve the shaped hair sections, which run along the edge of the hair and abut the background section. Slope each section slightly to differentiate it from the adjoining section and make the cuts as clean as possible. A depth of cut of approximately 3mm where the sections meet is plenty.

I make use of a photocopy and some carbon paper to mark out where the face features such as the eyes, brows, lips etc. will be placed, but you can also freehand draw them or use a set of callipers if you want more accuracy. However you do it, be aware that over and over you'll be cutting lines off almost as fast as you lay them on, so use whatever system is quickest and easiest for you.

With the face features drawn on and the

background and hair taking shape, you can begin defining the face. I begin by using a very sharp, straight knife to shape the lips. In this instance the lips are quite full, so I was careful to maintain a nice convex curve as I cut them from the outer edges toward the lowest point between upper and lower lip. Endeavour to keep as crisp and fair a line as possible along the line which unites the lip and the face as a wonky line here leaves a very odd-looking lip.

Next I use a bent knife, although a judiciously applied gouge will work well too, to shape the cheek and chin area. I use a big No.1 gouge to shape the forehead and a No.5 gouge to shape the nose and the transition area along the side of the cheek. I'm very careful to maintain the fair line along the outer edge of the lips while working a nice convex curve between

nose and lip and between chip and lip.

For the eye area of the Celtic face, I suggest marking out the ovoid shape that will surround the eye details by cutting in a crisp line with a straight knife. Cut cleanly to a depth of approximately 3mm and then use a chisel or No.1 gouge to shape a nice dome into the interior area. Aim for a clean intersection at the scribed line, which leaves no chips or fraying but doesn't dig down past the 3mm range.

Once all of the face shaping has been completed, give the area a good sanding with a range of abrasive grits from about 150-220. Ensure there are no scratches or chipping and try to keep the facial features smooth and flowing with no dips or bumps. The smoother and fairer you can make the many curves, the more lifelike the face will become.



Cutting the stylised hair detail



Work out the relevant dimension of the eye area



Defining the mouth area



Paring down the lower face area under the eye



Using a knife to outline the eye area



Recessing the eye section



Sanding the lower face area

Celtic knotwork



Stick on Celtic pattern



Use the templates to guide the cutting, starting with the background areas



Work carefully to achieve the right shape and depth



Go gently and ensure everything is even



With the hollow areas done move on the the weaved sections



Pare away the background to the right levels



Use a micro tool to create the very delicate carved areas of detail

When everything is sufficiently smooth and tidy, use a gluestick to adhere the photocopied Celtic knots to the face. Take your time and be careful each pattern is properly placed and is well adhered before beginning any cutting.

Use a straight knife to mark out the knotwork. Keep a nice vertical edge around the outer part of the knotwork cut to about 3mm. Go slow and be aware of grain direction at all times as the knife can easily go off course. Keep all curves as fair as possible and try not to make too many passes as this can result in a faceted curve rather than a smooth one.

With all the lines marked, begin shaping the knot by cutting away material toward the outer line. Aim to fair the work and follow the existing curves as much as possible so that the knot becomes slightly raised. Work your way around the entire perimeter of the knot before commencing work on the inner areas.

When you are satisfied that the exterior cutting is completed, you can begin on the interior areas of the knot. Use a fine-tipped straight knife or the smallest chisels and gouges you have for this process. It

is easy to chip the knots, so cut cleanly and resist the urge to 'pop' the interior cuts out. If you can find small gouges which match the inner curves of the knot, make use of them as they leave a fairer cut than a straight knife.

With the knot shaped inside and out, begin shaping the overs and unders by making use of a small $\frac{1}{8}$ in (3mm) chisel. A straight knife will also work for this job, but you'll probably find a small chisel much easier.

At this point, you can leave the area around the eyeball with the gentle dome you had originally shaped, or you can use a bent knife or gouges to shape a nice convex curve all around the eye. I think the convex makes for a more vibrant and lifelike appearance than the domed, but it is a fair bit of extra work. If you opt to shape this area with a bent knife or gouge, be conscious of the eye shape and keep the line around it as fair as possible.

Carved face

This photo shows the completed but unfinished Celtic side of the face. Take time to go over the entire carving one last time to clean up any scruffy areas and to make sure all the knotwork is complete. Use the opportunity to do any last-minute sanding to fair curves or smooth out rough sections. If you intend to paint the face as I did, carefully mask off the carving with painter's grade tape and use good-quality paint. For mine, I used a black oil paint and an oil-based red metal primer to give the effect of the plant-based red and ochre that were used for face paint design like this one I based on an old drawing of a native Cree elder.

