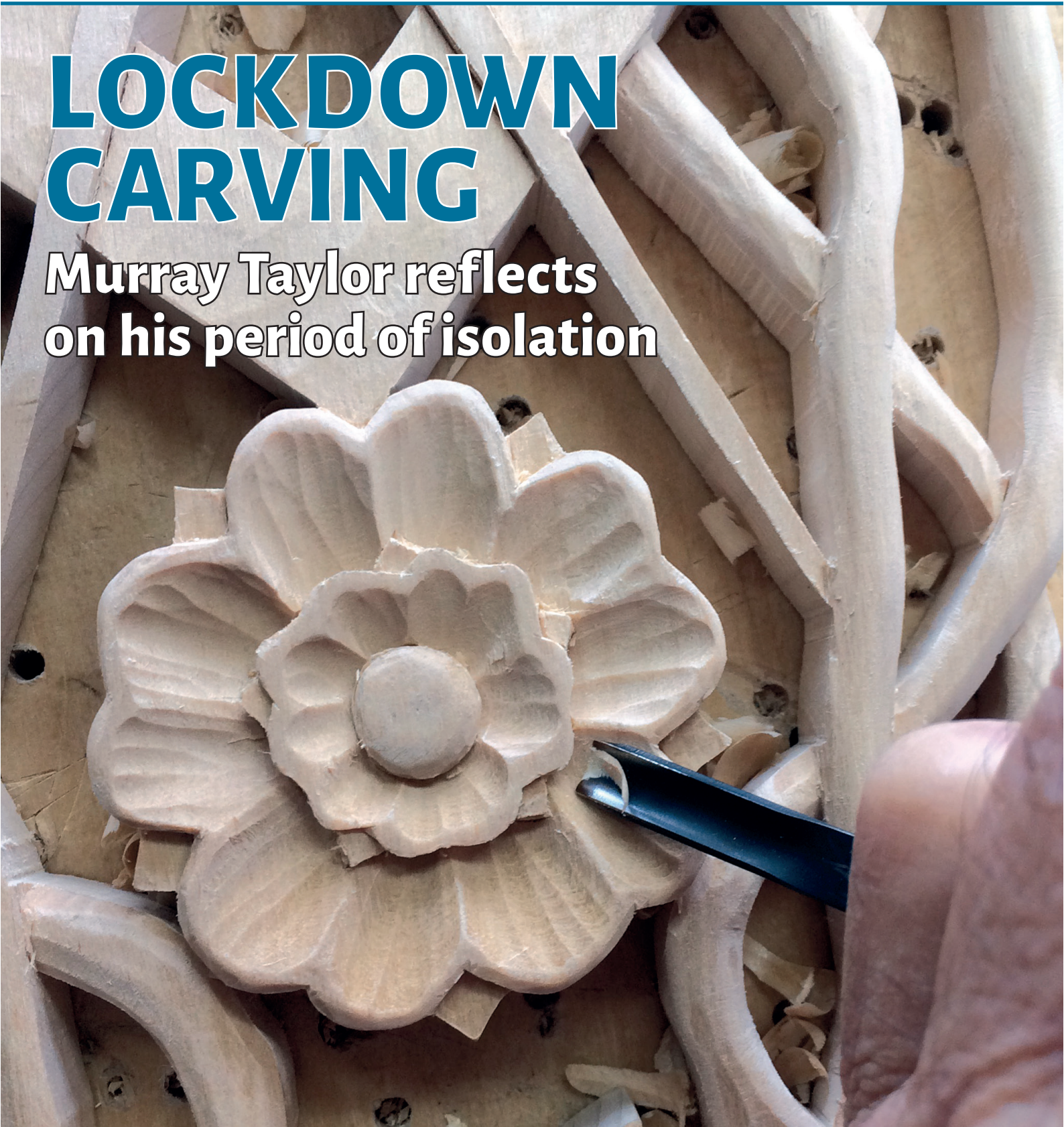


WOOD CARVING

LOCKDOWN CARVING

Murray Taylor reflects
on his period of isolation



PROJECTS TO CARVE Acanthus swirl • Hare head walking stick • Traditional Icelandic motifs • Hanging parrot • Pierced panel • Oak and laurel frame
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Welcome



PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK IAN FORTUNE

This issue we were keen to find out what you were doing during the lockdown months and you rose to the challenge. We take a glimpse at some of your carvings in our From the Community section, while Murray Taylor shares how he made the most of the extra time on his hands.

In this edition we have the pleasure of introducing the art of chainsaw carving to *Woodcarving* magazine with expert Tim Burgess sharing his experiences of this popular and fast-paced craft, and Dave Western brings some Nordic style to the bedroom with an Icelandic bedboard.

Among the other projects and techniques covered in this issue, you will find guides to carving a parrot and a walking stick handle, tips to improve your carving of faces, and inspiration on every page.

Maybe the past few months have given you the time to develop your talent, or maybe you've been frustrated when it came to sourcing materials. Whatever your experiences have been in this strangest of times, we'd love to hear from you and see your latest work, so please contact us at WCEditorial@thegmcgroup.com

Happy carving!

5



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Flexcut Has The Largest Assortment Of Fixed Blade Carving Knives In The World.

Flexcut knives are precision made for maximum performance. Their high-carbon steel blades have durable points, hold an edge extremely well and are easily maintained by simple stropping. Each knife is expertly hand-sharpened and tested before shipping, so it's ready to use right out of the package. Comfortable, curved ash handles allow for long periods of carving without hand fatigue. A wide range of knives are available individually or in sets, to handle every task from roughing to fine detail carving.



Acanthus swirl ornament

Steve Bisco carves and gilds a classical acanthus swirl in sapele mahogany



The classical acanthus swirl is one of the mainstays of decorative carving. It forms the swirling foliage of just about every type of classical decoration, including Ancient Greek and Roman, 17th-century Baroque, 18th-century Rococo and 19th-century Neo-Classical. It appears in crestings, picture frames, mirror frames, chimney pieces, friezes, staircases, capitals, corbels, and just about anything that can be carved in wood and stone. Sometimes the leaves are densely entwined together, and in other examples they are thinly strung out along slender vines. They generally bear only a slight resemblance to a real acanthus – a plant with indented green leaves and unfurling fronds that grows as a weed in the Mediterranean, and also quite well in my East Anglian garden.

It takes practice to master the subtleties that put the life into an acanthus carving. Tiny little touches at the leaf ends, such as the little half-moon incisions and the downward twist of the gouge at a leaf tip, can make a big difference to the appearance. Also the shallow concave surfaces of the broader leaves, the deeper channels of the narrower stems, and the half-

unfurled fronds that roll over on themselves. You must capture the fluidity of the swirl, twisting and turning upwards, downwards and sideways, continually on the move like a living organism. All the curves must be smooth – an awkward angle or a straight line will spoil the carving. And you must accentuate the curves with grooves and vein lines that flow all the way along a leaf or stem, never losing that continuous smooth line.

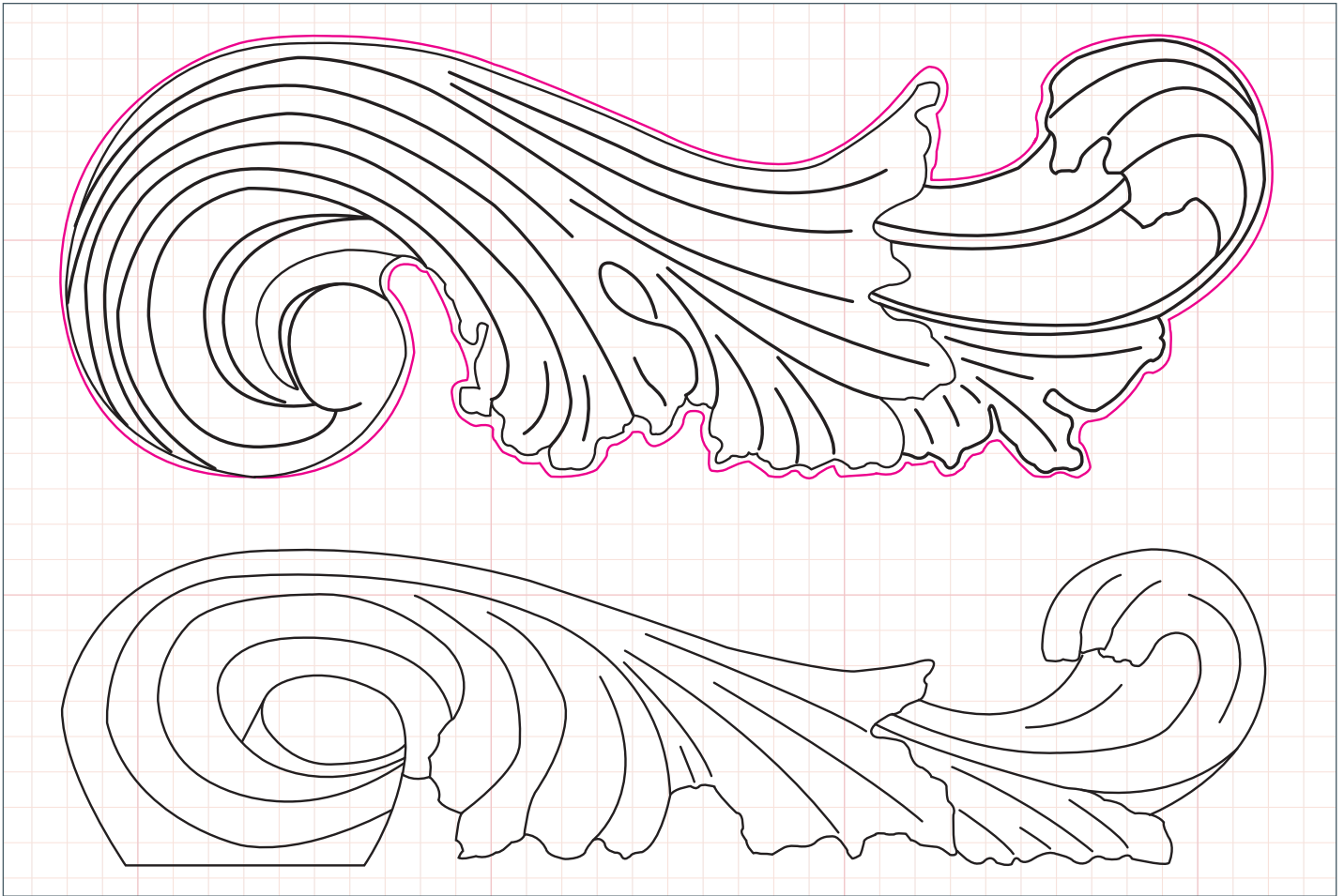
This project gives us an exercise with which to practise acanthus carving, and also an attractive ornament at the end of it. So that it can sit on a cabinet and look pretty, I have made it in sapele (*Entandrophragma cylindricum*) – one of the mahogany substitutes that is much easier to obtain than the real thing. I've finished it with French polish and given it 'highlights' of real 23¾-carat gold leaf (known as parcel gilding), which on this scale is much easier than it sounds.

If you just want some acanthus practice without a fancy finish and the challenge of a hardwood such as sapele, you can, of course, just carve it in lime with any finish (or none) to suit your taste.



A real acanthus plant

PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVE BISCO



THE ANCIENT HISTORY OF ACANTHUS

The acanthus plant grew wild in the lands of ancient Greece and Rome, as it still does today, and it has been used as a decorative motif for at least 2,400 years. The Ancient Roman architect Vitruvius, in his book *De Architectura* written around 30BC, relates a poignant tale of how the capitals of Corinthian columns came to be encased in acanthus leaf decoration: A maiden of Corinth in Ancient Greece died young (in around 400BC) and her grieving nurse filled a wicker basket with things the girl had loved and placed it on her grave. An acanthus root was growing on the grave, and in the spring the leaves grew up and clasped around the basket. The architect Callimachus, working in Corinth at that time, saw this and was so struck by the decorative effect that he designed capitals for the columns of Corinthian buildings encased in acanthus leaf decoration.

The Corinthian capital was one of the most decorative of the classical orders throughout the days of Ancient Greece and Rome, and in the classical revivals of more recent times.



A Corinthian capital (dismounted from its column).

Things you will need

Gouges:

- No.3, 10mm
- No.3 fishtail, 18mm, 10mm
- No.4 fishtail, 6mm
- No.5, 7mm, 13mm curved
- No.6, 25mm
- No.7, 10mm
- No.8, 8mm, 8mm curved
- No.9, 20mm, 3mm, 16mm curved
- Short bent, 10mm
- Skewed spoon, 10mm L&R
- V-tool, 6mm straight, 2mm straight, 4mm curved

Chisels:

- Flat, 20mm, 6.5mm
- Hooked skew chisel, 16mm

Other :

- Bandsaw, rifflers

Materials:

- Sapele (*Entandrophragma cylindricum*) 250 x 90 x 65mm
- French polish, smooth soft brush
- Gilding size, 23¼-carat gold leaf, gilder's tip brush, soft brush, artist's brush

SAPELE MAHOGANY

Mahogany hardwoods are much favoured for their rich-red lustrous surfaces, but the genuine mahogany traditionally used for carving and cabinetmaking (*Swietenia macrophylla*) can be difficult to obtain today. Substitutes like sapele (*Entandrophragma cylindricum*) are the next best thing and are quite easy to obtain from hardwood suppliers and many general timber merchants. Sapele gives a highly decorative

finish, but it can be hard work to carve. It is quite hard and brittle with an unpredictable grain, so care is needed to prevent splinters breaking off. In awkward sections it is often safest to carve across the grain or by using skew gouges. Sapele has a moderate blunting effect on tools, so frequent honing is needed. All mahoganies produce a beautifully rich period effect when finished with French polish and decorated with gilding.

**1****2****PREPARATIONS**

1 Get a piece of sapele (*Entandrophragma cylindricum*), 250 x 90 x 65mm, and make a full-size copy of the drawing to fit it. Trace the top pattern on to the wood using carbon paper. Also trace the pattern on to transparency film so you can redraw it on the wood as you carve it away.

2 Cut the pattern out of the block, preferably with a bandsaw or scrollsaw if you have one, or otherwise with a long-bladed jigsaw, a coping saw, or whatever saws you have.

3 Fix the carving to a backing board and on to the bench. The best type of bench is one you can walk around to get the best cutting angle, but if you can't do that clamp the piece with quick-release clamps so you can easily move it to get the best angle.

**3****4****ROUGHING OUT**

4 Rough out the volute at the left end to get the main features in roughly the right position. Sapele is not a very forgiving wood and breakouts can be difficult to put right, so work down gradually and carefully with small slicing cuts to get the measure of the wood as you go.

5 Move to the other end to rough out the frond. Make a couple of saw cuts to the required depth and chisel out a 'trench' between the frond and the main leaf. Round over the end of the frond, sweeping upwards and towards the back. Undercut a little to rough out the shape, but leave the main undercutting for the detail carving.

**5****6**

6 Now rough out the shape of the main leaf. It slopes down towards the base at the sides and flicks up at the end nearest the frond. The opposite side is rounded over into the flow of the volute. Use the transparency to redraw the flow of the swirl (a white crayon shows up best) to finish shaping the leaf.

7 The rounded sides of the carving need to be followed round into the underside. It is best to do this before the detail carving so you can more easily carve in the flowing curves, and while you can still clamp it in a bench vice without damaging the detail. It is hard work doing this in sapele, so make sure the carving is clamped in tight. The underside and back of the frond need a lot of shaping.

**7****8****CARVING THE DETAIL**

8 We start the detail carving on the main leaf. Mark in the main flow lines with a V-tool, using the transparency as a guide, then cut round the individual leaf ends to their required shape.

9 Separate and shape the individual segments of the main leaf. Make them broader and shallower at the ends, with a mixture of concave and convex profiles. Where they coalesce towards the volute end, make them steeper and narrower with pronounced vein lines and mainly convex profiles.

10 At the ends of the main leaf, carve the details that put life into the acanthus. Cut some 'eyes' in the leaf lobes by 'drilling' in vertically with a No.9, 3mm gouge or No.8, 8mm. Use the same gouges to scoop out grooves running outwards and downwards at the leaf ends, and also some little half-moon cuts to give the ends a slightly ragged look. Add extra veins at the ends with a fine V-tool.

11 Carve the veins of the main leaf round to the left-hand end, swirling around the outside of the volute. Make some of the leaf stems convex, some concave and some flat. As the area gets smaller around the end, merge two or three leaf stems together, adding some eyes at the point where they merge.

12 Now carve the detail of the volute. The outer part merges into the first acanthus leaf, with a vein separating the part that joins the face of the leaf from the part that joins the edge of the leaf. Both of these are slightly concave. The central part of the volute 'spins' outwards and underneath the first leaf – these parts need a smooth finish for gilding.

13 Moving to the frond, cut around the leaf ends and mark the flow lines on the outside. Hollow out the inside curve of the frond, carefully undercutting beneath the leaf tips, to form two smooth concaves with a vein down the middle and thinner veins on each side.

14 Carve the outside curve of the frond, using three widths of gouges and a fine V-tool to create coves and veins that sweep up from underneath and curl over to the leaf tips. Shape the leaf tips with downward turns of the gouge and the little half-moon cuts discussed in step 10.

15 Carve the leaf that emerges from under the main leaf beside the frond. Also undercut the ends of the main leaf where they extend over the frond.

16 Remove the carving from the backing board and undercut the underside of all the leaf edges so they look suitably thin from the front. You can clamp the carving in a bench vice with plenty of padding, or you can make a wooden 'cradle' on the bench to hold it still upside down.



9



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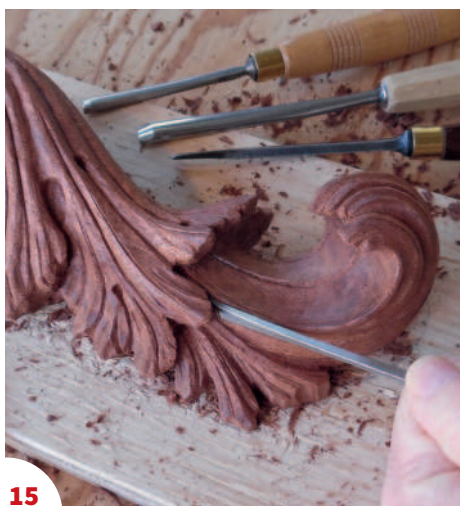
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16

**17****18****FRENCH POLISH**

French polish is a solution of shellac dissolved in alcohol. It is applied thinly with fine brushes or cloth and dries quickly, leaving a clear, hard coating which enhances the colour of the wood. If you need more than one coat, work quickly and smoothly as the alcohol can dissolve previous applications. If it all goes horribly wrong you can clean it off with methylated spirit, which is alcohol based and is also used to clean the brushes.

17 Use fine abrasives, and fine rifflers if you have them, to create a finish that will look smooth and even without losing the detail. French polish, and especially gilding, will show up any irregularities, so make sure the surfaces to be gilded are very smooth.

FINISHING

18 To apply a French polish finish, brush it on very thinly with a fine, soft brush. Work it into the crevices but avoid letting it run or build up thick patches. Let it dry and harden before you buff it up to a soft sheen with a dry cloth.