Finishing the carving

I gave this carving three coats of Danish oil to bring up the tremendous colours of the red cedar and to give it a bit of protection against dust and dirt. I sanded between each coat with 1500 grit wet and dry and then gave it a light buff with some beeswax polish. I resist the urge to use varnish, lacquer or any surface finishes as I find they clog the carving and are just too 'plastic' in appearance. ▶



The finished carving after sanding



Apply a finish of your choice. I chose an oil



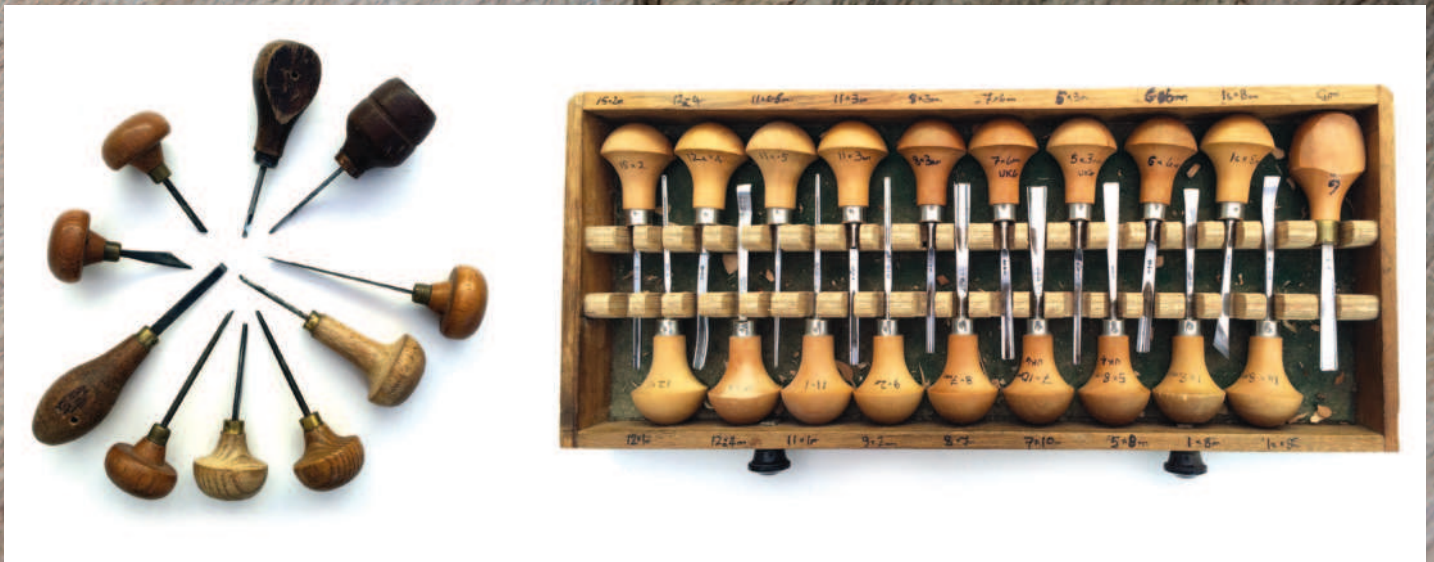
The effect once the finish is dry



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Carving printing blocks

Murray Taylor reflects on the different ways of carving printing blocks and the variety of tools used to produce them



A selection of scorpers or gravers that I used to engrave on metal

Palm tools used for woodblock engraving or general carving techniques

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MURRAY TAYLOR

As a working jeweller and silversmith I would use small, specialist tools to engrave on the surface of precious metals, either to create a pattern for decoration or to produce lettering for an inscription. I would carve patterns into other materials, such as copper or hard wax, in order to produce a model for casting. The tools used for this work are known

as scorpers or gravers and are exactly the same as the tools that an engraver of copper printing plates would have used in the past.

As I researched this subject I became aware of the fact that these very same tools were used in the production of wooden printing blocks and that such famous artists as Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) or Paul Gauguin (1848-1903) would have used similar tools for their

woodblock engravings, along with palm tools that we are familiar with in woodcarving today.

It was through this connection that I became interested in the production of woodblocks for printing and this fascination with the subject led me on to some interesting discoveries regarding a style of carving tools which vary considerably from our own. I refer to the tools used in Mokuhanga, the ancient art of Japanese woodblock printing.

Looking at the Japanese tradition

For many years now I have been visiting Japan in pursuit of my interest in martial arts, and while there I have also spent some time looking at different carving techniques. In recent years many Japanese woodworking tools have become very popular in the west, their pullsaws and planes in particular, but their

specialist carving tools are little known in the western world.

I am sure that most people will be familiar with this famous print, commonly known as The Wave, a superb example of the Japanese art of woodblock printing. The tools used to produce the woodblock vary somewhat from those used in the west.



The Great Wave off Kanagawa, by Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849)



Two prints from the famous series by Hiroshige, Leaving Edo and Arriving at Kyoto



The Japanese tools used in woodblock carving

You will see that the Japanese knife is quite different from the knives we are used to in the west. The major difference is that the blade can be pushed out as it wears away due to sharpening and that it is used by pushing the blade away from you with the thumb, as opposed to the pulling action we would normally use in chip carving, for example. It is important to note that the hangi-toh only has a bevel on one side.

The komasuki or gouge is used to remove background wood. As you will see from the photograph the handle swivels open and the blade has a small turnover on the tang which engages with a hole in the recess. As the blade wears down through sharpening, another hole can be made to accommodate the blade, a novel idea I think, and very different from our own tools.



The hangi-toh or Japanese knife



The component parts of the hangi-toh



The komasuki or gouge family



The komasuki opened to show its component parts



The aisuki. This tool has the profile of the flat chisel but ground with a curved end. The aisuki is used for very shallow carving and has the advantage of the corners not digging into the work

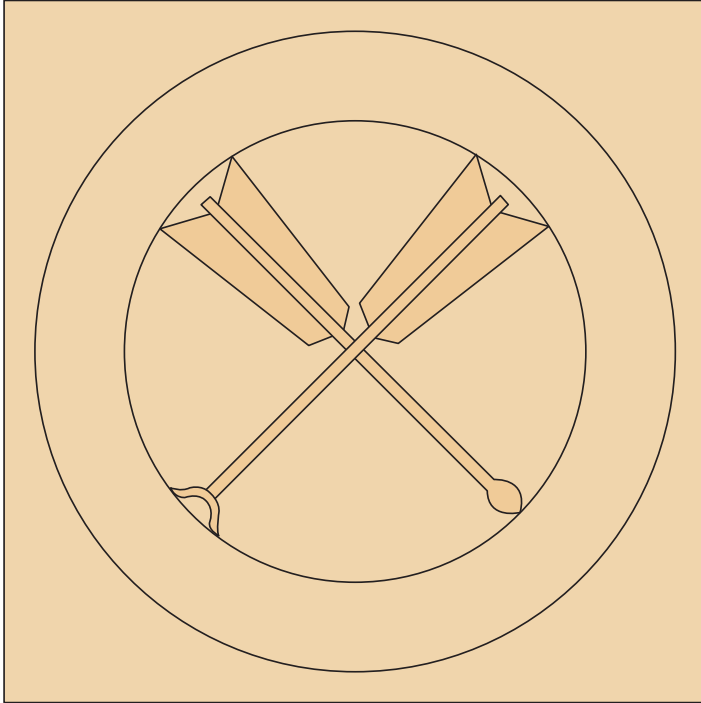


The sankaku-toh, a V-tool which also has an extending blade

The principle of woodblock printing

It is hard to imagine the incredible skill of the woodblock artists, they had to visualise the entire picture as a negative, as it is the parts that you carve away which leave the blank spaces, and the parts that remain which will print the colours. The use of the colours and the exact repositioning of the printing block, or indexing, as it is known is outside the scope of this article, and for further study I recommend *Japanese Woodblock Print Workshop* by April Vollmer (ISBN 978-0-77043-481-6).

As my interest for the purpose of this article is not in the printing of the pictures per se, but in the carving of the original woodblocks, I will not presume to produce a block for a picture in the style of the masters, but rather a block for the printing of a 'mon', or the Japanese equivalent of a coat of arms. In ancient times the mon was worn by the warrior lords and their samurai, in modern Japan, families of samurai decent are still proud to display their family mon. This is the mon of a Japanese family with whom I am closely associated.



Drawing of the mon depicting crossed arrows, one armour cutting and the other piercing



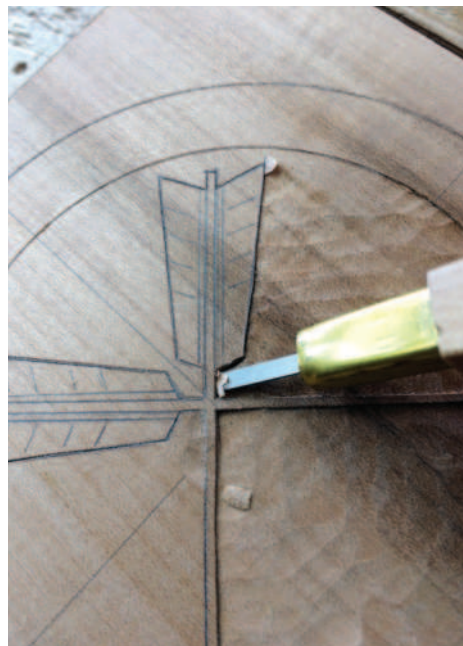
The drawing transferred to the wood



The first thing to note is that the drawing on the wood differs from the paper drawing. If I were to carve the printing block as in the original drawing the arrow shafts and flights would merge into one, so I have had to include a line to delineate between them. You will see that as the hangi-toh, or Japanese knife, is sharpened on one side only, it is important to keep the bevel side of the blade to the outside of the design.

The next stage is to generally cut round the outside of the design with the sankaku-toh, or V-tool, and then start to remove the background with the komasuki, or gouge, and then proceed to smooth things off with the aisuki.

Setting in with a hangi-toh



Various stages of carving the printing block



The completed block



The roller and the ink

Having come this far I thought I should have a go at making a print and having no printing experience my first attempt was with acrylic paint – needless to say, this was a complete failure. A word with my friendly local printer and I was soon on the track of the inks used for lino printing, these are easily obtained online.

Now, armed with a sheet of glass, a roller and the inks I was ready to start printing. I soon realised that in making the block I had been thinking like a carver, not a printer, and that I did not need the surround to the actual printing area of the block. The paper touched it and made a mess, so a minute on the bandsaw the now round block was re-inked and my first print was made.



The inked block with my first print. They did get better after this, but I thought I would show it 'warts and all'

DID YOU KNOW? The Japanese do not use a signature for official documents, signing cheques or signing forms as we would do in the west, instead they use a small stamp called a Nanko and this stamp is registered at a local government office. The stamp is always used with a red ink pad, which is either in the Nanko case or attached to it. The stamped signature is called an Inkan and it was this that gave me the idea for a project.