19 Get a book of real gold leaf, some gilding size and a thin artist's brush, a gilder's tip for picking up the leaf and a soft brush for pressing it down. A proper gilder would use a special gilder's knife and pad to cut up the gold leaf, but unless you plan to do a lot of gilding it is cheaper just to manage with an ordinary knife.

**19****20**

20 'Paint' a thin coat of size on the areas to be gilded, a few sections at a time. The gold will stick exactly where you put the size, so accuracy is important. The size takes about 5-10 minutes to become touch dry.

21 Carefully fold back the cover paper on a sheet of gold leaf and gently score across it with a knife at the edge of your fold. Cut it into sections slightly larger than the patch you are going to gild. Pick it up carefully with a gilder's tip, which you rub into your hair first to build up static.

22 Lower the gold into position with the gilder's tip and press it down gently with a soft brush. Brush away loose leaf from the edges (it will only stick to size) and go over bare patches with small pieces of leaf. For this I used three leaves of 23¾ carat gold, including the inevitable wastage.

23 The carving, with its French-polished sapele and pure gold highlights is now finished. The 23¾ carat gold will never tarnish and will retain its brightness for very many years. ▶

**21****22****23****GOLD LEAF**

Real gold leaf comes in books of 25 sheets, each measuring 80mm square. Expect to pay about £37 for a book of 23¾ carat gold leaf, from a specialist supplier. You could use imitation gold leaf, which comes in larger sheets, is much cheaper, and is easier to handle, but you would need to seal over it with French polish to stop it tarnishing and it would be less bright.

The whole head

In the fifth article of his Practice Makes Perfect series, Peter Benson perfects the whole head

Each of the articles so far have dealt with study sticks for individual elements of the face but the size of head that hobby carvers tend to carve doesn't allow too much detail to be included. More accurately, we tend to try to put too much fine detail into small heads when it is far more important to get the proportions and overall form correct than to try to include detail that is, in fact, almost impossible to achieve for the majority of us.

In this final article I shall be looking at getting the proportions and form correct and deciding how much detail is actually needed.

First of all the carver needs to be absolutely clear what the proportions of the human head are. Although each head is different, the basic proportions vary little from person to person. It is being able to recognise these differences that allows us to achieve individual likenesses.

1 Looking at the head from the side it will fit into a square, as it is as deep, from front to back as from top to bottom.

2 From the front, the width is two-thirds of the height from top to bottom. The eye line is halfway down the head and, at this point, the head is five eyes wide – the distance between the eyes and outside on each side being equal to one eye width.

3 The distance from the eye line to the chin can be divided into five equal parts – two for the nose, one more to the centre of the mouth and two more to the chin.

4 The distance between the outer edges of the nostrils is equal to one eye and the width of the mouth is equal to the distance between the centres of the left and right eyes. See diagrams opposite.

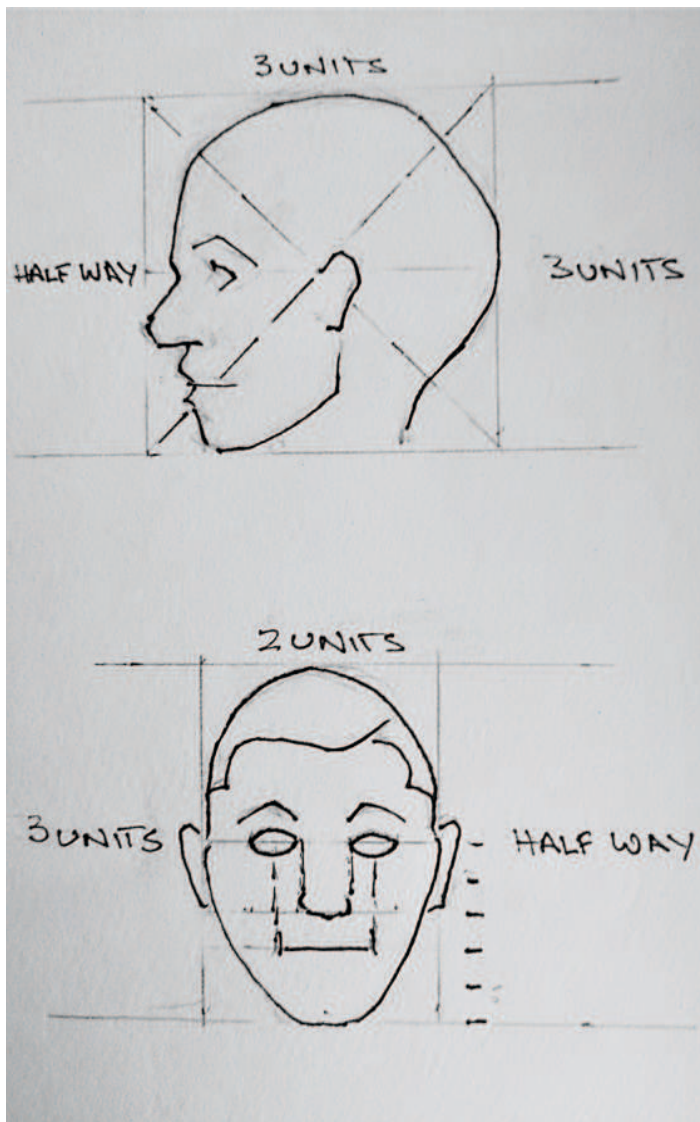
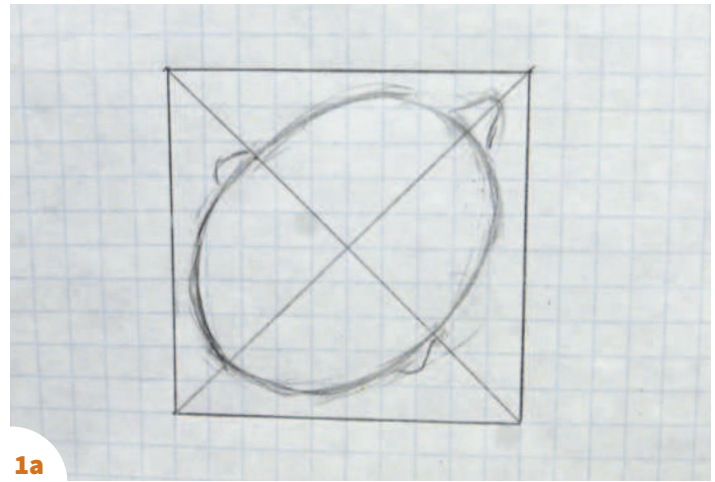


PHOTOGRAPHS BY PETER BENSON

Diagrams of proportions

As mentioned above, these are for a generic head and there will be small variations from individual to individual. These can be applied if required once the basic shape is fully understood. Also, the proportions I have given are for a head, not including the hair. Before setting out your head carving, here or in general, you need to decide exactly what you intend doing with the hairstyle and make sure that you allow enough wood for whatever you have decided. All too often carvers leave the decision on hair until they have carved most of the head – this is too late.

For this exercise I have used a piece of jelutong, 50mm square and around 300mm long. This means, using the information already given, that the maximum-sized head I can carve will be around 50mm long and 33mm wide, as this is the maximum length I can draw on the end section. See picture 1a. I shall concentrate on a male head showing the ears but, if you want a female head you can hide the ears under the hair.



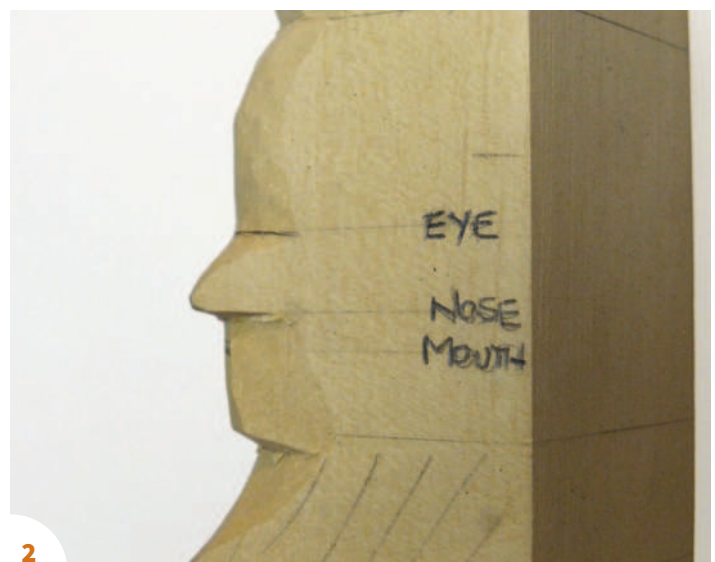
Head drawn on end of block

Stage 1

Draw the top view of the head on the end of the block to confirm the size and then mark out the block as shown. I have left around 18mm between sections for ease of carving and have ended up with five sections which should be enough.

Stage 2

Leaving section 1 uncarved move on to section 2 and remove the basic waste wood as shown. Angle the area for the nose from the mark showing the tip to the eye line and lower the brow until you are happy with the profile.



Stage 3

Mark where the ear will be – the top in line with where the eyebrows will be and the bottom in line with the bottom of the nose. Cut away the waste wood from above and below the ear as shown in the picture. You don't really need a separate head to show this.



Stage 4

Mark out the various parts of the face according to the diagram at the start of this article. At this stage you don't need detailed drawings, lines for the sizes of the mouth and eyes will do for reference.



Stage 5

The most important cuts to make when carving a face are shown here. Three lines can give a guide to the shape. These are the tear line from the inner corner of the eye, the laugh line running from around the top of the nostril down past the corner of the mouth and the jaw line from in front of the ear under the chin. These are shown by the arrows.



Stage 6

Once you have the basic face shape you can start to add the detail. It is very easy to leave too much wood at this stage so regular checking of your proportions is vital. I have doubts about whether, on a face of this size, you should attempt to carve the actual eyeball. I think you will have more success just carving a shadow within the eyelids. I have done this as an illustration, but the advantage of the study piece is that you can try out different ways of getting what you want. You can also go back to an earlier stage and do something different. You will need to be sure of what face shape you require. To get a masculine-looking face an angular, slimmer shape will be more effective, whereas a feminine face is easier to achieve if kept more heart-shaped. Obviously face shapes vary enormously, but it is very easy to end up with feminine male faces and masculine female faces unless a great deal of care is taken to get them right.



Summary

In the last five articles I have covered the essentials of carving the human face by carving study sticks. Although the repetitive aspect of carving a stick with progressions is the main part of the learning process, you could just as easily carve each element on a separate piece of waste wood. The important thing is to treat each part of the carving as a practice piece and not as an important carving that has to be done to a high standard in order to add to your collection. Practising quality of finish and fine detail can be a totally different exercise and can form the subject of yet another study stick. I would advise that the more you practise carving study stick faces the less stressful will be the process and the less chance there will be of getting it wrong on your treasured carving.

Most of all, have fun and don't be afraid of making mistakes or getting it wrong. That is what practice is all about. ▶

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News

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

Good With Wood

A new series from Channel 4 will showcase the skills of UK woodworkers

Our favourite craft is coming to the small screen later this year as the UK's most talented woodworkers are put to the test in a new, six-part factual entertainment series from Plimsoll Productions.

Presented by Mel Giedroyc, *Good With Wood* will see a group of woodworkers challenged to craft beautiful and ambitious builds to exacting briefs. Over a series of competitive rounds taking place in a stunning woodland setting, the contestants will be put through their paces.

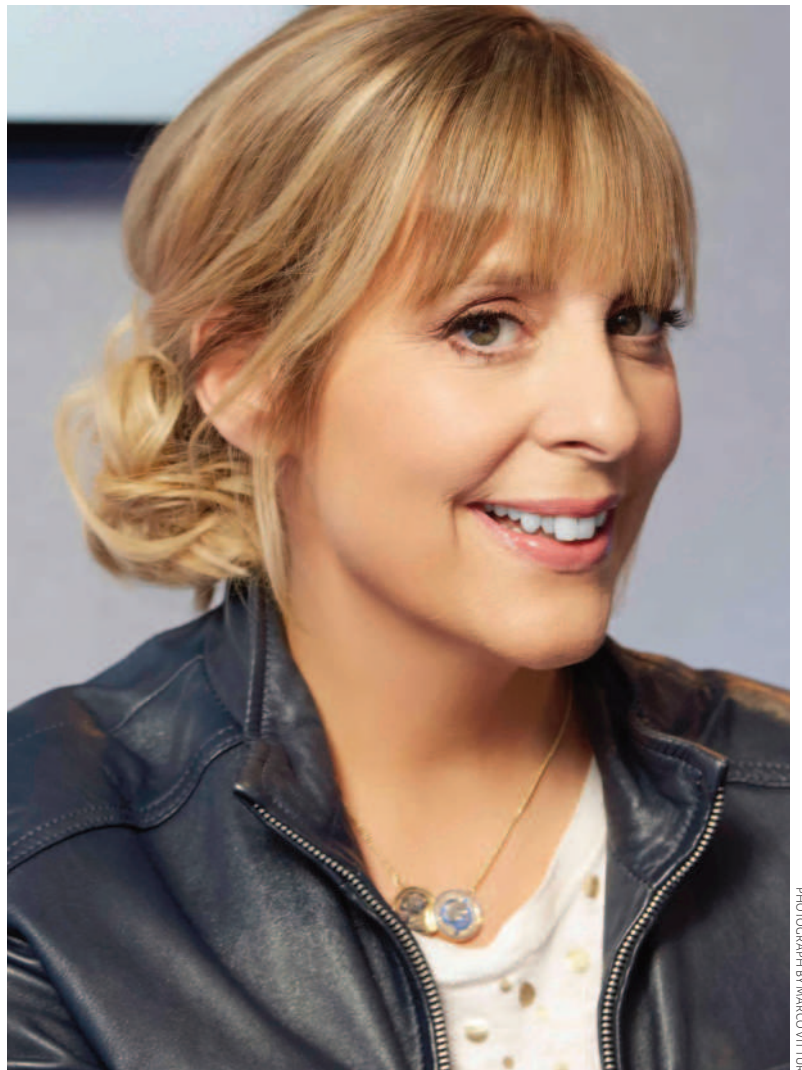
Each episode will centre around a Big Build, in which the contestants will create large and imaginative wooden structures and objects, as expert judges scrutinise their designs, techniques and skills. The competitors will be pushed to their limits, with only one crowned as winner.

Mel Giedroyc said: 'In the words of Ian Faith, the manager of Spinal Tap, "... in the topsy-turvy world of heavy rock, having a good solid piece of wood in your hand is often useful." I would add to that by saying that in the topsy-turvy world of 2020 in GENERAL, having a good solid piece of wood in your hand is pretty much ESSENTIAL. So, if you go down to the woods today, you're in for a big surprise. *Good With Wood* is going to be something we can all lean on. I can't wait to make like Edward Woodward and get WOODSWARD.'

Karen Plumb, head of factual entertainment at Plimsoll Productions, said: 'In a throwaway world, more and more people are turning to woodwork to connect them to nature and their creativity. We're delighted to be making this escapist and ambitious competition for Channel 4.'

Daniel Fromm, commissioning editor at Channel 4 Popular Factual, said: 'Joyous, insightful and entertaining, this series is feel-good Fact Ent and an antidote to our times, as it celebrates the extraordinary craftsmanship and artistry of the country's finest woodworkers.'

To learn more about the series, and maybe even take part yourself, check @goodwithwoodtv on Instagram and Twitter.



PHOTOGRAPH BY MARCO VITTUR

'In a throwaway world, more and more people are turning to woodwork to connect them to nature and their creativity.'

2020 Events

EVENTS CANCELLED

Due to the ongoing situation with Covid-19 and the current cancellation of events we've suspended our events list.

BDWCA NEWS



Front view of the Ruddy Duck



Left view of the Ruddy Duck

PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE LATE DAVID ROSE FOR THE BDWCA

Normally in this issue I'd be telling you all about the Ward World Bird Carving Championships in April in Ocean City, Maryland, US, and how our members who were going to attend had got on, but sadly this was cancelled due to coronavirus. Since then more shows have been cancelled, including the Rutland Birdfair, and we had to take the decision to cancel our annual show and competition, the Festival of Bird Art, which should have been held in Bakewell on the weekend of 12-13 September.

In consequence, articles that I would usually write for the next few issues have gone down the drain, so to speak, so there may be a few trips down memory lane to come.

Back in 2008 this magazine held its Woodcarving Competition, which that year included an additional prize in the Painted category for the best Duck, Decoy & Waterfowl Carving, and, as stated in the editorial in *Issue 103*: 'Yes, this is a blatant attempt to encourage members of the BDWCA to enter.'

I'm glad to say that some of our members took up the challenge, sending in the photographs required, and BDWCA member David Rose was awarded the Silver medal in the Painted carving category for his interpretive-style Ruddy Duck Hen. Chris Pye

(whose work David greatly admired) gave it his Judge's Choice award, saying: 'It's often hard to say why we like something, why it gives us a little surge of delight. I look at this simple carving: the outline, the forms within; the surface and lightness of touch with the colour; the sense of character – and just really like it.'

Fast forward to the present day and, because we can't hold our annual show and competition this year, we have decided to hold a virtual competition in its place. Each member can enter one carving – sending in four photographs (left side, right side, top and front) – and the winners will be announced on the weekend when we should have been at the show in Bakewell. The corresponding photographs that David provided for the competition in 2008 illustrate what will be required.

Contacts

For further information on the BDWCA, including membership details, visit www.bdwca.org.uk, or contact the membership secretary: Mrs Janet Nash, 26 Shendish Edge, Hemel Hempstead, HP3 9SZ, Tel: 01442 247610. Alternatively, please email: pam.wilson@bdwca.org.uk Membership includes three issues of our full-colour magazine, *Wingspan*.



Right view of the Ruddy Duck



Top view of the Ruddy Duck

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 KarenSc@thegmcgroup.com



Chainsaw sculpting

Tim Burgess presents a quick guide to this dramatic art

In the Oxford English Dictionary the word 'sculpture' is stated to mean 'the art of making three-dimensional figures and shapes, especially by carving wood'. (Origin - from Latin *sculpere*, 'carve').

A 'sculptor' is defined as 'an artist who makes sculptures'. And 'to carve' - is 'to shape to produce an object'.

I have been 'sculpting' wood as a hobby since I was a young boy and I have been sculpting wood with chainsaws since 2005. In my late twenties I started carving rocking horses of various sizes, following the designs of Anthony Dew in his book *Making Rocking Horses*.

I have always had a fascination with trees and their wood. An early ambition of mine was to join the Forestry Commission and even work in the teak forests of Burma. But for me that was 'the road not taken'. When I retired from 30 years of public service I realised that, as life is short, I should indulge one of my passions.

I became a chainsaw sculptor, and it has taken me all over the UK, Europe, the US, Canada and even as far as Melbourne, Australia, where I came third in a Stihl-sponsored international chainsaw sculpting event.

For now, I am content to transform much-loved trees, which have had to be taken down due to disease, or because they are dangerous. Some trees, of course, are not loved at all, but they can still be transformed.

When tree surgeons remove a tree it is generally sliced up into manageable pieces and either used for firewood or left to rot.

I believe that to be left to rot, or reduced to firewood, can be a real shame for a once-magnificent tree which has, in its long past, done so much for the local ecology and environment. So, from a tree stump or a log I create something new, which, if properly cared for, will last a very long time.

Creating a sculpture from trees and logs - indeed, any wood - can take a great deal of time if mallet and chisels are used. This can result in sculptures becoming very expensive.

However, by skilfully using a variety of chainsaws to sculpt the wood, a lot of progress can be made in a relatively short period of time due to the amount of wood that can be quickly removed. And, in the hands of an experienced chainsaw sculptor, chainsaws can be used to create a variety of finishes.

Because a chainsaw-created sculpture can be produced in a relatively short time, the price of a unique tree, or log sculpture, is within reach of many people's pockets.

For anyone thinking of taking up sculpting with chainsaws it is essential to have the appropriate training to use them.

Courses and assessment take place all over the UK, for example at Myerscough College,

Lancashire, for CS30.1 and CS30.2 of an NPTC City & Guilds Course, which is the minimum standard for operating chainsaws and maintaining them safely.

As a result of passing the final course assessment, insurance for chainsaw sculpting in public and private places can be obtained.

An important consideration when it comes to sculpting with chainsaws is the need to have



PHOTOGRAPHS BY TIM BURGESS

A bird of prey in oak, ready to finish - nearly 5ft tall overall

SAFETY FIRST

Woodworking tools, and particularly chainsaws, are inherently dangerous. Please make sure you comply with all the safety regulations mandated in your country. Ensure you wear all safety equipment including body, eye, nose, mouth, face, ear, head, feet and hand protection. Make sure your tools are correctly maintained and used in a safe manner as recommended by their manufacturer. Any deviation from these recommendations mentioned in any article, you follow at your own risk. We show these tools being used but cannot be held responsible for any damages, death or injury caused by their use.

all the appropriate safety equipment. It is wise to always wear approved chainsaw-protective trousers, gloves, and boots, all designed to withstand some degree of contact with a chainsaw. In 15 years I have not damaged any part of my clothing – or myself – with a chainsaw or other equipment.

Good-quality ear defenders are also essential – mine are usually tuned into Radio 2 (or occasionally Radio 4).

A facemask should always be worn – this is to protect your nose and lungs from small fibres of wood. Occasional exposure is not generally a problem, but continuous exposure during chainsaw sculpting can be dangerous with certain types and conditions of wood.

Apart from the danger of small wood fibres being inhaled, and eventually clogging up lungs, there is also a danger from various microscopic fungi that can be present in some woods.

I generally use Stihl, Makita and Husqvarna chainsaws, with Stihl and Cannon carving bars. Saws and bars need to be maintained and chains need to be sharp. I regularly maintain my saws and particularly the chains I use.

Every chainsaw carving I create is a step along the road to further developing my skills. The more I do the better I get.

The very best chainsaw sculptors in the world take time to study the principles of sculpture, including form and composition, interaction, balance, use of space and negative space, proportion, movement/flow (including edges and lines, and direction of action), emphasis (including expression, posture, gesture), and also they take great care with the detail and spend time with smaller power tools to refine areas and features.

Many chainsaw sculptors try to aim for some subtle interaction between the audience and the piece.

Personally, I am more likely to create a sculpture which is sitting watching quietly, and looking at the viewer, as though the viewer has disturbed the sculpture's quiet environment and the sculpture is looking at the viewer.

I am happy to sculpt a piece which is in motion, however, my personal feeling is that, despite looking as though they could be, or are, in the process of movement, such pieces are actually forever held static by the restrictions of the wood – with no 'before' and no 'after'.

There are specific reference books for chainsaw carving/sculpting.

Many chainsaw sculptors in the UK do 'likenesses' – in other words figures, shapes and forms that are instantly recognisable for what they are.

My website – www.thetimburgess.com – has many photos of chainsaw sculptures I have created. All the designs on my website are of pieces that people asked for that fitted within their budget.

Very often, the shape and dimensions of a person's tree or log have a big say in what can be achieved.

They can be advised on what tree and log sculptures are most likely to work and those that are less likely to work in both the short and long term – sometimes this is due to the species of tree/log.



Sculpture of golf course architect Alister MacKenzie in progress

Personally, I rarely provide sketches – mainly because I know from experience that the tree or log will define the actual shape. And I am not as good at drawing as I am at chainsaw sculpting.

The initial step in the process of creating a chainsaw sculpture is to 'block out'. This means making very large cuts, with the biggest saws, to get the overall outline and general shape.

This part of the process is the noisiest because the chainsaws used at this point are the largest. Depending upon the size of the log or tree, this part of the process can take a few hours.

The chainsaws used at this point are traditional chainsaws. The chains are tight on the bar – this is the tightness to copy if

you have a chainsaw of your own that has a sprocket at the end of the bar.

The next part of the process involves 'shaping'. The 'blocked-out' shape is refined and key elements of the final sculpture are put in place. This is best done with an appropriate carving bar on a chainsaw. Obviously, once a cut is made there is no going back. You can only take away – as with any carving, using a chainsaw is a reductive process.

At this stage a variety of chainsaws with specialist bars can be used – toonie tip, quarter tip and dime tip. A dime tip means the end of the bar is the size of an American dime coin. Similarly with a quarter dollar coin, and the toonie, which is the nickname for a Canadian two dollar coin. The length of these bars vary



Details of MacKenzie

from as short as 8in to over 20in. On all these bars the chain is run slightly slack so that it can easily move around the tip of the bar, because bars with these names do not have a sprocket at the tip.

At the later stages of the process of creating a sculpture there are some elements of detail which are completed just with the dime tip bar, for example, feathers and fur (although larger bars and saws can be used depending upon what is being sculpted).

Many chainsaw sculptures are finished only with a chainsaw, however, there are other power tools used for a greater degree of finishing – angle grinders with sanding discs, power files/pencil sanders, eye tools on die grinders, Dremels and gas burners (for getting

light and dark effects), and sometimes, but rarely, a variety of chisels.

The final stage of creating a chainsaw sculpture can take the longest time. It depends upon how much detail is required.

As the log has been sculpted 'in the round', effectively out of a branch or log from near the base of a tree, or a tree stump itself, a 'relief cut' can be put in the back of the carving – from the outermost part to the centre. This is because the outside area of the carving will dry first.

As it dries the outside of the wood shrinks. As it shrinks it will split along the path of least resistance – so if you put in the path of least resistance at the back of the chainsaw sculpture, it is much less likely to get a split

that affects the appearance of the front of the sculpture.

Virtually all chainsaw sculptures are intended for outside display in gardens and open areas. They are usually viewed from some distance away, so less time is likely to be spent on small detail – unless it is specifically requested.

A chainsaw sculpture can be finished by effectively sanding it with the edge of a chainsaw, or it can 'finished' by sanding down with the variety of power tools mentioned above.

Chainsaw sculptures can be protected with a large number of readily available wood preserver products, for example Cuprinol and Ronseal for rough-sawn or garden wood (it says this on the tin).

There are some types of wood that produce a better finish if they are protected with, for example, Sadolin or Sikkens for external wood.

All chainsaw sculptures should get at least one coat of wood protection. Further coats are always advisable but not strictly necessary.

With a chainsaw sculpture of a tree stump, if there is going to be any rot it is likely to come from the direction of the roots, perhaps over quite a long period of time – maybe years – and also where the weather hits the chainsaw sculpture.

Some tree-stump sculptures can be sawn off their base, but left in situ with a membrane between the top of the tree root base and the rest of the stump.

If the tree stump continues to grow shrubbery and small branches where there is bark then, in my view, let them continue and prune as necessary – it gives the roots something to do. This will help the tree to stay alive for longer – and delay its inevitable decline – for a number of years.

There are a number of choices with sculptured logs. They are not intended for internal display because the wood used is green wood – that is, a log that has not been air dried or kiln dried. Green wood will dry out to some extent. For example, oak takes one year per inch of thickness – at least.

As the wood dries it will develop very small 'shakes' (splits). These occur as the wood shrinks slightly and finds the path of least resistance through the age rings of the tree. These shakes will very rarely lead to the sculpture splitting in two. They can be prevented and minimised, and they can also be repaired.

To minimise and prevent shakes the chainsaw sculpture is best placed in a shady area, out of direct sunlight – perhaps where there is a microclimate among some shrubs. Perhaps more towards the south end of a garden or area to avoid direct sunlight (in the Northern hemisphere). The sculpture could be raised up on small blocks – flower-pot raisers are adequate, using three to four. And any leaf debris should be removed from underneath on at least an annual basis.

Chainsaw sculptures do not have to be regularly coated with protective coatings – some people like to see the natural decay of wood take place over a long period of time. But, if looked after, chainsaw sculptures will last for many years. 🍷



Il Porcellino is the local Florentine nickname for the bronze fountain of a boar. The fountain figure was sculpted and cast by Baroque master Pietro Tacca shortly before 1634. I thought it was great so sculpted it with chainsaws, life-sized in oak



The seven foot tall three owls in a tree are - A Wise Owl, a Tawny Owl and a Barn Owl, with an Echidna sculpted at a Stihl Carving competition in Melbourne, Australia - I came third but got the highest auction price



ABOVE: The sculpture of a dog was someone's much loved deceased pet

BELOW: The Greenman face was sculpted as a commission for John Bishop the comedian



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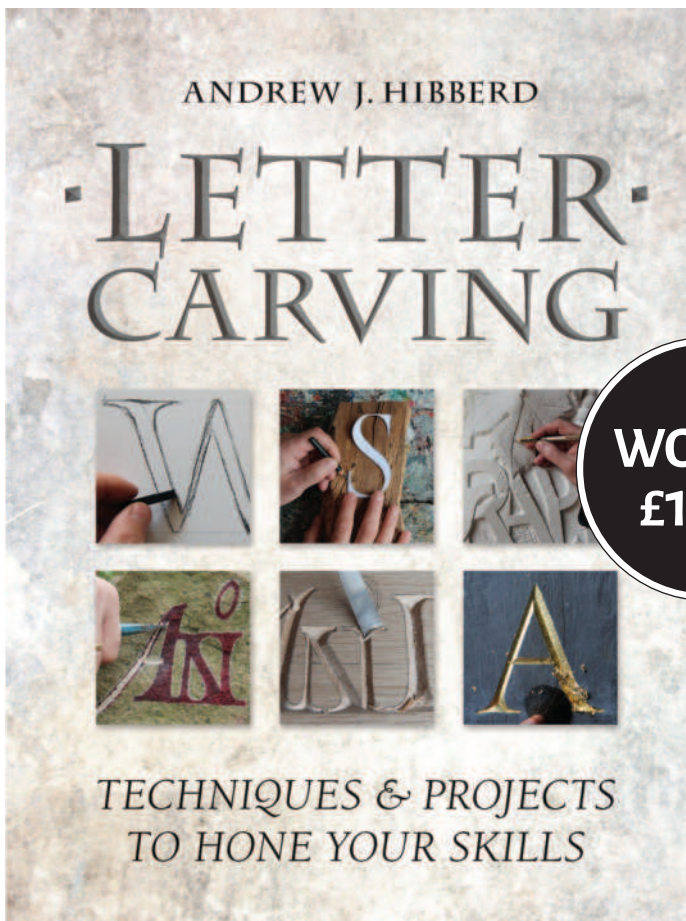
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Sharpening carving tools

If you spend any time with woodcarvers, you'll soon gain a whole new appreciation for sharp tools

Carvers are fanatics about sharpness. They have to be. All their tools are expected to make clean cuts in wood regardless of the grain direction. The resulting surface is crisp and free of tearout.

Carving tools fall into four broad categories: chisels, gouges, V-parting tools and knives. As you might expect, chisels have a straight cutting edge. Carving chisels may have a single or double bevel. Sharpening a carving chisel is similar to sharpening a standard woodworking bench chisel.

The range of carving tools

Gouges have U-shaped cutting edges and vary in width and radius, or sweep. The most common types of gouges are made with the bevel on the outside of the sweep. These are referred to as out-cannel gouges. In-cannel gouges are made with the bevel on the inside of the sweep. Gouges offer some unique challenges in sharpening in order to maintain the proper shape.

V-parting tools, as the name suggests, feature V-shaped cutting edges. The angle of the 'V' can vary. For the purposes of sharpening, you can treat the bevel on each side of the 'V' as a separate chisel.

Carving knives generally feature short blades that can be straight or curved. You would sharpen these as you might a conventional knife.

There's one thing I need to point out. Each woodcarver has their own preference for the shape and configuration of the cutting edge and bevel on their carving tools. It is not uncommon for a carver to regrind a tool to suit their needs. In this chapter, we will focus on sharpening and honing the cutting edge, regardless of shape.



Most carvers are all about honing and stropping the edge of their tools frequently while they work. Serious carvers use powered equipment to do this. We'll talk about a couple of the options you can use to keep your carving tools scary sharp.

The hobbyist carver may choose to use sharpening stones and strops. It may take more time to do this by hand versus using a powered tool, but the results are no less satisfactory. Regardless of how you decide to sharpen carving tools, one thing to remember is to always pull the tool away from the cutting edge on the sharpening medium.

Gouges

The challenge with sharpening a gouge is maintaining a consistent edge throughout the sweep. This is a little easier on out-cannel gouges since the bevel is on the outside of the blade. The main thing to remember is to keep the tool rotating as it is in contact with the sharpening medium.

The important thing to watch for is maintaining the same bevel angle. This isn't as critical as it might be on other tools, but you'll get a more uniform cutting edge if you pay attention to this detail.

Rolling the gouge from side to side as you move the gouge towards you is one of the keys to getting a smooth edge.

This method is a quick and easy way to touch up the edge as you work. If the edge or bevel needs to be reshaped, use a coarse stone and

follow the same technique. Then you can work your way up through finer grits to a more polished edge.

One tool you can use to refine the edge of a gouge is a slipstone. Slipstones come in a variety of shapes to address curved or unique edge profiles.

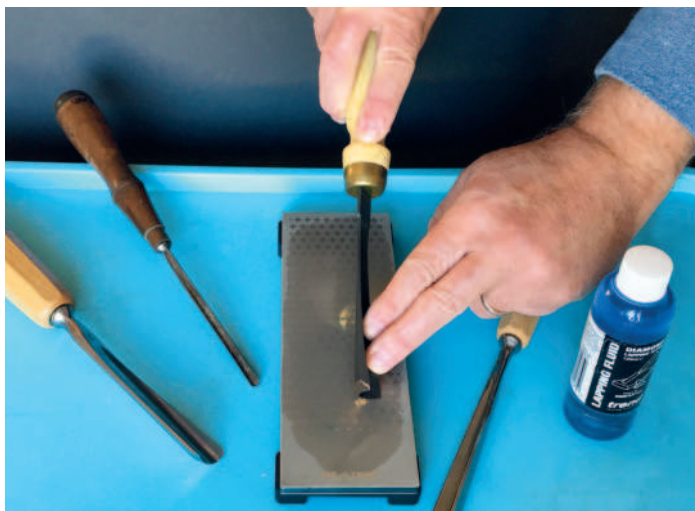
When using a slipstone, the same rule applies – remember to always pull the gouge away from the cutting edge. After using a sharpening stone or slipstone, you will want to strop the edge to a polish. This is a sure way to get the sharpest edge possible.

To remove any burr on the inside edge of a gouge, or when honing an in-cannel gouge, with the bevel on the inside of the sweep, you can use a slipstone here as well. You can

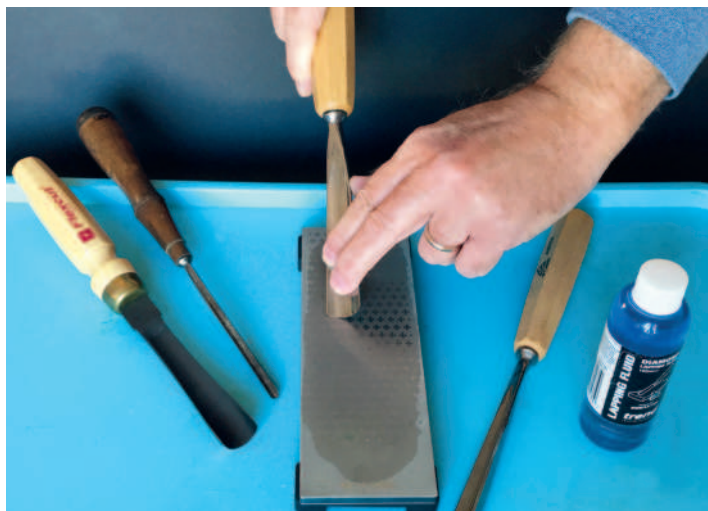
hone gouges using a small piece of wet/dry sandpaper or lapping film wrapped around a pencil or dowel. This makes it easy to hone the inside radius of any gouge.

A trick you can use to hone the edge of an out-cannel gouge is to use a piece of scrap wood and honing compound. You use the gouge to carve out a trough in the wood. Then apply honing compound to the trough. Because you used the gouge to make the trough, its profile is guaranteed to match the cutting edge of the tool.

Draw the tool back through the trough in the direction away from the cutting edge. Make several passes to put a polish on the edge. You can test the sharpness of the tool by cutting into the wood. The result should be a clean cut with no tearout or chipping.