Two examples of Nanko showing red ink pads

Further reading:

The Woodcut Artist's Handbook
George A. Walker
ISBN 13-978-1-55407-635-8

Beginner's Guide to Linocut
Susan Yeates
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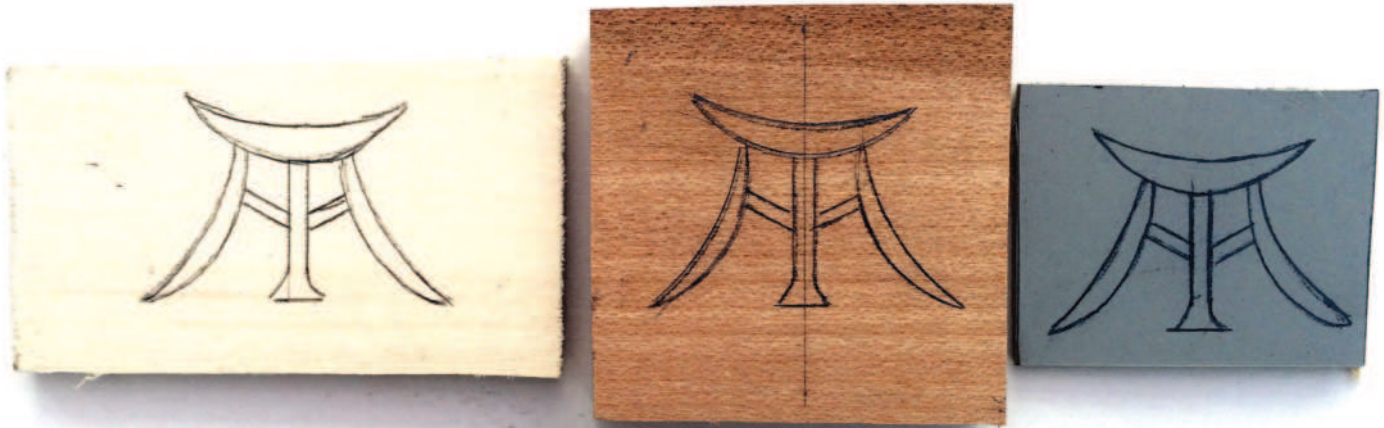
The project

Having taken my first inky steps into the use of the printing block with the initial purpose of introducing some unusual tools, it occurred to me that this could develop into some interesting carving projects.

Needless to say, I do not expect you to have the Japanese tools that I have described so far, so your normal carving tools will suffice. It is

my usual practice to sign the back of my carvings with a monogram, I normally chip carve my initials and then fill them with dark liquid wax.

The project idea is to produce a stamp to use with an ink pad or printing ink. It is a very easy exercise with many possibilities – you can try different species of wood or even try a lino cut.



From left to right: The monogram marked out on Lime, Fruit Wood and lino



Carving away the background



Left to right: the carved block. The pierced and applied block. The first printing

I think the pictures are self-explanatory and it is a good way to get young carvers started by carving lino printing blocks. You could produce a block by piercing out the monogram and applying it to a backing piece.

If you think that I have wandered away from the usual style of project, then I say, as always, apply these ideas to your own styles and requirements, think outside the box, or in this case it could be the box.

I have used the monogram 'HIS' which stands for 'Jesus Hominum Salvator' (Jesus saviour of men) in two ways: one is to carve it into a charity collection box for our local church, the other is pierced and applied on a box for the Bishop of St. Asaph, so you can see that the idea for printing blocks can be used in quite a different way. So, as always, don't carve when you're tired, carve in good light, strop regularly and think in or out of the box. ▶

CARVER'S TIP:

For younger carvers you can buy lino cutting tools which are readily available online, and I noted with interest that Flexcut is now offering a 'Lino and relief printmaking set' in its new 2020 catalogue.