Using a sharpening stone, start with the gouge rolled to the outside corner



Finish up with the sweep on the opposite corner as you finish pulling the gouge across the sharpening stone



As you pull the gouge towards you, start to roll the cutting edge to the opposite side while maintaining the same bevel angle



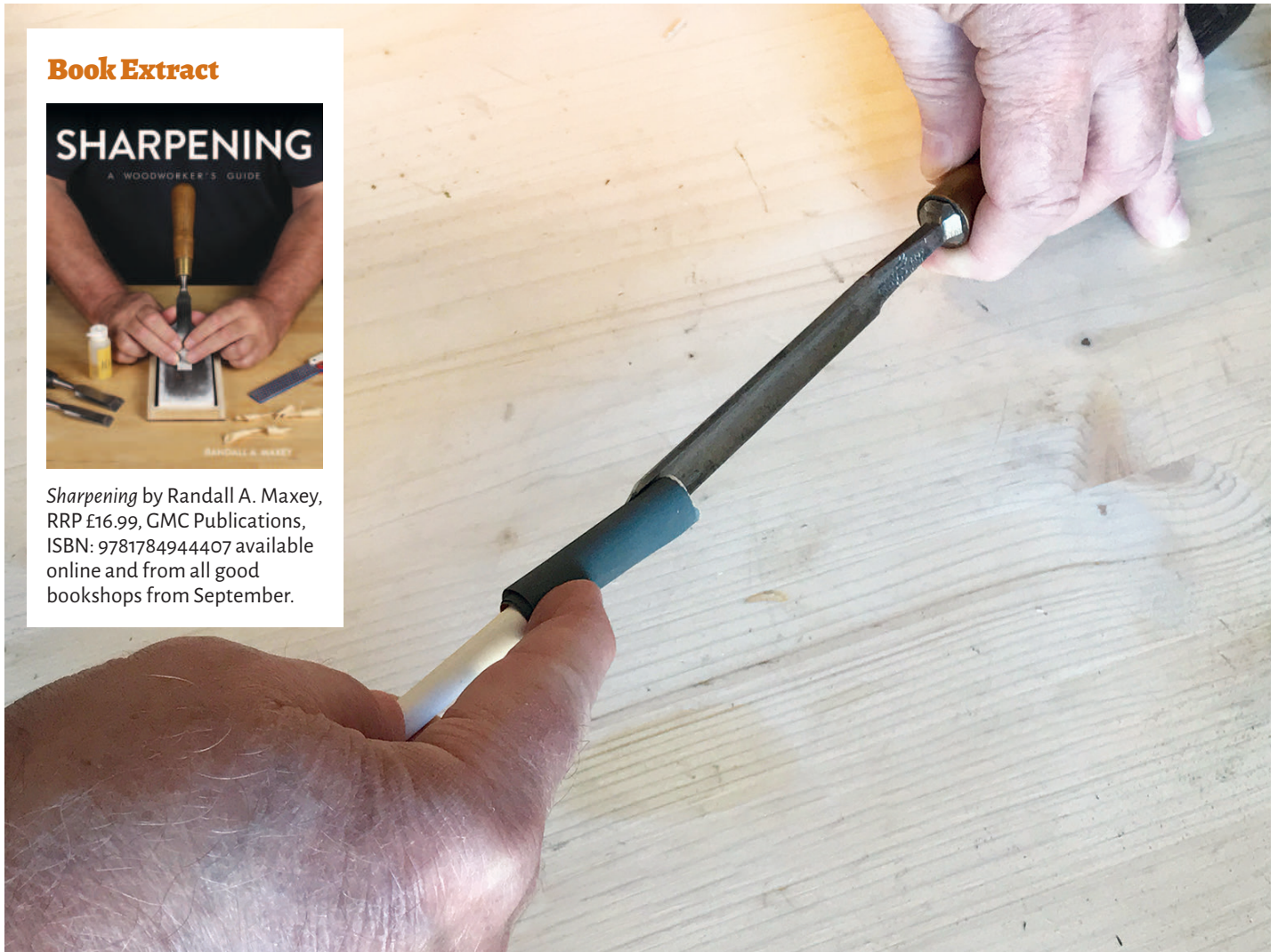
A curved slipstone can help sharpen the edge of a gouge



A slipstone with a convex edge can remove the burr on out-cannel gouges or hone the bevel on an in-cannel gouge

Book Extract

Sharpening by Randall A. Maxey,
RRP £16.99, GMC Publications,
ISBN: 9781784944407 available
online and from all good
bookshops from September.



You can get creative when honing tools. Here, I'm using sandpaper wrapped around a pencil to touch up the inside edge of this carving gouge



Apply honing compound to a trough carved into the wood using the tool you want to hone



Make test cuts to check your progress when honing

V-tools

Sharpening a V-tool is almost like sharpening a pair of straight chisels. You can touch up the bevels easily on a sharpening stone.

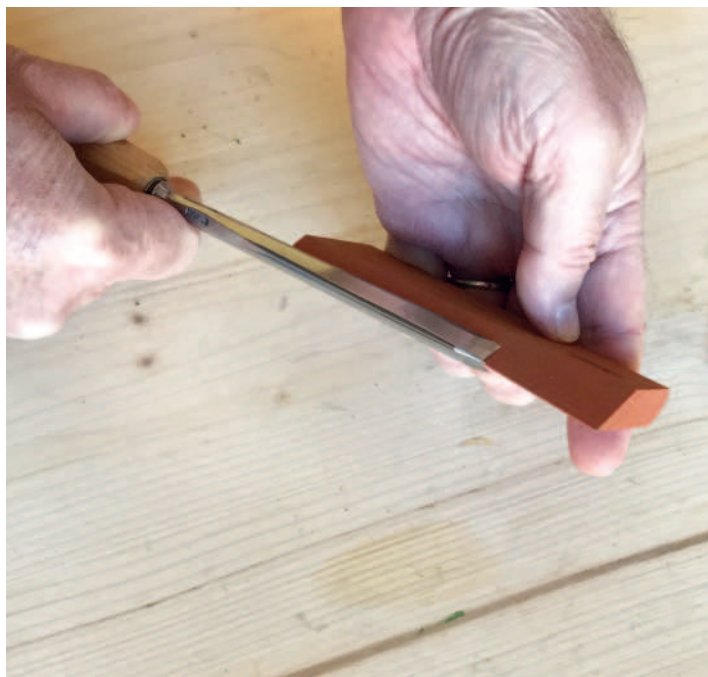
After you hone one side of the V-tool, rotate it 90° and repeat the process. Remember to always pull away from the cutting edge. Lift the tool before repositioning it at the opposite end of

the stone to make subsequent strokes.

The point of the 'V' on parting tools has a small radius. You can carefully rotate the tool on the point as you pull it across the stone. A slipstone comes in handy to remove any burrs on the inside edge.



Lay the bevel of the V-tool flat on the stone and draw it towards you, making several strokes



A slipstone with a sharp edge can get into tight corners

Carving knives

You can treat a carving knife almost like any other knife when it comes to sharpening – it just requires more frequent honing during use. I use a sharpening stone to keep the cutting edge nice and straight. A coarse stone can quickly remove small nicks in the edge to restore it.

You can work your way through finer grits until you see a polished edge. The next step would be to use a strop. This creates the final, razor-sharp edge.

Leather is not an absolute requirement as a honing material;

you can make a hone from almost any material. Popular options are hardwood scraps or pieces of MDF (medium-density fibreboard). You can shape the hardwood or MDF to conform to the shape of the tool, apply honing compound, and you're in business.

After honing, the test I use for sharpness is to make a cut across the end grain of a soft wood. If it slices the wood fibres cleanly instead of crushing them, your knife is ready to be put to work. ▶



Try to match the knife's original bevel angle and push or pull the blade away from the cutting edge



Make several passes on a leather strop charged with a honing compound. Hone both sides of the knife equally

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A motif plaque

The House of Samworth is now immortalised in a distinctive way by woodcarver John Samworth



1 Inspiration may be found at a time and place you least expect, so grab it and record it whenever you can. Your camera phone is ideal for this. Recently, on a walk through Falmouth, I noticed a badly weathered stone carving over the entrance to King Charles the Martyr Church. There is a more modern replica carved on to the granite keystone over the back door. What appealed to me is the manner in which the letters entwine, binding themselves together, there to stay for eternity.

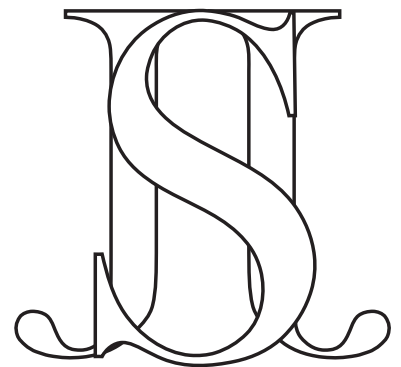
2 The initials of family members form the basis of my family's motif. By typing the letters into a computer programme, it is simple to test a number of designs quickly. To keep the symmetry of the motif, consider

reversing a letter as I have done here. The effect here is to join the two Js together with one S. You could keep your motif as simple as this or embellish it with other elements.

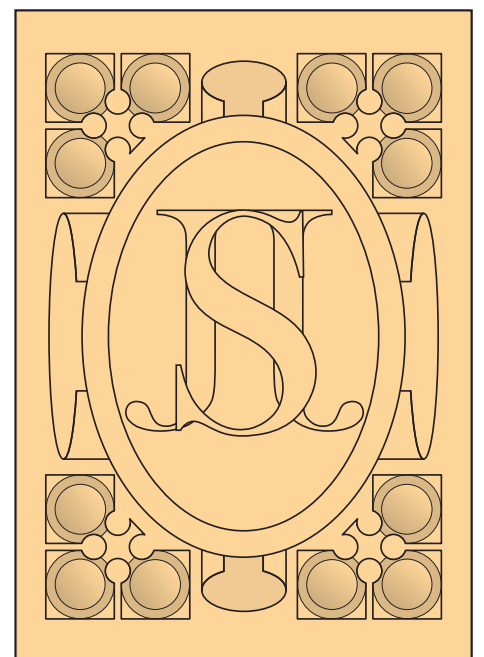
3 For my final design, I have framed the initials within an oval border. The space I intend to fill is rectangular, which leaves some awkward triangular corner spaces. These could be filled with any design that you have some association with, or simply a design you like. I have chosen the traditional dogtooth and scrolls because they add an air of age, an illusion of heritage to the whole design. The actual design is to be carved in relief into 20mm-thick lime wood of a full A4 paper size.



1



2



3

**4****5****6****7****8****9****10****11**

4 First, you should copy the design on to your wood. I prefer the technique of tracing or drawing designs on to the wood, because it begins the hand-eye learning process of the shapes, which helps in the understanding of the shapes within the design. Mark all around the sides of the wood for the depth of the carving. I would suggest an even depth of between 10mm and 15mm.

5 Take out the wood from the centre of the dogtooth design. Make these circular holes using a No.8, 10mm gouge. Small plugs of wood can be quickly extracted leaving four tidy holes. The wood inside the hole is fractured by the cut, leaving the central cross design strong and intact. Repeat on all corners.

6 Using a parting tool, trace out the intricate sections of the design to prevent damage to the wood fibres in places that will later hold crisp, square edges. I have marked with an arrow the actual cut direction of the nearest incision, to work with the grain keeping the central oval crisp. Make the first cut in the waste wood. Swap hands and cut backwards on the far side, in the opposite direction as shown here. Remove the rest of the waste wood using a small flute or a veiner, down to the level of the central holes.

7 Remove the waste wood from the corners using a skew chisel. If the apex of the dogtooth design is in the way it may be lowered, but keep the green centre as the high point.

8 First with a flute gouge then with a broad flat gouge, square off and tidy up the edges of the design. Continue to reduce the height of the background around the entire plaque.

9 Tip: When clearing out the small channels between the dogtooth leaflets, it's better to carve into the centre of the design. If you carve away from the centre there is a tendency for the back of your gouge to run across the design, leaving an indent in the area we want to make crisp and square.

10 To start the boss leaflet, find the grain. Here it is running left to right across the picture. Lower the level of the unmarked wood. Reverse the cut direction when cutting close to the outside edge. Make your initial cut with a veiner to prevent the wood from crumbling. Deepen and widen the circle around the centre.

11 I require the central boss to be the high point, about 1mm higher than the corners. I have shaved 2mm off the corners and started to insert a dip between the corners. Here I have re-marked the corner tips with green and highlighted with blue the second side where to insert a dip.

12 The central boss requires rounding. Using a No.8 gouge, start to shave wood from the top, working all the time with the grain. To complete the edges, continue the shaving and as the gouge approaches the edge increase the angle sharply so that, eventually, you are cutting down vertically.

13 Your cut boss should look like the picture here. You can see how fine the shavings are, the underlying shape you are aiming for and the original high point still marked green. Shave this off too.

14 Tidy away the waste with a flute, ensure the central ring is low to catch a deep shadow, round off the corners of the leaflet and apply a small rounded chamfer to the edges (optional). Repeat the process on all the leaflets – there are 12 of these to cut and I got better at them as I practised. I would advise anyone cutting these for the first time not to proceed in order around the piece but to cut them randomly.

15 Take the background back to its final depth and smooth off the surface. To avoid stab marks appearing in the smooth surface, use a parting chisel to clean the shavings out of the angle.

16 Use a straight skew chisel to tidy the end of the scroll. This is a sideways, slicing cut with the grain. Stop at the top of the curve, swap hands and work in from the other direction. Ultimately, I want the lettering and the oval in the centre to be the highest points. Reduce the scroll's height by 2mm.

17 Invert a straight, small sweep gouge and round off the sides about a third of the way down from the top. This is necessary because the bottom of the scroll will curve up to meet it, but this curve starts in the centre of the scroll. Use a flute to remove the wood from inside the scroll's corners. Do not cut back right to the edge – use the wood left above the depth line to make the curves flow as if one continual piece of paper.

18 Use a straight-edge chisel to tidy up the edge of the scroll. With one clean sweeping cut, holding the chisel horizontally with the blade vertical, begin cutting left to right, slowly turning the chisel until you reach the position shown here. The chisel is vertical but leant backwards at about 45°, cutting downwards. Continue to turn the chisel, swap hands and begin to cut right to left until the chisel is horizontal in length and the blade is vertical, opposite to the start position. Stop at the centre and repeat the cut on the other side.

19 You are aiming for this shape. The edges currently appear too thick, but the extra wood will be removed by the undercutting in the final stage.



12



13



14



15



16



17



18



19



20 Use a flute to begin the process of removing the waste wood from the centre of the design, leaving the letters as raised wood. Note the stop cuts used to prevent the flute from slipping and the wood from splitting into the letter design. It is at this point the design's visual impact jumps out from the wood.

21 The straight skew is used to straighten off the straight edges. Note that I still avoid the stab cut in favour of the sideways slicing cut. For me this leaves a clean finish.

22 Use a shallower sweep gouge – here a No.6 with bullnose – to form the inside curves of the letters. Remember, on inside curves use a gouge with a greater sweep than the curve and on an outside curve use a gouge with a shallower sweep than the curve. A slicing cut is used to leave a cleaner finish than a stab. The bullnose is essential here – if the gouge was square, then the corners would be digging into the wood and the centre of the blade would not clean out the waste.

23 Cut out from the corners to prevent wood splitting along the grain. Once a small incision is made the edges can be safely tidied up. Continue all around the letters, lowering the visible parts of the back letters (the two Js) by 4-5mm.

24 Finish off the scrolls by undercutting the top fold of paper with a veiner. Start about 1mm in from the edge. This creates the illusion of a thickness to the paper fold. Finish off the scrollwork by undercutting the outside edges and shaving off the construction lines. Because I want this piece to have an appearance of age, it is important to leave the tool marks to show. These will catch and reflect the light, enhancing the design.

25 I have finished the piece in simple beeswax and hung it on the wall, just above head height. By applying wax, the polishing naturally brings out the high points, which play to the light and contrast with the shadows. ■





Walking stick

Paul Purnell carves a brown hare head to top a useful cane

The European brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*) is widespread on low ground throughout England, Wales, Scotland and parts of Northern Ireland. Often mistaken for rabbits, these hares are quite different: larger in size at 520–595mm; with very long, black-tipped ears; large, powerful hind legs enabling them to reach speeds of 45mph; and they have a black-topped tail. Brown hares prefer exposed habitats. Unlike rabbits, hares neither live nor breed in burrows, but make a small depression in the ground, known as a form. Females can have up to four litters throughout February to September. For the first four weeks of their lives, the leverets gather at sunset for their mother to feed them – other than this, they receive no parental care. Brown hares do an enormous amount

of damage to crops, and landowners legally control the problem by shooting. However, hare hunting with dogs, harriers and coursing is now illegal in the UK since the Hunting Act 2002. However, the illegal poaching of hares with dogs, especially lurchers, is widespread.

DID YOU KNOW?

The upper lip of hares and rabbits is split into two distinct parts. These fleshy flaps are like fingers that guide food into their mouths. They also help them to crop plants close to the ground, as there is no lip in the way.

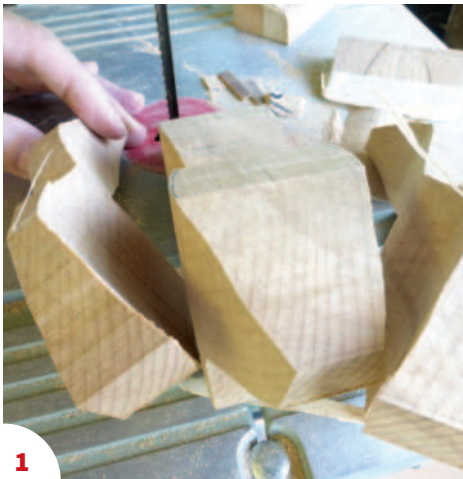
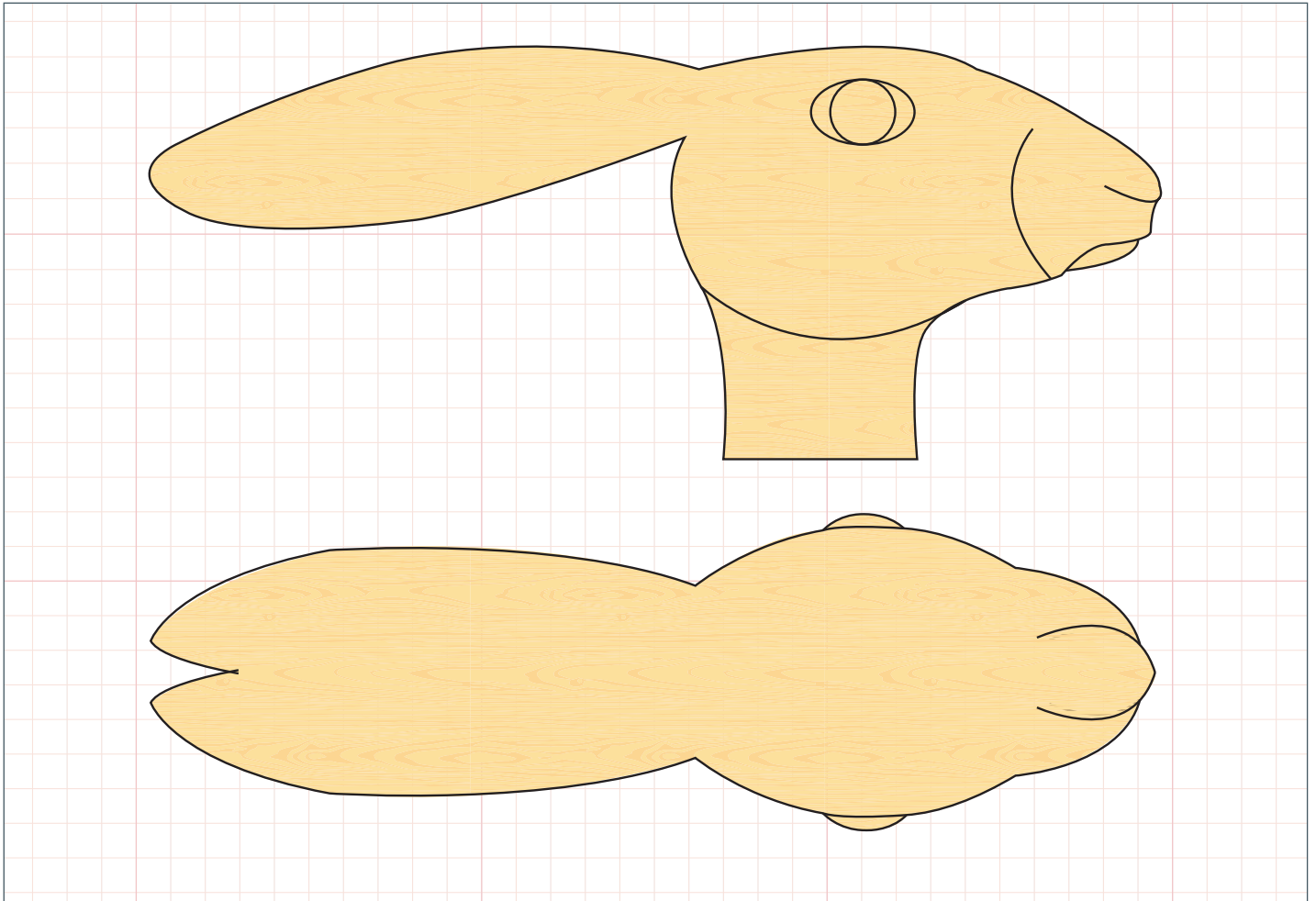
Things you will need

- Bandsaw
- Rotary carving tool
- Selection of coarse and medium burs
- Selection of diamond burs
- Carving knife or scalpel
- 13mm wood drill
- Cushioned-drum sander
- Cloth sandpaper, 120 to 400-grit
- Hazel shank
- Buffalo horn spacer
- Brass ferrule
- Epoxy glue
- Finishing oil

Materials:

Eyes

- 12mm brownish-orange glass eyes
- Wood
- Piece of sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) – 160 x 70 x 50mm
- Hazel shank – 915mm

**1****2****3****4**

1 Use the diagram (above) to make cardboard templates of the side and plan views. Use these to bandsaw out the blank. The diameter of the hazel shank that I intend to use for this project is 28mm, so I suggest drawing the width of the neck at 30mm, giving 2mm for safety. Adjust this measurement according to the diameter of your shank.

2 Find the centre point on the bottom of the neck. Measure 15mm on both sides and mark. Drill a hole to a depth of 35mm using a 13mm Forstner bit or wood drill.

3 Draw a centreline around the entire piece of wood for reference. Use a coarse bullnose burr to shape the cheeks by removing material from above and below. Do not remove too much material around the eye location as the hare's eyes bulge. Also, outline the indentation behind the fleshy part of the snout.

4 Use the same burr to round over the head and snout.



5 Sand with 120-grit abrasive on a cushioned-drum sander. Don't be too fussy as this is just to enable a perspective and symmetry check. Redraw the centreline.

6 Prepare the shank using the dowel method. Drill a 13mm hole in the horn spacer. Dry-fit the head and spacer to the shank. When you are happy with the alignment of all three, mark the positions. For protection, wrap a piece of masking tape around the top of the shank. Use a medium burr to shape the neck and spacer to marry up with the shank. Sand with 120 and 180-grit paper on a cushioned sander. Leave enough material for final sanding at a later stage.

7 With a coarse tapered burr, carve an indentation in the lower and upper surfaces of the ears. The ears are the handle and comfort is priority. Round over the outside edges. If this stick is for someone with small hands, consider reducing the width of the ears. Continue to refine the grooves with a medium flame burr. Sand with 120 and 180-grit abrasive paper.

8 Refine the snout to its finished size. Define the edges of the nose with a fluted cylinder burr. The width of the nose is approximately 10mm. With a carving knife or scalpel make the edges crisp. Define the nasal flaps by undercutting the bottom of the two sides with a knife. Clean up the nose with 240-grit paper on the split-mandrel sander.

9 Draw the U-shape of the mouth as shown. To help with symmetry when cutting, draw in the centreline on the underside of the mouth and equal segments either side.

10 Holding the carving knife in the vertical position, cut along the shape of the mouth. Then make a cut at 45° to this cut, and remove the segment of wood. The area at the front of the mouth is cross grain; be careful, as it will easily chip away. Soften the hard edge with 240-grit on the split-mandrel sander.

11 Cut the philtrum with the carving knife. This line runs from the bottom of the nostril to the top lip.

12 Use the diagram and your reference material to mark the position of the eyes. The eyes for this project are 12mm and a brownish-orange colour. Use a pair of pins to locate the centre of each eye.

13 Draw a 13mm square grid around this centre point for reference. Using the medium flamed burr, carve the eye socket. Ensure a tight fit of the eyes, which will be fitted with epoxy putty. If the socket is too wide, the putty will show. Make the sockets deep enough to accommodate both eyes and putty. A 3mm carbide burr is handy for the final stages of achieving the correct depth. Carefully knock off the outside edges of the sockets with 240-grit paper on the split-mandrel sander.

14 There is a slight bulge around the eyes. Identify where you need to remove material.



**15****16****17****18****19****20****21**

15 Use the split-mandrel sander to define the bulge.

16 Draw on the shape of the outer ear lobe. Use a combination of the coarse bullnose flame and sphere burrs to hollow out each ear.

17 The flamed burr will enable you to carve down into the ear canal.

18 Sand the ears using drum and split-mandrel sanders. Sand through 120, 180 and 240 grits. Test the grip on yourself and adjust accordingly if uncomfortable.

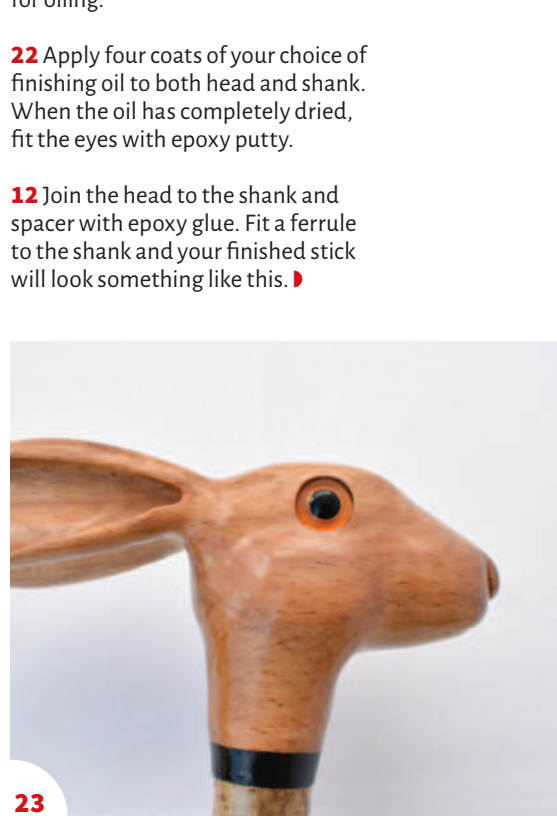
19 Hand sand the entire piece with 240, 320 and 400-grit abrasives. To reach inside the ear use the split-mandrel sander or wrap some sandpaper around a pencil.

20 Check you have removed all tool marks by wiping over with white spirit and viewing in natural light.

21 This the finished head, ready for oiling.

22 Apply four coats of your choice of finishing oil to both head and shank. When the oil has completely dried, fit the eyes with epoxy putty.

12 Join the head to the shank and spacer with epoxy glue. Fit a ferrule to the shank and your finished stick will look something like this. ▶

**22****23**

Icelandic bedboard

Dave Western shows how to add some Nordic style to your sleeping arrangements



Recently, it was my very good fortune to visit the National Museum of Iceland in Reykjavik. This fabulous gallery houses a treasure chest of historically significant Icelandic artefacts, ranging from Viking jewellery to Björk albums and for woodcarvers is studded throughout with absolute gems of the woodcarver's art.

For me, one of the most exciting finds was a small collection of bed boards, which had been crammed – with little fanfare – into a glass case full of carved wooden household objects. Although the boards were literally simple, flat, wooden planks, it was the passion and artistry of their decorative carving which caught my attention. These boards had obviously been given either as romantic gifts (like lovespoons or mangle boards) or as gifts of great sentiment among family members, and were rich with fabulous intertwining knotwork or foliage patterns and mysterious text called Höfðaletur.

The boards were fairly similar in size at approximately 3ft long by 6in wide and 1in

thick, and were decorated on one face only. They appeared to be predominantly carved from pine and I was told the wood was primarily salvaged from driftwood which would wash up on Iceland's northern shores. The boards were in common use from around the mid 1600s through to the very early 1900s. Icelandic beds were built into the structure of the house and had an open area midway along one long edge of the bed where people could sit during the day. At night, the board would be laid across this area to keep the bedding from falling over the edge of the bed, but during the day, it would be proudly hung on the wall like the piece of art it was.

I've also been told that one or two people could sit on the bed, lay the board across their laps (plain side up) and use it as a rudimentary table at mealtime.

The patterns carved on these boards were as varied and eccentric as their carvers, but for this one I have used a pair of simplified antique patterns. Each pattern can be mirror

image doubled or both patterns can be used as I have done. Either way, the lovely knotwork features some challenging detailing, which can be left unadorned and simple or can be lined out and made much more complex, depending how detailed you'd like the final piece.

I've also set this up as a two-part project and in the next issue will further decorate the carving with some of the wonderful Höfðaletur font mentioned earlier.

To replicate the Icelandic pieces as closely as possible, I have opted to use a fairly plain piece of white pine, which measures 18in by 6in by $\frac{3}{4}$ in. The pine has a nice, soft yellow tone and is easily worked, but the tools have to be kept razor sharp to avoid shredding and fraying the soft grain. If you print out the included sketches to about 8in long by 2in wide, the patterns will fit nicely on the workpiece, leaving an inch at each end and some room along the top and bottom edges for the font work later. (I left approximately $1\frac{1}{2}$ in at the bottom edge and 2in along the top.)

I have included two designs, which likely date back some time into the 1700s. Each can be flipped end to end to make a mirror-image bedboard, or both can be used, as I have done with this sample



Things you will need

Tools and materials:

- Carbon paper (to draw out design)
- Pair of 1in straight knives (one by Flex Cut the other by OCC tools)
- ½in straight chisel (for clean up work at 'over and under' sections)
- Cabinet scraper (for final clean up of worked surface)
- Abrasive papers (in grades from 150-320)
- Danish oil and cheap 1in brush



1 Begin by laying out your plank to accommodate the two sides of carving (either mirror image of one drawing or use the two supplied diagrams) and some space for letter carving later. I left a 2in-wide space above and 1½in-wide space below the area where the decorative carving will be. I also centred everything and left approximately 1in of uncarved space at each end of the plank.

2 If you have access to a photocopier, you can expand or reduce the diagrams to whatever size works best for you and then simply adhere them to the board using an all-purpose glue stick. I made mine approximately 2¼in by 8in so they would fit nicely on the board I had at hand. You can also trace them on to the board using carbon paper, which is what I did. Be careful to secure both the tracing and the carbon paper to ensure they don't move around.

3 With the carving outlines in place, I took a bit of extra time to colour in all the sections I would be chip carving out. This let me see the drawing more clearly and helped to limit the chances of my accidentally cutting into the wrong areas.

4 With the drawing neatly marked out, carving can begin on the chip-carved sections. If you are confident and you have a good, sharp knife, you can make the cuts fairly deep right off the bat, otherwise I would recommend not cutting too deep on your initial pass. I like to get everything cut and be certain that all is in order before committing and risking an error that ruins the piece. In this case, it was probably good I left myself some 'finishing' room as my knife was a touch dull on the first pass and it tore the soft grain of the panel a bit more than I had expected.

5a & 5b I resumed cutting out with a much sharper knife and reworked previously cut sections to shave out any rough areas. As with any chip-type carving, the goal is to have the cuts meet up neatly. Symmetry also makes the cuts look tidier and more professional, so take care to keep all sides of the cut as even in width and depth as possible.

6 With the bulk of the outlining cuts made, form of the design should be easily seen. Next come some of the smaller detail cuts, which lend shape and form to the curlicue details around the outer edge of the pattern. These can be undertaken in one or two quick passes and shouldn't be allowed to get too deep or dramatic or they will look too unwieldy.

7 If some of the cuts are fuzzy or unruly, it may be necessary to make additional trimming cuts to render everything smooth and uniform. It may even be necessary (as shown here) to go slightly outside of the original lines. Here the cutaway section is almost touching the 'pinstripe' lining, which follows the form lines of the design. The form line will be erased and redrawn to take into consideration the little changes that may have occurred as the cutout sections were being formed.



1



2



3



4



5a



5b



6



7

**8a****8b****9****10a****10b****11****12****13**

8a & 8b With all the cutout sections carved and tidied, the pinstripes are next to be marked out and carved. If you have found your cutouts have travelled beyond their original lines and are impinging on the pinstripe lines, I would suggest lightly removing (with very fine abrasive paper or a sharp cabinet scraper) the remaining lines and redrawing them. The goal is for them to remain as consistent as possible in their distance from any cut sections. Staying in about $\frac{1}{8}$ in from the edge is the most visually pleasing.

9 It can be tricky to stay 'on line' when scribing out the pinstripes. I find the safest way to go about it is to cut a gentle $\frac{1}{8}$ in deep line using a straight knife held as vertically as possible. Use the knife like a pencil and carefully scribe along your pencil line while remaining conscious of any upcoming changes in grain direction. If you go off course, it is still relatively easy to come back over the area a second time and correct the error.

10a & 10b When you are satisfied the pinstripe line cuts are all fair and on line, make another pass with your straight knife following along the line. This time tilt the knife slightly somewhere between 30° and 45° and cut to a depth of about $\frac{1}{8}$ in, following the line as smoothly as possible. Then repeat, tilting the knife in the opposite direction and removing a nice, long, thin triangular shaving. Concentrate on not wandering in and out of the line as even the slightest variation in the pinstripe's width is remarkably noticeable.

11 With the carving completed, it's a good idea to sand off any remaining lines and marks and then give the piece another once over to clean up any rough cuts, smooth out any ragged curves and even out any wandering lines. As can be seen in this photograph, the swirls are both in need of some work, especially in the tightest parts of the curves. There are also a number of frayed and badly cut lines, which need to be tidied up, and the little balls need to be finish-shaped a bit more thoroughly. I will also sometimes use a magnifying glass to get a good look at sections that I think might need more work.

12 The pinstripe lines really are quite tricky to get just right. As can be seen in this photo, I have overdone it with the width of several sections and this makes the lines appear a bit cumbersome and heavy. I also think the lines in the swirls are too wide and this has made it hard to read the design properly in those areas. To thin the lines down a bit, I will scrape and sand the surface a little, while being very careful not to develop any dips or rises.

13 Although the antique bedboards seem to have been left unfinished, I have opted for three coats of Danish oil with a light 1500 grit wet and dry abrasive sanding between each coat. This leaves a light finish that offers some protection against dirt and spills, but doesn't overwhelm the carving. I will let it dry for a few days and then will begin carving the Höfðaletur style text lettering. That, however, is a subject for the next issue. ▶

Carved bowl

Mark Baker reflects on the bowl he was once asked to carve using traditional methods



We have many requests for information on how to create a bowl that isn't turned on the lathe. Many people have also commented that they want a more organic form than can be achieved on the lathe. Hand-working bowls gives you total control over the shape and decoration and frees you up to create what you wish. We took a look at how these were done of old. A variety of tools were used, from axes and adzes to knives of various shapes and bends, chisels of various shapes, and specialist long blades that pivot off a fixed secure point. There are also the modern power tools and shaping cutters that can be fitted to an angle grinder and another modern tool that is used by some – the chainsaw. There is still a vibrant and healthy woodworking community that makes hand-worked/carved bowls. We then pondered this further and looked at what tools the average woodworker is likely to have in the workshop and from there we came up with this project. The beauty of hand-working/carving bowls is that time is not important and you can do it when you choose. You can also use timber that turners may not because of size, splits and shakes, which make it unsafe for turning but can allow you to add wonderful features and hand-worked designs.



If you opt to carve or shape your bowl using an angle grinder and sanding attachment, it is quicker but incredibly dusty, and you obviously have to wear personal protective equipment – eye, face and lung protection. It is not possible to extract the dust at source, so this is a job best undertaken outside in the fresh air. Of course, make sure you have an RCD on your electrical items

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GMC/ANTHONY BAILEY



1



2

1 We found an old, gnarly piece of false acacia (*Robina pseudoacacia*) in the workshop, which had splits and cracks in it – useless for turning but ideal for this.

2 The hand tools needed are three carving tools of various curves – starting with a very deep U-curve and moving to a shallower one, a standard bench carpenter's chisel, a mallet and a wire brush. If you do not have such carving tools, you could use out-cannel carpenter's gouges, which have a similar profile to the mid U-shaped carving tool. Note the marked circle. This was created so I could have a rough idea as to what area I wanted to work with. Some areas were very shallow and some deep, so I picked the best area to create some conformity of shape.



3



4

3 Depending on the wood shape you have, you can start shaping with a gouge almost immediately, but I laid a circle gauge on the top knobby section and used it as a template to cut around on a bandsaw.

4 It doesn't have to be exact, but any timber you take off makes the shaping process quicker. Remember to follow all safety instructions when using a bandsaw, keep the work stable and solid and keep all fingers out of the line of cut of the blade.



5



6

5 The issue most will encounter is how to hold the work while you carve it. You can try clamping it, but you need to move the work frequently. Another option is to take a bag of wet sand and, depending on the strength of the bag to resist the risk of puncturing it, you can cover it with an old blanket or similar and this will act as your support.

6 The wet sand moulds to the shape of the surface placed on it. It does not stop all movement, but does minimise it enough to work it safely. Cut the underneath of the bowl first, then lay the knobby bit on to the sandbag, take the deep-shaped gouge and start by removing the corners, making multiple light or heavy cuts as you choose. It is a good way of working through the frustrations of the day as nothing cut-wise can really go wrong. Everything can be altered and changed as necessary.



7



8

7 There is a big jump in sequence now, but the simple fact is you have to work around the bowl, creating the curve and shape you require by making repeated cuts that minimise the risk of tearing the grain. You can see the area that will be the base. About one-third of the overall diameter will be about right.

8 It can be a bit tricky near the bark edge, especially if you wish to retain it. I did, so did not cut directly into the bark from the solid wood section. If that had happened, I might well have forced the bark off, so to speak. We can refine this bark area from the other side. Minimise pressure on this area by cutting obliquely, sideways or from the top in the bark zone.



9 Once the outside is roughly shaped, sort out the bottom area. A standard chisel can make light work of creating a flat foot for the bowl to sit on cleanly. Turn the bowl over to work out how you wish it to sit and cut the base accordingly. Check often to make sure you have it right.

10 It is up to you if you leave the gouged surface as it is or refine it somewhat. We decided to refine the surface so it was smooth. Take a shallower gouge or the carpenter's chisel and smooth out the deep gouge marks.

11 A random orbital sander fitted with a coarse grit makes light work of smoothing out other surface irregularities, but of course, the shape is not regular and even. It gently undulates so the foam pad on the sander gets in all of these curves nicely. Work through the grit grades to create the surface refinement you require.

12 A fast option is to use an angle grinder and sanding attachments for finishing the surface of the outside. You could, with very coarse grit grades, use such a system for shaping the bowl, too. There are even special carbide disc cutters to fit on angle grinders that help with this type of shaping. As I said earlier, there are so many options open to you. Whatever route you choose, make sure you follow the recommended safety instructions. If power carving with grinders, etc., the dust and debris is considerable. Do it outside and wear face and lung protection and gloves to protect yourself from the dust and debris.