A monogram carved on a collection box

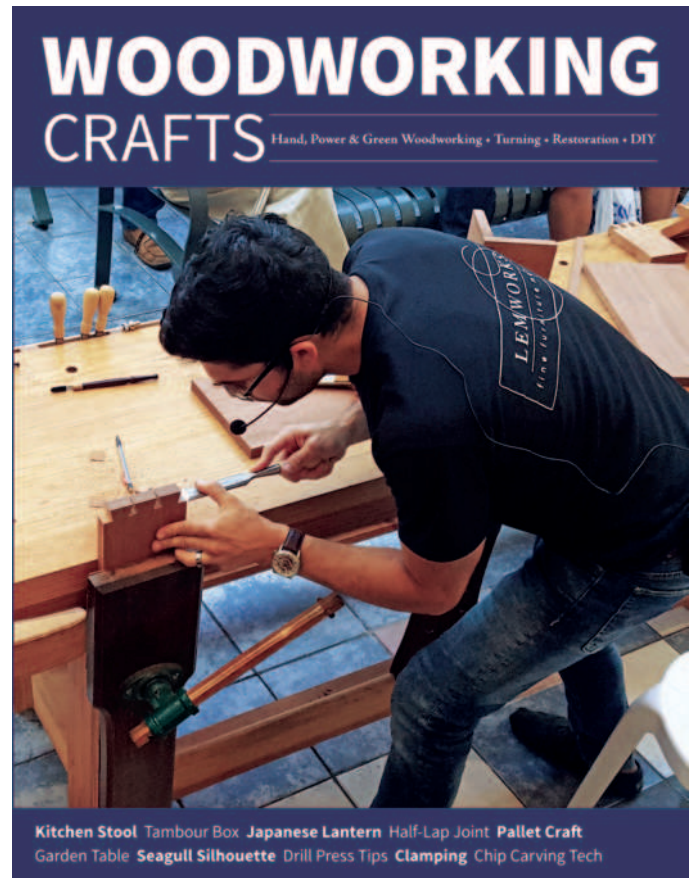


A monogram pierced and applied to a turned box

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Carved oak burr bowl

Zoë Gertner shows how to create a relief-carved tree design on a bowl



An oak tree in our field which provided me with the idea



Some turned bowls before carving

Recently I acquired a collection of fairly chunky wooden bowls that were turned in the late 1980s/early '90s – a fine variety of shapes and sizes made from different timbers which, over the years, have warped and become interesting shapes. Among my collection is a large oak burr bowl with an impressive grain pattern, which must have taken some skill to turn into a bowl of this size – 16in diameter. Burrs have interesting irregular grain patterns and whorls that are fascinating, but can be rather tricky to carve.

A silhouette of the species of tree carved in its timber is a fairly easy project

which can be done on a bowl's outside, or its inside as more of a challenge.

One of the problems when carving a bowl or any warped, irregular piece of timber is to hold it securely so that it cannot slip while you are carving, without damaging it by holding it in a vice. My method is to use four bags of sand, the sand being contained inside cushion covers obtained from a charity shop and the bags pushed together with a non-slip mat laid over them. In my workbench there are two holes into which I insert pegs.

A board is placed on its edge vertically

against them and the sandbags and mat rested against it. My bowl can then be placed on the non-slip mat and nestled into the sandbags, its shape being accommodated by the sand and easy to reposition when necessary – which will be frequent with this particular piece of burred timber.

Unusually for this project I have not supplied a specific drawing of a tree for you to copy and that is due to my not knowing where you will place the drawing or what type of tree you wish to use. Instead, look outside and make a sketch or take a photo for yourself and this can be your inspiration for your drawing.

Things you will need

Tools:

- No.39, 6mm
- No.3, gouges from 3mm-20mm
- No.5, 6 or 7, 10mm
- 6mm skew chisel
- No.10, 3mm
- Coarse & fine punches
- Nail punch

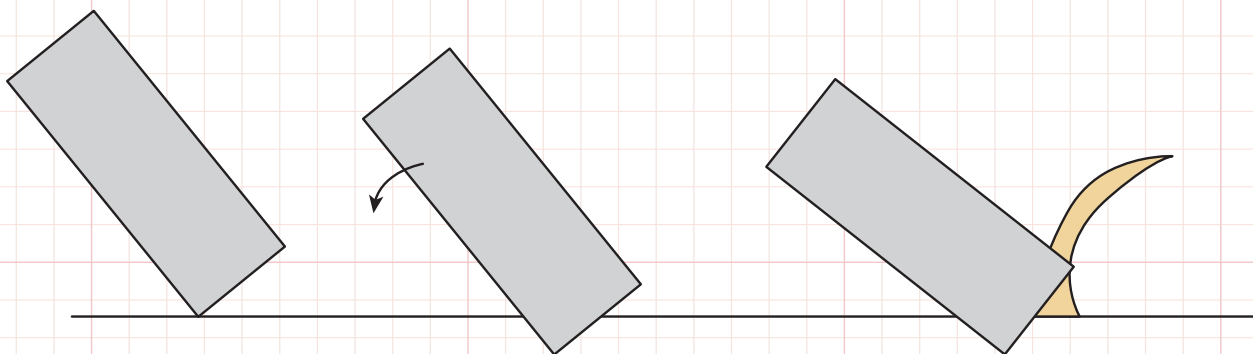
- Light hammer

- Mallet

- Pyrography or soldering unit

Materials:

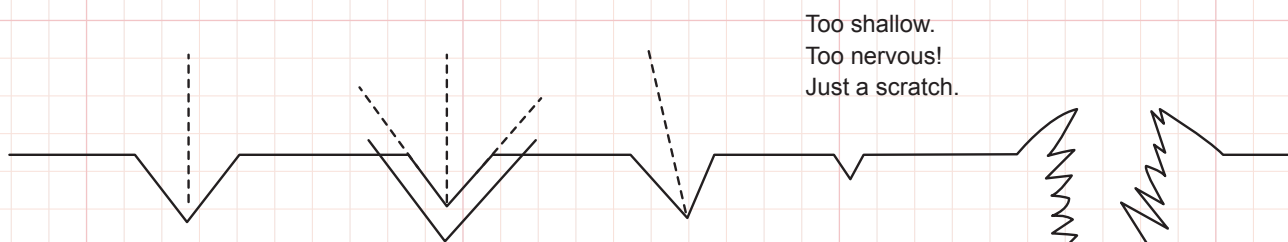
- Wooden bowls or boards on which to carve your design
- Finish of your choice



Hold the tool fairly steeply, give it a tap with the mallet to make it 'bite' into the wood.

Drop your hand a little, and continue tapping. If you drop too much, it may scoot off, so raise it fractionally.