13 Once happy with the outside, flip the bowl over and start shaping the inside. You have to have a clear idea of how you wish the bark edge to be. Other than that, you are working from the top gnarly face down into the centre of the bowl with a carving chisel again – the deep gouge works great to start with.

14 The high, sticking-out branch part needs careful attention. An oblique cut is better than one that starts from the top, going down to the centre section.





15



16



17



18



19



20

15 Keep repeating the cuts, working from the edge and maintaining a relatively bark-edged rim form. Note the smooth section on the right. I wanted to do this inner section in two halves – one side cut by hand and the other using sanding discs. The sanding discs saved more than two hours in time, though were far more mucky. While quick and easy to do, as long as you take regular breaks to prevent hand fatigue, there is something about hand-cutting with a chisel that is wonderfully satisfying. There is also a cost in the abrasives as they can wear out quite quickly. Carve the interior until you have the depth and shape you need, then decide if you want a smooth or carved texture.

16 The hand-cut side has grooves running from the top into the centre, which run in that approximate direction, influenced by the late David Pye, a brilliant turner and carver, who developed a hand-operated jig to create wonderful gouge cuts that, although not quite uniform, were very close to being so, hand-cut running from rim to the centre of his work. His book, *The Nature And Art Of Workmanship*, is fascinating and well worth reading. Work from the top of the bark edge down to the centre of the bowl, keeping the cuts as close as possible but allowing the full cut of the blade width. If there are gaps between the grooves make a new cut in the blank area and run it as far as you can. The depth you can go is determined by the angle you can cut with the straight gouges and the bevel angle. To maintain a bevel rub cut in the deep areas may be tricky as the handle can foul the top bark section.

17 After the carving has been done and you can see the gouged cuts, it is time to clean up the bark area. Some timbers will not require the following treatment, but this wood is old, dirty and the bark is gnarly, so a wire brush can be run over it to clean it. After brushing, clean the piece up with a soft bristled brush followed by a damp – not wet – cloth to get rid of the remaining dust.

18 Flip the piece over, wipe with a damp cloth, let it dry then apply a finish of your choice. I used a Danish oil, which can be applied with kitchen towel or a cloth.

19 Once the outside is done, wipe off the excess oil after about five minutes, then turn it over and oil the bark edge. A brush is the best method for getting into the nooks and crannies of this rough bark.

20 Oil the inside using Danish oil. When using finishes such as oil, make sure you dispose of the old cloths and paper towel properly to avoid risk of fire. You now have your own unique and organic bowl form. ▶

An avian carving talent

In tribute to the carving talent of Mike Wood, we proudly present a portfolio of some of his best work from *Woodcarving* magazine

Mike carved all of his life, becoming professional in 1986. Carving mostly birds, he was self-taught and took great inspiration from the American bird carvers.

Since *Woodcarving* magazine first published in issue 115 Mike's carving of a European kestrel, woodcarvers have been stunned by his attention to detail, lifelike renditions and realistic poses. He will be profoundly missed and we offer our sincere condolences to his wife, his family and his many friends.



BULLFINCH

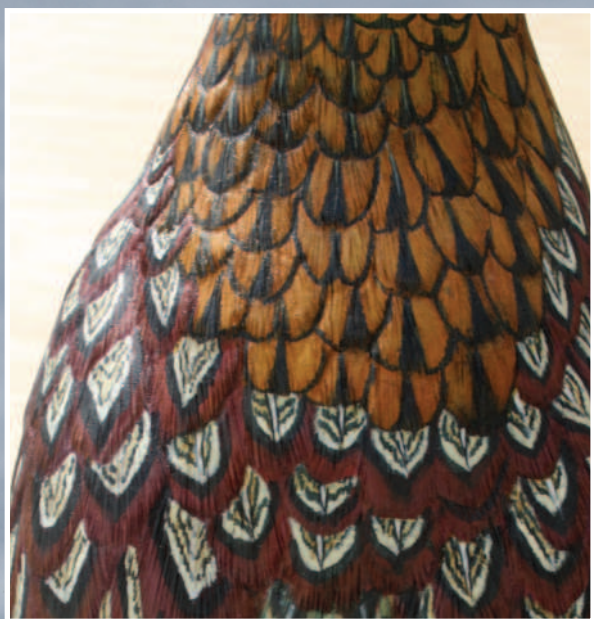
A relatively rare sight in many UK gardens, the bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*) is a colourful but shy bird, one of the larger of the finch family

**LITTLE OWLS**

The little owl (*Athene noctua*) is one of the most widely distributed species of owl, native to warmer parts of Europe, North Africa and Asia east to Korea

**BLUETITS**

The blue tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus* or *Parus caeruleus*) is a small bird in the tit family Paridae, widespread and resident throughout temperate and subarctic Europe and western Asia

**COCK PHEASANT**

The common pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*) is a member of the family Phasianidae. It is thought the pheasant was introduced to Britain as early as the 10th century

**WALLCREEPER**

The wallcreeper (*Tichodroma muraria*) is found in the mountains of Eurasia, southern Europe, the Himalayas and central China



REDWING

Redwings (*Turdus iliacus*) are the smallest birds in the thrush family seen in the UK

**CANADA GOOSE**

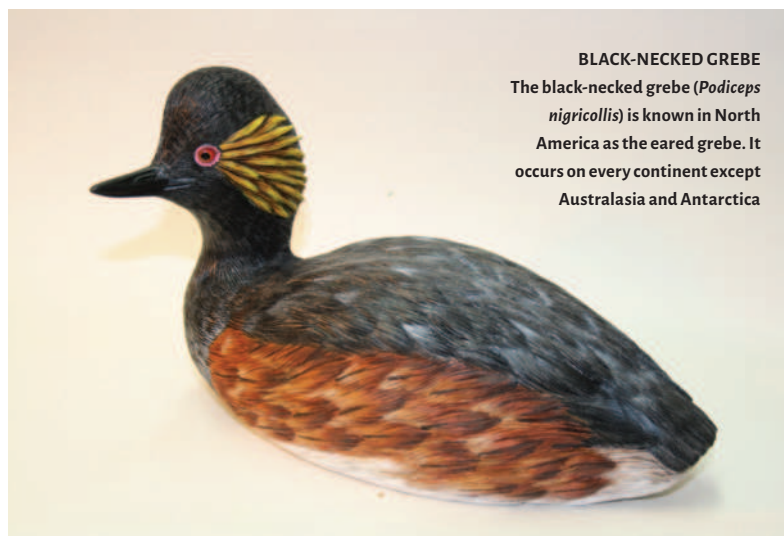
Introduced into the UK from North America, the Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*) is widespread, with some 62,000 breeding pairs and around 190,00 UK wintering birds

**WOODPECKER**

The range of the black woodpecker (*Dryocopus martius*) covers a wide area, including Europe (apart from Ireland, the UK and northern Scandinavia), the Middle East, Korea, Japan and China

**RINGED PLOVER**

The ringed plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*) is a small wading bird resident in the UK and northern France that makes its habitat around coasts, flooded gravel pits and reservoirs

**BLACK-NECKED GREBE**

The black-necked grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*) is known in North America as the eared grebe. It occurs on every continent except Australasia and Antarctica

Carving during lockdown

In this article Murray Taylor reflects on his period of isolation with particular reference to an unusual commission and several other projects that turned up along the way



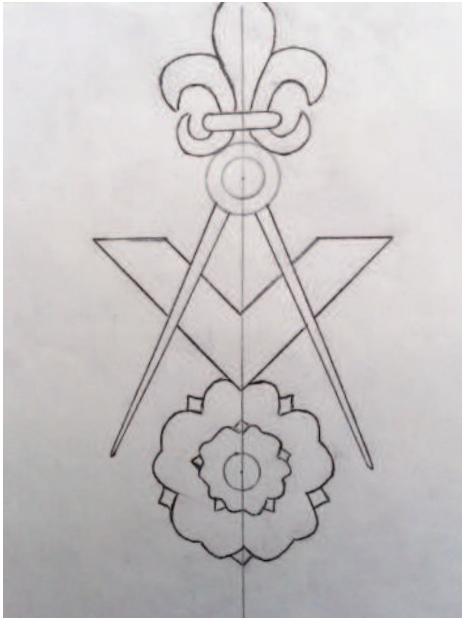
The reality of lockdown really started to dawn on me as everything became more difficult, especially as I had to go into isolation due to my previous medical history. My forthcoming club talks were cancelled, along with demonstrations at woodwork shows and tool stores and I began to consider some experimental projects that I had long thought about but never had time to work on, but how different this lockdown time has turned out to be.

As chair of my local carving club I was worried that people would drift away as we could no longer meet, so I decided to email a weekly bulletin to the members and encourage them to send pictures of what they were working on. This worked well and I started the long-awaited tidying of my workshop. Then my phone rang.

The first job

The call was from a gentleman who told me he had been tidying his drawers – didn't we all in the early days of lockdown? – and that he had come across one of my brochures. It transpired that he had picked it up over two years earlier but now decided to commission something for his father to cheer him up during that difficult period. He first suggested a spoon idea, but when he told me what he wanted to include in the carving we changed the idea to a wall plaque. His instructions were to include the Fleur-de-Lis of the Boy Scouts movement, the Masonic square and compass, and the Lancastrian rose. This all seemed fine until he then suggested that he would like a Greenman image to also be represented.

My first thoughts were that the three emblems represented very geometric shapes, whereas the Greenman did not really fit in. I started by drawing the three symbols to see how they fitted together and then thought about how the branches emanating from the Greenman could envelop them.



The three symbols



The Greenman, the three symbols and the interconnecting branches drawn on to a piece of lime wood approximately 350 x 150mm



The outline of the pattern has been cut out

There was quite a lot of trial and error getting the overall design to come together and I was eventually happy with it, especially after cutting out the basic outline. The next job was to cut out all the internal sections of the drawing and on any complex pattern such as this one I recommend that you mark the areas to be removed, it can save some costly errors.



The areas to be pierced marked in red



Removing the marked areas on the scroll saw



All the piercing work completed

Having reached this stage, it was time to take a long, careful look at how the various levels would work between the differing elements of the design, the interlacing of the branches and the relative depths of the three symbols.



Carving down the levels between the geometric elements of the design



The levels of the face were now designated by numbers



Modelling the face



Modelling the square and compass



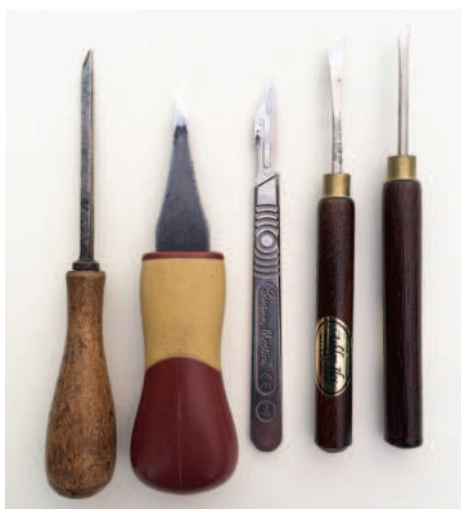
Carving the Fleur-de-Lis



Working on the Lancastrian rose



Carving the face required very fine skew chisels



Some small skew blades. Left to right: a homemade one, then a modified Flexcut, a Swan Morton scalpel and, finally, two Peter Benson skewers by Ashley Iles



Creating the barked effect on the branches using a curved V-tool



The completed carving on an oak backboard

Needs must when the devil drives

Lockdown meant that I could not get out, which created a problem in respect of the fact that my wife's birthday fell in early May and I was unable to buy a card. Does this deter a woodcarver? Of course not, I simply made one.

This does not warrant any great explanation, just two pieces of lime, the upright being mortised into the base, some free-form lettering, and a little chip-carved decoration. Not at all difficult but it might just give you some ideas.



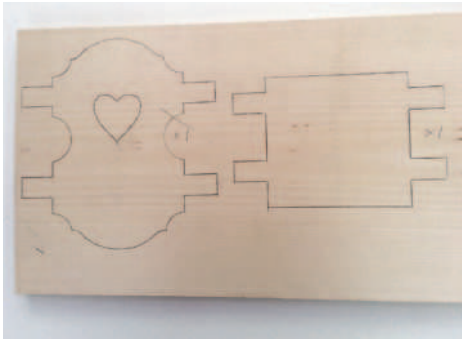
The birthday 'card' (Cariad means darling in Welsh)

Going deeper into lockdown

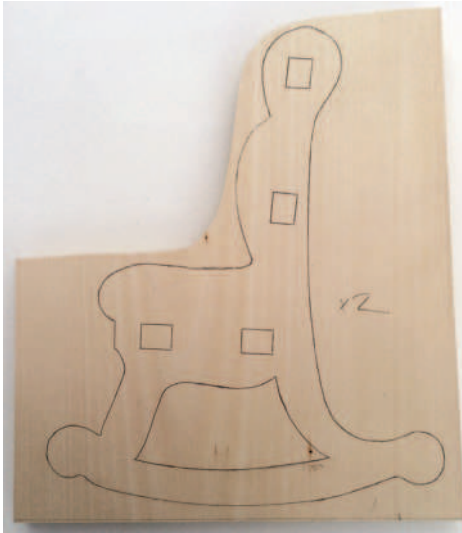
Having finished and dispatched the wall plaque commission I was about to return to the sorting out of my workshop, servicing the machines, making a few alterations and changes when I began to wonder what I could do to help others. Not much, I thought, but stories of parents having problems with young children at home during lockdown gave me an idea. I could make toys and puzzles to give to families in the area, and so the work began.

The first project was to make a doll-sized colonial-style rocker and decorate it with chip carving. I first made a mini cardboard model and, when I was happy with the proportions, made a working drawing.

It didn't take long to cut out the components, but some care needs to be taken in aligning the mortise and tenon joints. I found that the hardwood pegs were specific to their positions, so I numbered each one as I adjusted them for a tight fit. When all the parts fitted together, I took the chair apart and drew all the decorative patterns, then I took advantage of some sunny afternoons to do some relaxed al fresco chip carving. Finally, the wood was sealed and the components lightly sanded. The rocker was assembled and pegged and it quickly found a home where a little teddy bear rocks contentedly.



Above and below: The design drawn on to a lime wood board



The components cut out on a scroll saw and the chip carving design drawn on



Carving the seat



The carving completed on the back and the seat



The completed chair finished with a sanding sealer and light stain

Lockdown marches on

As we got deeper into lockdown I made some jigsaw puzzles and other toys for local children, no carving but a lot of scrollsaw time. Then someone in the small community where I live suggested some form of thank you for the local food shops that had not only stayed open, but went out of their way to help those of us in isolation. Various things were planned in accordance with social distancing, but I settled on making something for the local butcher who had so kindly delivered meat to the door each week.

I decided to make a plaque to hang in the window of the shop. The design of this piece is of a specific nature, but it may give you some ideas for something you would like to make. I usually describe a project by showing a photograph of the drawing, however in this case I made it up as I went along, so I will start with a photo of the finished object.



The completed plaque. Pori Gwyach is the name of the butchers-come-delicatessen. It translates from Welsh as Wonderful Grazing. The word 'diolch' means 'thank you'. It measures 400 x 200mm (16 x 8in)



Roughing out the sausages with a rotary sander



Dedication to the cause – I had to make 16 of these



Chip carving the lettering



Clamping the sausages



Scrollsawing round the board

The pictures are more or less self-explanatory. I drew the words and animals on tracing paper and juggled them around to get a balanced result. The 16 sausages were glued around the backboard and then it was cut to the finished shape. The edges and the sausages were finished with progressively finer abrasives and the whole thing given a coat of sanding sealer.

Thinking outside the box

I have long been interested in old clocks and have often thought it sad that the striking and chiming mantel clocks of the 1950s and 1960s have fallen out of favour, I am not, of course, referring to the beautiful cabinetmaker cases of earlier years but the everyday dome-shaped clocks that adorned the mantelpieces of most British homes. The cases of these clocks were mass-produced using plywood and veneer and are now to be found in a sorry state in every auction room and secondhand shop.

You may wonder where this is leading. Well, within each of these horrid cases lurks a well-made movement, the majority of which were made in Scotland, England and South Wales. So what has this to do with carving during lockdown? I have had the time to experiment with scrapping the cases and mounting the movements so that their intricate moving parts can be seen.

DID YOU KNOW

One winding square is only a timepiece, two winding squares is a striker, while three winding squares is a strike and chime.



Typical 1950s clock

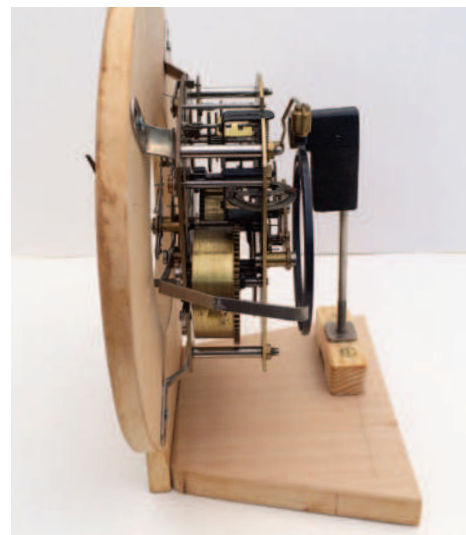
This clock movement project is in its early stages, but I intend to develop it, making hardwood stands and covering them with plastic domes or possibly a glazed case. There is a lot of scope for further development with this idea, which I hope will save some otherwise doomed movements.

This is a record of what has kept me busy so far during this difficult period. I feel that time in my workshop has helped to keep me sane, not that my wife agrees, but at least it stops me getting under her feet.

So as always, don't carve when you're tired, stop regularly, practise, practise, practise and, above all, stay safe. ▶



The experimental mounting



A side view of the mounting

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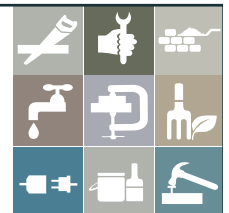


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Knife grips for carving wood

Adrian Lloyd shares the fourth and final article in a series exploring traditional carving techniques



In this series we have focused on some simple and, most importantly, safe knife grips and cuts for carving wood. In the first article we considered powerful wasting strokes made away from the body for removing large amounts of wood quickly and safely after initially roughing out a project with the axe (although I feel sure some would also opt to use a bandsaw for this stage). In the second article we explored finer cuts and techniques that were useful for refining the shape of the project being worked on, with some explanation and guidance about how to safely carve towards the body. Then, in the most recent article, we demonstrated

a really effective knife grip for finishing the workpiece and shared some techniques that were useful for adding decorative details to make your projects unique.

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

In our previous articles we were purposely demonstrating the knife grips and the cuts they made using either long pieces of wood that were square or rectangular in cross

section, often used in the Swedish sloyd system of carving and known as 'try' or 'test' sticks, or nice flat pieces of timber to demonstrate the decorative techniques.

In this final article in the series we shall be considering how all of the techniques shared in the previous three articles can be used together to complete a project. The project we will be focusing upon is the carving of a simple, yet functional, eating spoon.

We have chosen green, knot-free and straight-grained timber to carve our spoon from as it allows us to easily work with the grain of the wood to produce a strong product with a clean finish.



Starting with a quarter log cleft section of frozen fresh birch (stored in the freezer)



The cleft section is cleaned up and rough-shaped to a 'billet'



I like to use templates to mark the profile of designs I carve regularly

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MEACHAN LLOYD

All the knives we will be using during this article are Hewn & Hone blades, hand forged using bearing steel from both flat and round bar, precision heat treated and then ground and sharpened by hand using the Hewn & Hone sloyd jig and the small knife jig. They are then honed to a razor-sharp yet durable finish using our range of adhesive-backed abrasive papers. We will be hollowing the bowl of our spoon using Nic Westermann hook knives, although for the purposes of this article the bowl carving will happen 'off screen' – using hook knives requires a different set of techniques that are beyond the scope of these articles.

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.

A reminder from our previous articles that 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 several 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 all cuts can be made safely, but there is no substitute for seeking instruction from a suitably qualified or experienced teacher.

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

The knife grips

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

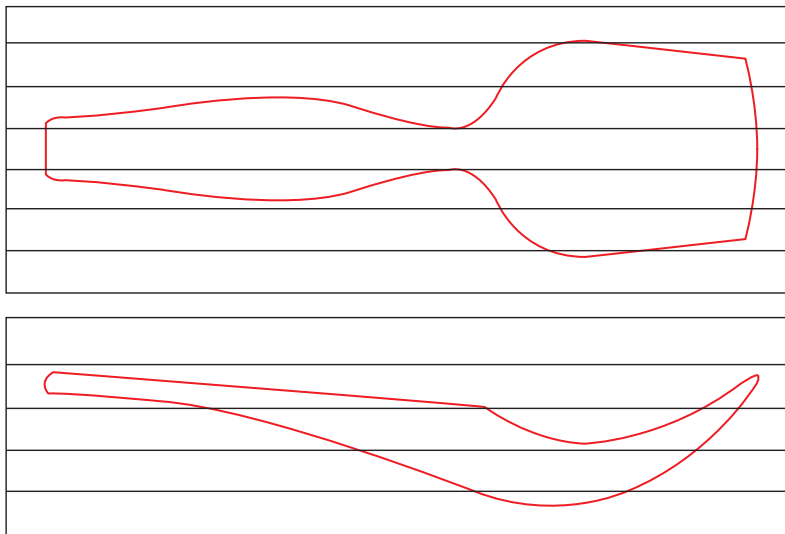
When practising any of these knife grips and the cuts they make try to execute

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.

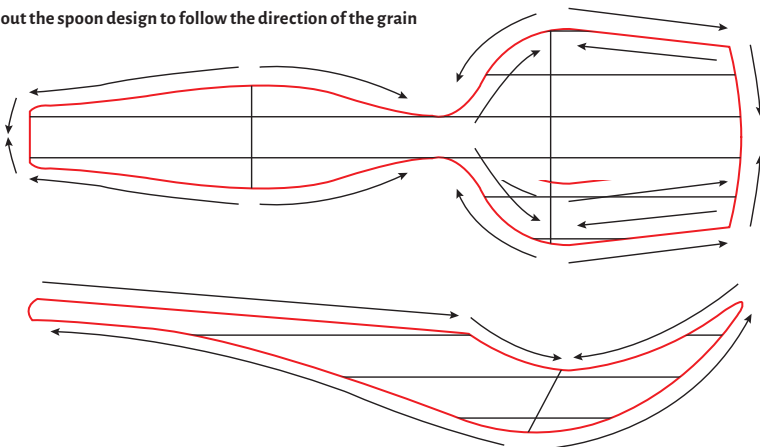
A note on grain – or fibre direction

When carving it is important to only ever carve 'downhill' following the direction of the grain to ensure that we cut through the fibres cleanly, leaving a smooth finish. As soon as we start to carve 'uphill' our sharp edge comes into contact with the ends of the fibres and wants to lift them. Not only will you notice that this will be far harder to do but it is virtually impossible to achieve anything near a clean, smooth finish when carving against the grain.

When teaching I often liken this to stroking a cat, dog or any other haired pet one may have. Most pets prefer to be stroked in the direction in which their hair lies flat, as opposed to the other way in which their hair is ruffled upwards, if that makes sense. Another way of describing the process of carving downhill is if we think of the fibres in the wood as the pages of a book – we can move our thumb cleanly down the pages like we would with an old-style flick book without effort, whereas as soon as we move our thumb in the opposite direction the pages get stuck or begin to crease.



Laying out the spoon design to follow the direction of the grain



Ensuring that the direction of cut always goes downhill to avoid lifting the grain

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 gloves will not protect from a stab cut. Wearing a glove does restrict your feel for what you are doing and can lead to complacency and the development of poor technique.
- 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 steristrips (adhesive wound closures) and make sure you know how to use them.

The process

We will now revisit all the knife grips described throughout the previous three articles in the order they were first shared, but this time identifying where they are most usefully and effectively employed while carving our project spoon.

To illustrate the process, we are beginning with a spoon blank that has been prepared from a cleft billet and then roughed to shape using our carving axe. As previously mentioned, some carvers opt to use a bandsaw for this stage, and it is also now possible to order spoon blanks online from a number of makers in several countries across the world. This is definitely a viable option for those people who just want to carve and don't have access to an axe with the skills to use it accurately and safely, or to fresh green wood suitable for carving. This makes the craft of spoon carving even more accessible than it was previously.



The spoon blank roughed to shape with the axe, working as close to the profile as your skills allow



The back of the blank is also roughed out to profile with the axe

Forehand grip

This powerful wasting stroke is predominantly the first of the knife grips likely to be used once commencing carving on your spoon. It is most effective for removing excess material from the back or the underside of the handle, all the way from the back of the bowl and off the end of the handle. Some carvers also use the forehand grip to remove material from the underside of the front of the bowl, although I personally find one of the other grips far more effective when working on this area. Using the forehand grip should make it possible to take the underside of the handle to virtually finished dimensions, leaving just some refining of the shape to achieve with one of the more controlled cuts.



Using a skewed forehand grip to effectively remove material from the back of the handle

Drop-shoulder forehand grip

This is a particularly useful grip to use if, for whatever reason, you have left your blank far too chunky. Almost all carvers beginning their journey with spoons begin with a blank that is far larger than that required for their intended design. Although, to be fair, a great many beginner spoon carvers finish with a spoon that is far smaller than they had initially intended. The drop-shoulder forehand grip allows for more power to be added to the cuts that would normally be made with the simple forehand grip, such as those identified above – the back of the handle and the underside of the front of the bowl. In some ways it may be a more effective technique for beginning to add some of the contoured profile at the front underside of the bowl.



The drop-shoulder forehand grip is more powerful and removes material quicker but with less control

Chest lever grip

I particularly favour this grip and often use it in place of both the forehand grip and the drop-shoulder forehand grip. I find that I can deliver more controlled power when working the underside of the handle, and using the chest lever makes working the front of the underside of the bowl an absolute pleasure. When we talk about working the front of the underside of the bowl we are talking about working from the deepest point on the back of the bowl forwards towards the back of the rim, where the underside of the spoon is going to meet your lip when in use. A useful feature of the chest lever grip is that it is far easier to control both the power and the direction of the cut being made than it is with the previous two grips. It is possible to slow the speed of the cut being made right down yet still use the powerful back and shoulder muscles to remove significant amounts of material.



The chest lever grip works well for both the front of the bowl and the back of the handle, always carving downhill

Reverse forehand grip

The reverse forehand grip is the perfect choice for finishing the back of the handle. The slow speed, combined with the amount of control this grip affords, produces a wonderful planed finish and is ideal for creating clean facets on the back of the handle. We can work all the way from the back of the bowl, down through the 'keel' and off the end of the handle in one smooth controlled cut. Combining the progression from the forehand grip, where we removed the bulk of the excess material, to the reverse forehand grip, where we create a flawless planed finish, shows how the back of the handle can be effectively completed using just these two knife grips.



Using the reverse forehand grip to create a smooth, planed finish on the back of the handle

Off the knee

This is another technique that I rarely use as I find the chest lever grip a more effective method to achieve the same outcomes. The off the knee technique is a relatively powerful grip and can be used to remove large amounts of material quickly, but this comes at the expense of the level of control over the direction of the cut being made. It is probably best reserved for removing material from the underside of the handle away from the bowl, and for rough-shaping the front underside of the bowl. As mentioned, though, I really favour the chest lever grip for both these areas due to the additional level of control it affords.



Using the off the knee grip to remove excess material from a handle end that is too thick

Knee brace

The knee brace is a grip or technique that I use infrequently. While it is another really effective technique for producing controlled cuts that can leave a smooth planed finish, I generally find myself using the reverse forehand grip instead. One area, although unrelated to this article, where the knee brace excels is for the process of making 'feather sticks' used in the lighting of campfires. We won't explain this here but a quick internet search will provide you with numerous references to feather sticks – with almost as many references as to how to produce them. From purely a spoon carving point of view the knee brace can be employed for working the back of the handle, creating clean facets to leave a comfortable stick with your bowl on the end.



I like to use the knee brace grip to create smooth facets that make up the cross-sectional profile of my handles

Pull stroke

Although the simple pull stroke is one of the cuts that is made towards the body, it is possibly one of the most useful and effective of the knife grips in the spoon carver's toolbox. It can be deployed for most areas of a carving project to good effect. Areas where the pull stroke is most effective are when working the upwards facing surface of the handle and the side of the handle, working from the tip of the handle down to the junction where the handle meets the neck or the back of the bowl. As the workpiece is in so close to the body, right under your eyes, it is possible to slow the speed of the cut right down to produce extremely finely finished details and facets. The pull stroke allows so much control of both speed and direction of cut it could almost be considered a finishing cut as well as what can be called a process cut.



The simple pull stroke (the un-reinforced version) for working a clean cut from the deepest part of the back of the bowl down the entire length of the handle

Reinforced pull stroke

The reinforced pull stroke can be used to provide a little extra power or control for small areas that are sometimes more challenging to carve. I find it particularly useful for 'dressing' the top of the front of the bowl to a flat, level surface prior to hollowing with the spoon knife, and for working the back sides of the bowl where it meets the neck or handle. The reinforced pull stroke excels when working the back sides of the bowl as it is in this area that you are quite often working with end grain, which is far harder than working with the direction of the fibres in your spoon.



The reinforced pull stroke is useful for working the sides of the handle down towards the back of the bowl

Draw grip

I almost exclusively use the draw grip for finishing the ends of my handles. The range of movement is limited due to the length of stroke being restricted by the amount of squeeze as the fist is made, but it is just perfect for working that end grain at the end of the handle. If the cut is made with a skew, with the tip of the knife trailing, a really nice, polished finish can be achieved on the cross-section profile at the end of the handle. It is also effective if you wish to add some facet details to the ends of your handle rather than the handle ending at an abrupt right angle. I always like to finish with a very subtle chamfer to the ends of my handles – not only does this look good but it makes for a far more durable spoon in use.



The draw grip makes short work of trimming across the end grain at the end of the handle

Thumb joint grip

The thumb joint grip is a really useful grip for finishing around the rim of the bowl of your spoon, particularly at the front of the bowl. It is very controlled so extremely fine cuts can be made that enable an accurate and true profile to the edge of your bowl. I use this grip a lot for adding micro chamfers to both the inside and outside edges of the bowl, making the spoon extremely durable in use at the same time as making it feel good in the mouth when in use.



Using the thumb joint grip to take the edges of the bowl to a finished smooth profile



The results of using the thumb joint grip effectively

Reinforced thumb joint grip

This is very similar to the thumb joint grip described above except that, through using the fingers of our opposite hand to provide additional support to the cut, we can finely control the direction and strength of cut being made. I use the reinforced thumb joint grip to define the back of the rim of the bowl, from the broadest part of the spoon bowl to the junction where the bowl meets either the neck or the handle of the spoon. This is another area where we are working across the ends of the fibres and it is a more difficult cut to make than when we are working with the direction of the grain. I also often use this grip if my spoon has a transition from the handle into a definite 'neck' before it reaches the back of the bowl.



The reinforced thumb joint grip to carefully trim the end grain profile at the leading edge of the bowl

Thumb push

As shared in the previous article, the thumb push is an often-underrated cut, yet some carvers use it for the majority of their carving. If I had to define areas that I particularly favour this technique for I would most probably start with using it to finish the front half of the back of the bowl. This is one area where I feel the thumb push outperforms all other grips in that it affords the ability to have precise control over a very small area of work. The back of the bowl needs a carefully considered finish – especially if the spoon is designed for eating with. Our mouths are extremely sensitive and will easily identify any areas that just aren't right, from being oversized to having lumps,



The thumb push excels at dealing with changes in the direction of the grain and is especially useful for this area in the 'neck' of a spoon

bumps or imperfections in the quality of finish. The thumb push is also a really useful technique for addressing difficult grain in the neck of your spoon. Generally, carvers struggle with the change in direction from the back of the bowl of the spoon up into the handle. The grain changes direction as we move from a high point to a low and then back to a high again, where we have created a little valley that is the neck of the spoon. As soon as we begin to carve uphill the fibres will lift, so we come back at it from the other direction to leave a smooth area. The thumb push with the fine control it allows help to remedy this particular challenging aspect that most beginners struggle with.



The thumb push on the back of the bowl

Decoration

There really isn't a lot to add here about decoration that hasn't been shared in the previous article. Once you are happy that the carving of your spoon is complete and there are no further refinements to make to shape, proportion or finish, decorative details can be left to your imagination and creativity. I don't like to mix both chip carving and kolrosing on the same spoon, but that is a purely personal preference, and some spoons call for being left as they are – especially if the grain is particularly striking and you know that a coat of oil will really make it pop. Some spoons benefit from subtle detailing while others cry out for complete extravagance – the choice is up to you. Have fun experimenting.

And remember, all these techniques are safe to use when carried out 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.

We hope you have enjoyed the journey through our recent series of articles and, more importantly, have been able to learn some valuable skills and techniques that inspire you either to begin your own journey or start exploring how these methods can be used to enhance your existing projects.

Stay safe, and happy carving.



Carved, detailed and painted spoons



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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Pierced archer panel

Mark Gough carves a pierced and carved wall panel inspired by a local legend



PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK GOUGH

I've chosen a local legend as the inspiration for this article.

Nottingham is, of course, known for being the home of Robin Hood and his statue adorns the entrance to the castle. I wanted to explore pierced relief carving and came up with this design. The pose has been adapted from free-to-use online sketches of basic body shapes with added detail to suit the subject. I have selected European oak to tie in with the Major Oak of Sherwood Forest and added some leaf and acorn embellishment to fill in the blank spaces. Depending on where it will be placed when finished, I may decide to fit a background board of a contrasting wood or flat colour. The tree has been carved out with a V-tool to give a textured bark appearance and to emphasise the smooth detail of the archer. The inevitable happened during the carving process and the arrow broke off across the short grain area. I have shown how to repair this but in hindsight I would have shaped this with a small rotary burr instead of a gouge and probably designed it in such a way as to support the narrow part better. The carving tools suggested are what I have in my collection and not specific to this project – use what you have that works best.

Things you will need

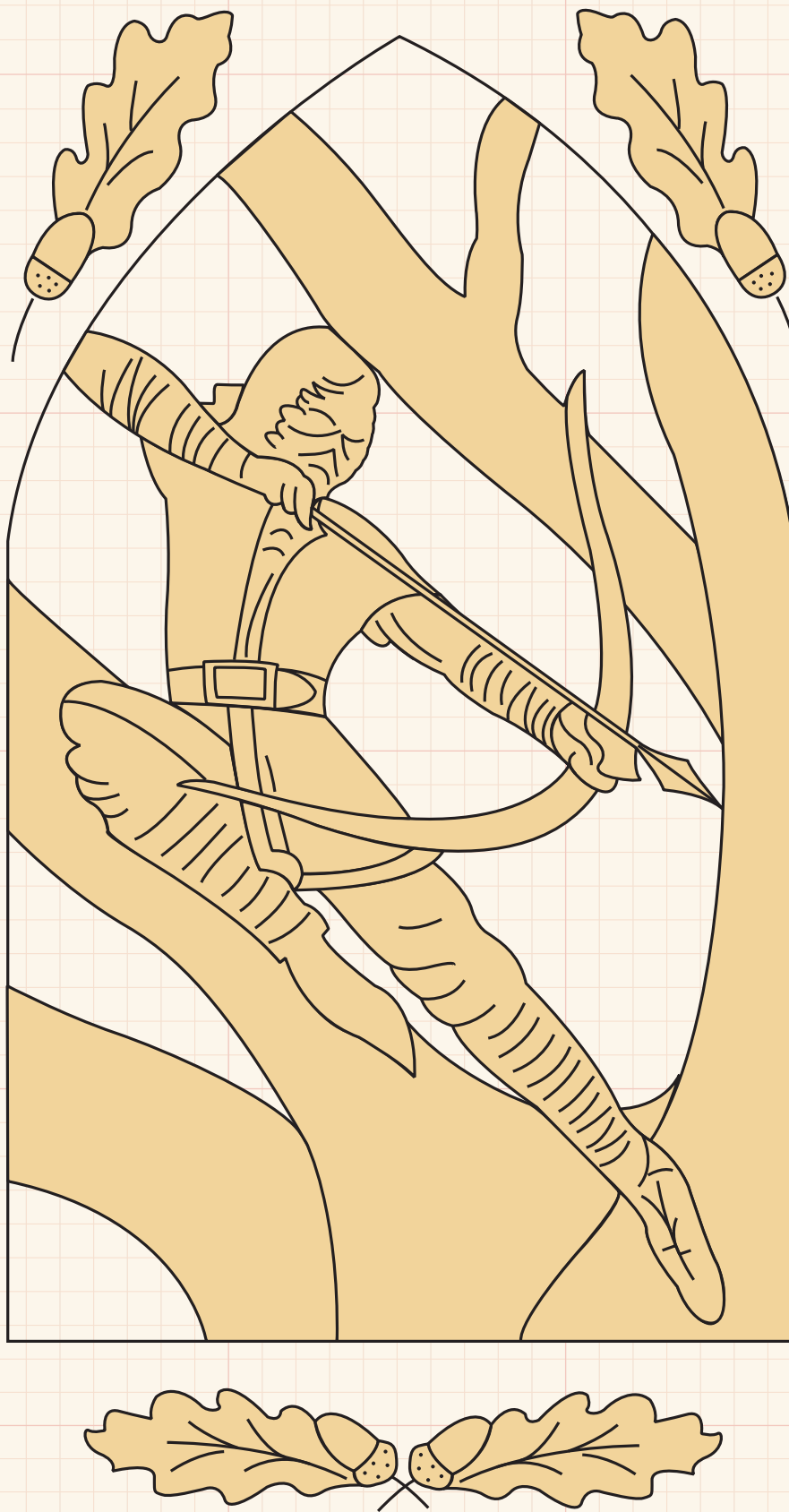
- Jigsaw
- Router
- Hinge mortise router cutter
- Pillar drill press
- Rotary micromotor

Tools

- 3mm and 16mm wood drill bit
- Half-round and flat wood rasp
- V-gouge
- 3mm, 16mm, 22mm shallow gouges
- 12mm, 18mm, 20mm fishtail gouges
- 6mm skew chisel
- 12mm, 16mm flat chisel
- Palm gouges
- Needle files and small rasps
- Rotary burrs
- Sandpaper
- Carving knife
- Small brass wire brush

Materials

- European oak (*Quercus robur*) 550mm x 340mm x 25mm
- Danish oil
- Clear paste wax



1 Grounding out

Fit a hinge mortise cutter with a template guide into the router and set the depth of cut to 5mm. Using the plans cut a template of the arch from plywood and fix it to the panel with double-sided tape, then route out the internal shape. Use a scrap of plywood for support as you remove the waste. This stage can also be done the traditional way with a shallow gouge, working a few mm in from the edge. Clean up the outline after.