If the chip impedes your view, break it off, but do not lift the tool from its groove until you have to change the direction of the cut.



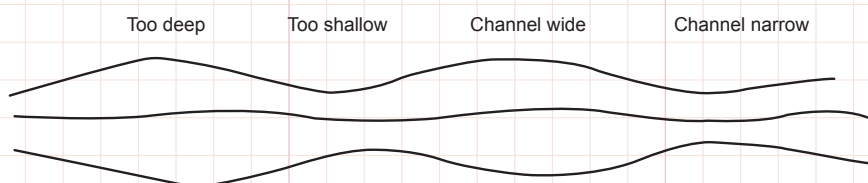
The groove should be of even depth and width, as symmetrical as possible.

A deeper cut gives a wider channel.

Tilting gives a lopsided channel.

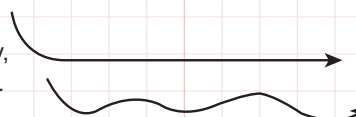
Too shallow.
Too nervous!
Just a scratch.

Too deep. Keep the tool corners above the surface.

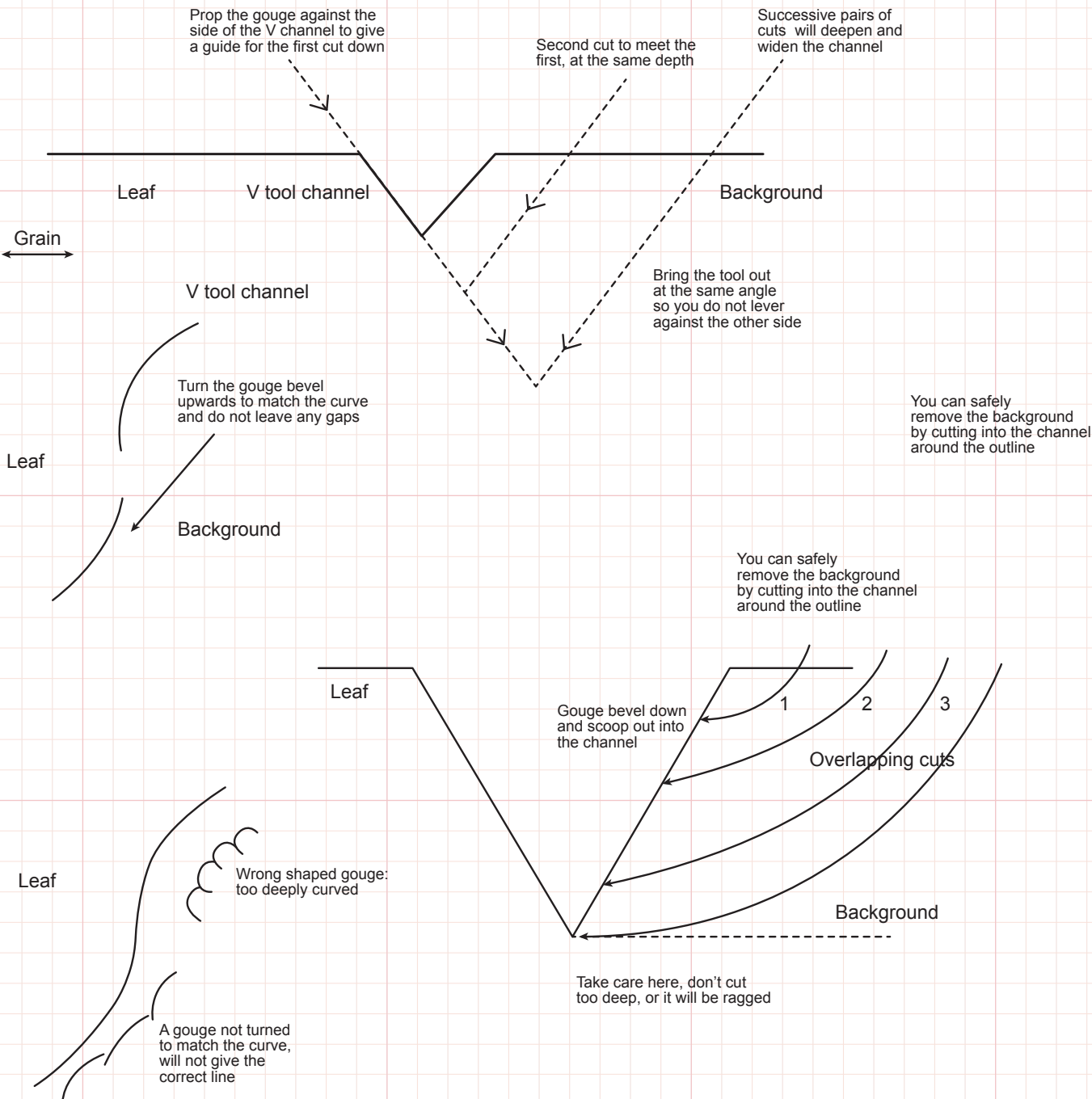


Raising and dropping your hand too much will give an uneven channel

Cut along steadily, not up and down.



Deepening the V Channel around the outline



Preparation

1 & 2 The magnificent oak burr bowl is approximately 405mm diameter, 100mm deep inside and has fairly thick walls with a rim of about 50mm around it. Dusted off, it revealed interesting patterns, both inside and out, which could be incorporated in a carving of an oak tree, this being an appropriate subject for the species of the timber. Somewhat unusually, I have decided to carve a silhouetted oak tree inside the bowl. More conventionally, and probably more easily, it could be done on the outside, though.

Starting the carving

3 & 4 Having photographed a convenient oak tree in our field, I referred to the photo to draw its outline inside my bowl, arranging it so that the grain patterns of the burr fitted within my drawing. If you are not confident in freehand drawing you could trace and copy a suitable illustration or silhouette and transfer it to the surface using transfer paper. Draw the bold trunk and several of the main limbs, then, using chalk, draw the outline of the lobes in its characteristic shape. Where possible, arrange the limbs to lie alongside any cracks or openings and the leafy lobes around any darker patches in the burr.

5 Using the mallet and the V-tool mark out the sides of the trunk and the main branches, but not the outline of the tree. Notice that, as its foliage is to lie over parts of the limbs, these edges should not be continuous lines, but broken in places. The next step is to deepen and widen the V-cuts, marking the branches and the sides of the trunk using a series of opposing cuts.

6 The first set of cuts is made by resting the No.3 gouge within the V-channel and against the sides of the trunk or branch and making successive cuts along them (diagram 3). Continue your cuts downwards along the angled side of the V-channel adjacent to the trunk/branch, so cutting away from it. Turn your gouge so that the shape of your cuts matches the curve of the outline. Where a curve is tight use a narrower No.3 gouge that fits, and do not cut towards the trunk/branch – always away for the first set of cuts.

7 For the second set of cuts use the gouge with its bevel downwards, resting against the surface, and from the opposite direction cut in towards the first set of cuts. Angle each cut so that it meets cleanly with the first ones, thus enlarging the original V-tool outline around the trunk/branches. To cut the channel cleanly the gouge bevel must always be used downwards. At a convex curve swing the gouge cutting edge slightly sideways so that its width meets up with the outward cut at the edge.





8



9

8 Burrs are notoriously difficult and challenging to carve due to the nature of their grain pattern, which lies in whorls and in all directions. To obtain clean gouge cuts you will have to change the direction in which you cut frequently as it is so unpredictable. At times I found it helpful to use a No.5, 10mm with its corner tilted to run alongside the outer edges of the V-channel and deepen the adjacent background surfaces of the trunk and branches. Then the edges of the trunk and branches were rounded over by paring carefully along their lengths using a No.3 gouge.



10



11

9 Working outwards from the middle of the tree, tool the surfaces between and over the branches cleanly but unevenly, using a No.5, 6 or 7, 10mm, to make cuts of varying depths, up to the outer edge (shown in chalk) of the tree. Here you can adjust the shape of its silhouette if need be. For added interest you could carve some wildlife in relief – I added a tiny owl perched on one of the branches using the opposing cuts technique described above.

10 The foliage. In the areas where this lies over the branches I used a nail punch with a light hammer to make clusters of foliage, varying its force to make a variety of depths of holes, the deeper holes giving a darker effect.

11 Around the outer lobes of the tree a lighter froster/punch was used, gradually fading the edge of the tree's outline into its background, the original turned concave inner surface of the bowl.



12

12 Along the rounded sides of the trunk and the main branches both the nail punch and a coarse froster/punch were applied to darken them. I preferred not to, but if you wish the bark on them could be patterned using a No.10 or 11, 3mm, in various lengths of runs.

13 As a contrast to the tooling and texturing of the tree the original surface of the bowl was scraped smooth around its silhouette and up to its outline. Using a redundant No.3, 13mm, I honed its edge on my sharpening stone, and retaining the wire edge produced from the stone, I worked carefully over the convex surface, finding it helpful to mark the grain directions in pencil beforehand, burrs being so challenging in their grain directions. The outer surface and rim of the bowl were then scraped smooth.

Erase any pencil marks and remove any remaining splinters, deep cuts or sharp edges. In several places around its outline I burned with the heated point of a soldering iron to darken it and show it more clearly against its adjacent surface. This is an optional process and can also be done with a pyrography unit.



13



14

14 The finished design ready for an application of a finish of your choice. I used a light coat of satin cellulose spray both inside and outside, though you could use wax polish, or perhaps a certified food-safe finish if you intend using it with food. ▶



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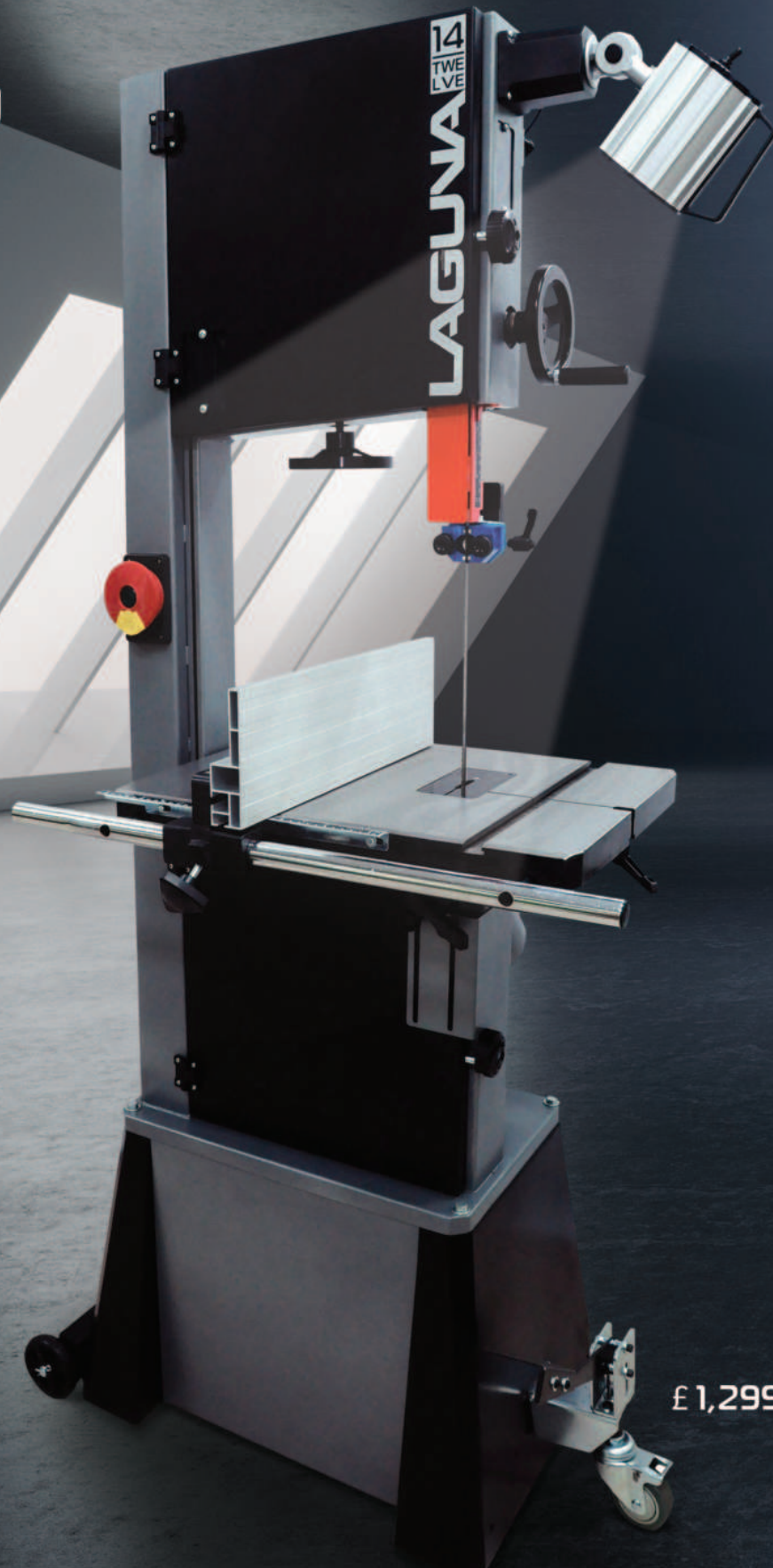
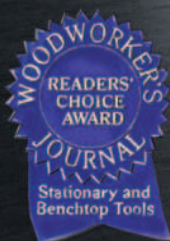
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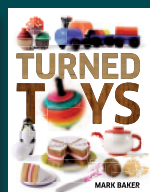
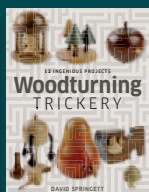
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Wat Arun Ratchawararam

One of Thailand's most familiar and formidable temples, guarded by stone Chinese statues

Bangkok's Buddhist Wat Arun Ratchawararam – Temple of Dawn – is renowned for having been built using tiles salvaged from a British shipwreck. There are said to be more than a million of these broken pieces of Chinese ceramics embedded in the temple, which is named after the Hindu god Aruna – god of the dawn.

The original building dates back to the Siamese Ayutthaya Kingdom, which ruled from the 14th to the 18th centuries, and sits on the west bank of the Chao Phraya River.

By the 1760s, this kingdom had fallen to invading Burmese and Chinese armies until a local general, Taksin, pushed the Burmese back.

The story has it that, in 1768, having battled his way out of Ayutthaya, which was taken over by a Burmese army, Taksin saw the ruined temple from the river as dawn was breaking and gave it its current name, vowing to rebuild it when the war ended.

Now a major tourist attraction and one of Bangkok's most familiar landmarks, the temple has 16 entrances, although only two are open to the public.

Its grand central pagoda, or prang, is built in the Khmer style and is around 70m tall. This tower is guarded at its base by elaborately carved soldiers in the Chinese artistic form. The pagoda shimmers in the sun thanks to the many pieces of colourful tile embedded into the structure and is said to be a representation of Mount Meru, the mythical mountain thought in Buddhist culture to be the centre of the world.

Thailand's famous Emerald Buddha was kept in Wat Arun before being moved to Wat Phra Kaew at the Grand Palace.

Wat Arun is a central part of Bangkok's Royal Barge Procession, being where the king would arrive by river to bring new robes for the monks at the end of the Buddhist Lent period. The Procession disembarks at the landing bridges of six Chinese-style pavilions.

Another feature of note at the temple is the Ordination Hall's Niramitr Buddha image, thought to have been designed by King Rama II, who created the Buddha's face in wood before covering it in gold leaf.



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