2 Transferring pattern

Make a copy of the pattern and cut out the arched shape, then place it snugly into the routed area of the panel. Drill a series of reference holes in the pierced areas, transfer the pattern to the back of the panel, matching up the reference holes, and trace the lines on to the surface. You should now have a replica of the image in exactly the same position but on the reverse of the panel.



3 Piercing the panel

Drill a large hole through the centre of each pierced section to allow access for the jigsaw blade then cut out each one, keeping inside the lines. Check to see that they match the ones on the front when you start off and keep checking as you go. This can be done with a scrollsaw without the need to transfer the pattern in step 2.



4 Cleaning up the edges

Clean up the edges as you go, checking the outline of each section. You can do this with a fine rasp. The sections will be sanded down once the carving is complete.

5 Laying out

The detail can now be marked in on the front surface ready for carving.

6 Separating the image

Start by cutting a V-groove to separate the main image from the tree. Keep to the tree side of the line where the level will be reduced and separate the sections of the tree at the same time.

7 Carving the tree

Using a selection of suitable shallow gouges start reducing the depth of the tree and separating the limbs, then round over the edges. Carve each limb at a different depth to get maximum 3D effect.



8 Carving the legs

Turn your attention to the archer and begin with the legs, reducing the depth slightly and rounding over the edges. The left knee and right foot will be the highest points. Carve away more of the tree to make the legs stand out if necessary.

9 Body

Move on to the body of the archer, round over the sides and relieve the belt and buckle. The highest points of the upper body will be both hands, which can be left untouched at this stage.



**10****11****10 Bow**

Make a stop cut with a knife around the outline of the bow where it lays over the tunic. Do this in one firm cut to separate the fibres, then carve away the knee up to this line. Be careful not to lift the wood on the bow.

11 Repeat the process for the arrow shaft using a straightedge as a guide. This is a delicate area due to the short grain, so round it over with sandpaper as soon as you have finished carving away the shoulder to prevent it from chipping. The top of the shoulder will be the lowest point here.

**12****12 Forearm and head**

Shape the forearm on the left of the panel and the basic shape of the head. Refine any areas to the correct depths on the body so that each part of the image looks in proportion to the others.

TOP TIP: SANDING

Before the detail can be added the areas need to be sanded smooth. Take time to refine the shape at this stage and correct any errors, for example the width of the leg and position of the knee. Use strips of sandpaper to round over the back edges slightly – this will add to the relief effect.

**13****14****13 Leg detail**

Draw in the folds and lines of the trousers then use small nail-head burrs in a rotary power tool to cut these in. Alternatively, use a V-gouge. With a small shallow gouge undercut each fold and sand smooth, then use a fine needle file to cut in the lines of the wraps on the lower leg.

14 Texturing the tree

It is a good idea to add texture to the tree as you progress with the main image detail in case you need to make any slight alterations to the depth. For this use a V-gouge and carve short, wavy, overlapping lines. Tilt the gouge from left to right to get a realistic effect. Clean out the fibres with a brass wire or firm bristled brush.

**15****16****15 Belt buckle and tunic**

The belt buckle is shaped by making fine stop cuts with a knife and paring away up to these lines. The tunic detail is cut in with a V-gouge, – make short little taps with a mallet to control the cut.

16 Shaping the arm

The back of the outstretched arm is carved out to make it stand proud of the surface. This is an area that draws the eye and would look too heavy, by doing this it appears in proportion to the rest of the carving. The wrap on the front of the arm is detailed in the same way as the leg wrap.

**17a****17b****17 Face**

Cut the facial features in with a rotary unit and a selection of burrs – small round carbide, small flame diamond and small nail-head diamond burr. The back of the head has been carved away in the same way as the arm to make it appear to stand off the background.

18 Carving the oak leaf

Mark out the position of the double oak leaf at the bottom of the panel and outline it with a V-gouge, then draw in a pencil line approximately 5mm away all around the shape.

19 Leaf, removing waste

The oak leaf is carved in shallow relief. From the pencil line carve out the waste with a small shallow gouge up to the outline.

20 Leaf, cutting in

Cut in around the leaf with a 2mm-deep flute gouge to tidy up the outline.

21 Leaf detail

When you have carved all three leaf and acorn parts sand the surrounding areas down and cut in the leaf veins with a V-gouge. The dimples in the acorns can be achieved by rounding the end of a wire nail and using it as a punch.

22 Finished arrow repair

Clean out all the texturing and sand down the archer and edges and front of the panel ready for finishing. Position the panel at the final viewing height and check the proportions and thickness of the arms, body, head and bow. Make any adjustments then sand the reverse of the panel.

Finishing

The panel has been finished with two coats of Danish oil then denibbed and coated with clear paste wax and buffed to a light sheen. Depending on where it will be situated the option of a backing should be considered. This will probably have a dark-green backing when hung on the wall to contrast nicely with the oak – probably Lincoln green, which will tie in with the subject perfectly.



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Repairing the arrow

The arrow broke away in the carving process. To repair it a flat spot was cut into the end of the shaft and a small V cut into the tree where the arrowhead sat. Then a replacement part was cut from

a piece of waste and fixed in place with small dots of a mixture of superglue and sawdust.



Preparing the end of the shaft



Fixing the replacement arrow

From the community

We have received lots of correspondence from readers letting us know what they've been doing and how they've been coping with the coronavirus lockdown. It's been a difficult time for us all, but it has also inspired lots of creativity. Here's a selection of readers' letters that caught our attention

Who's a pretty boy?!

I hope you are surviving these difficult times. At least there is rather more time to carve. I have recently finished a pair of carvings with a common subject, which have caused some amusement with my carving group online.

One day I was at a traction engine rally when I saw a man with a parrot on his shoulder, which looked as if it

was whispering something in his ear. The man looked over his shoulder with an expression of horror as if to say: 'You haven't done it down my back, have you?', which led to the first carving. The second was the parrot's response: 'It's all right, I've found it, it's down here.' Both carvings are in maple.

Regards, Peter Downham



Turning waste wood into avian art

In common with many others, I guess, the need to socially isolate during these unprecedented times has given me the opportunity to spend even more time in the workshop with my lathe and carving tools. Many projects have already been completed, and I have found myself with lots of scraps of waste wood on my bandsaw table. It seemed a shame to put it all in the bag for the wood burner, and so, inspired by the Cuban woodcarvers in a previous issue. I have set about producing some simple creations combining the different colours and textures of the various timbers. They are fun, and quite easy to make, and although I have chosen to construct birds, there is certainly scope for other creatures. This could also make a simple introduction for anyone starting out with woodcarving/sculpture, as it is possible to make them with relatively few specialist tools.

Regards
Cedric Boyns
Cornwall Woodcarvers



Staying inspired while socially distanced

During the lockdown, I think it is important to encourage the many carvers in clubs to keep busy, keep thinking and keep carving!

At Exeter Woodcarvers we have no idea how many more weeks will go by without a club meeting, but I'm sure we all want to keep adding shape to our ideas. I know some of us find having the idea in the first instance is probably the hardest part, but to help with that we often work to titles or topics.

Yandles in Somerset has always allowed us to exhibit and demonstrate at its shows. This September (if the

show goes ahead), it has kindly sponsored the idea of a competition titled British Countryside. Often just a word, or maybe a song, book or film title, can spur the imagination.

We hope that, in the seclusion of their sheds and workshops, our members are keeping up their skills and interest in working with wood. I have completed a couple of carvings so far – hope you like them.

Good luck to anyone chiselling away in solitude.

*Thank you, John Patterson
Chairman, Exeter Woodcarvers*



Some other letters from our readers

Tips for letter carving

Having done a considerable amount of letter cutting on memorial benches, bowls and church candlesticks, I have found the easiest and best way to space the lettering and achieve standard forms was to make friends with my local signwriter who, for a small sum, will produce the modern equivalent of Letraset, in whatever size and font I require. (They have even produced Greek script for me). This can be stuck to the item, drawn round in pencil and then peeled off.

*Regards,
Peter Davies*



A website for woodcarvers

During the lockdown I had been thinking that a lot of carvers are now working in isolation and it would be good to see the progress, ideas and problems they experience as they work on projects.

What I am thinking of is a website about woodcarving where carvers can post their progress and the issues they experience. Some professionals may want to post but this would be mainly for keen amateur carvers to get ideas and inspiration and share problems.

What started this for me was my current owl project. I began working on it in 2012 when I wanted to do a large carving but didn't want to spend a large sum to obtain big blocks of lime, which was a problem to source.

My brother-in-law works at a carpet warehouse and he had some scrap MDF panels, 900mm square x 10mm thick, which he gave me. I used these to cut out the profile and I had a gallon of wood glue to laminate them to the size I wanted.

After cutting and gluing I started profiling with a disc cutter carving disc (a Christmas present from my daughters). Unfortunately, while it roughed out well, it became blunt and didn't sharpen well. I started making the feet from scrap copper wire from work and home, however this did not go well and the project was put to the back of the bench.

I retired a couple of years ago and, along with a bit of gardening and volunteering, I still continue doing some carving. Now with lockdown and cleaning up my workshop, the owl project was restarted and, to keep in contact with family and friends, I started posting my progress on Facebook. The good comments and encouragement I received inspired me to push on.

Here you can see the first phase of the owl in 2012 (top right). This is the restart of the project (opposite); and another reworking of the feet and taking great care to clean the copper and flux well before soldering (below right).

I hope your readers find the project so far interesting, and it would be great to know if anyone has any ideas on an upload site for those interested in woodcarving. Look after yourself and stay safe.

Best regards, Mike Gurney



Creating a fairyland

A lady who lives a few doors away from me looks after the local park at the end of our road and wanted to make fairy doors on some of the trees. So I made a few for her out of my scrap timber.

This picture is of a log of unidentified timber, so I made a log fairy house. All scraps come in handy.

Steven Freeman



Hanging parrot

Cedric Boyns lets his imagination take flight with this fun decoration

After a few years playing professional cricket for Worcestershire, I embarked on my teaching career, first at RCS Worcester, then at Bloxham School, where I spent 23 years teaching biology. I also ran a boarding house there for 13 years before retiring in 2009. I have always enjoyed working with wood and was keen to have a go at both carving and turning now that I had more time. I joined a carving evening class for a couple of terms in 2010, which started me off and I loved it. I also joined a local woodturning club, which is brilliant, and I enjoy combining the two skills in my projects. I have done a lot of travelling abroad in the past 10 years and have got much of the inspiration for my carving work from what I have seen on those trips. I have no formal training whatsoever in art or design, but feel I have learned a great deal by 'giving it a go'. There is a wealth of talent in the clubs I belong to, so there is ample opportunity to learn from others.

Making use of waste wood

With many carving and turning projects already completed during the coronavirus lockdown period, several of them for my grandchildren, I found myself with plenty

of offcuts of different woods on my bandsaw table. Rather than throw them in the bag for the woodburner, I wanted to see if I could make use of them.

I recalled seeing some of the work of woodcarvers in Cuba when I visited there fairly recently. They combine many different woods in much of their work. One of the birds I remember featuring on their stalls was a parrot, so I decided I would start with this, and have a go at combining different woods to make a selection of simple birds that hang up, with the possible goal of producing a mobile.

This project was therefore the first one I tried and crafts a parrot-like bird using the offcuts of six different woods. The idea was to make relatively simple, but nonetheless recognisable, creations that are fun and quite straightforward to make with relatively few really specialist tools. There is also the possibility of combining carving and turning in their construction which appeals to me – although I appreciate that it would not appeal to all carvers.

I have so far completed six different designs and have plans in my head for many more.

Things you will need

- Copy of the templates
- Titebond III wood glue or similar
- Superglue
- Hot-melt glue
- Fishing line (about 30cm)
- Masking tape
- Danish oil or other finish of your choice

Tools

- Bandsaw (or scroll saw, coping saw, fretsaw)
- At least one No.3 or No.5 gouge, 6-12mm (Fishtail if you have it)
- Carving knife (detail knife preferred)
- No.11 gouge - 2mm (or other suitable veiner or small parting tool)
- Set square
- Pencil and metal ruler (can be used as a straight edge)
- Drill - hand or pillar drill
- Twist drills - 2mm, 3.5mm, 4.5 mm
- Belt sanding machine (plane or sanding block)
- Abrasives - 100g down to 400g
- Carving vice - or chops, preferably with cork and leather-lined jaws
- PPE - dust mask + suitable dust extraction

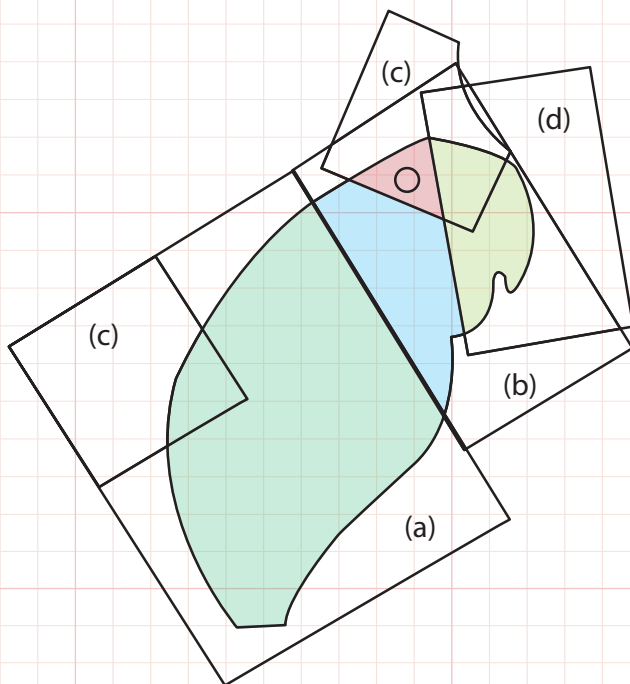
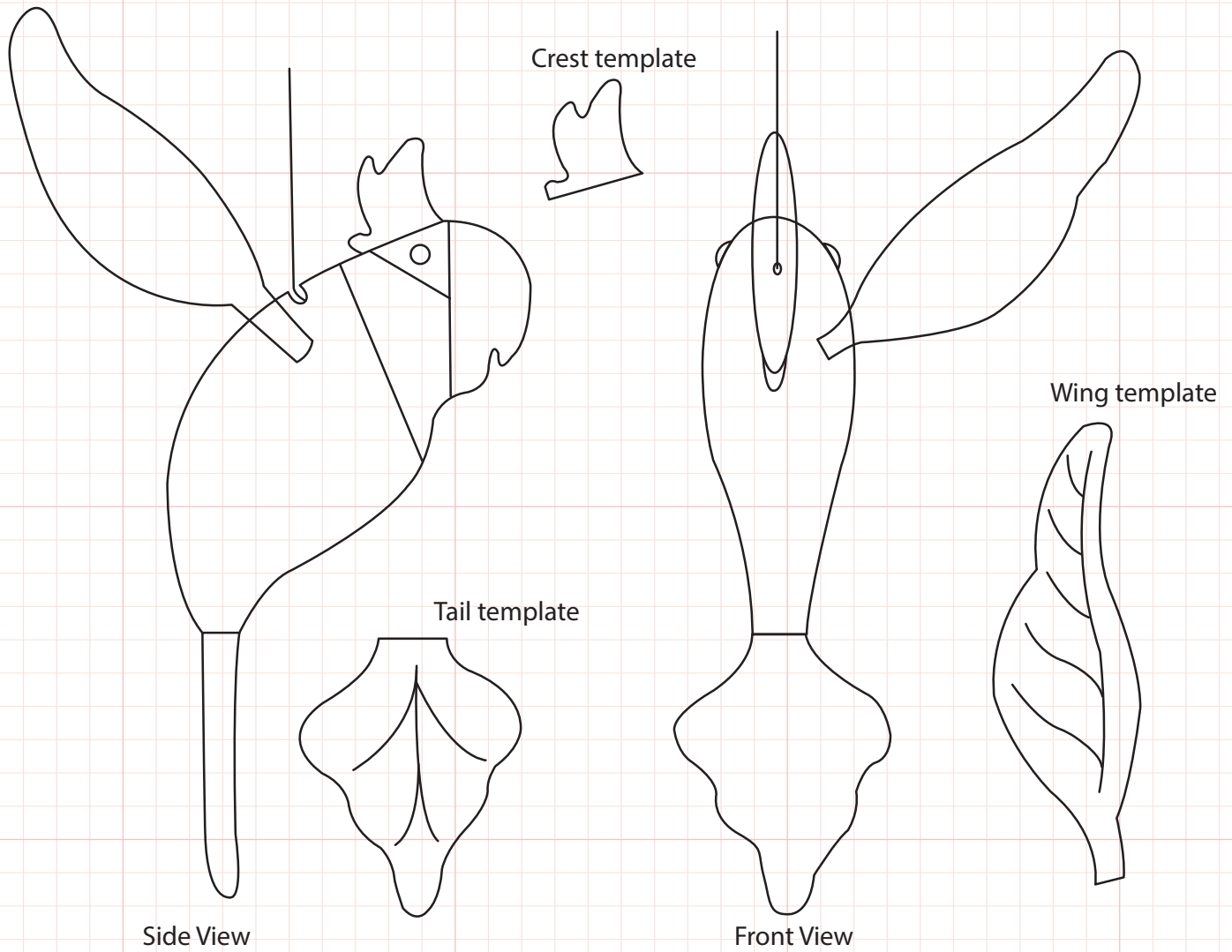
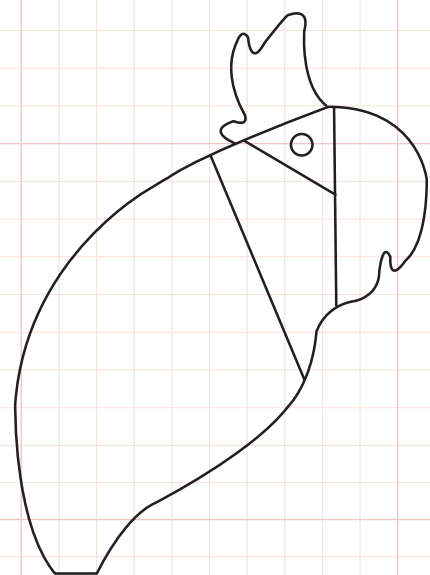


Diagram to show how the
body blocks are assembled



Body template

1 The wood you have will determine what you use. I used those indicated below in brackets.

Preparing the body

2 (a) A block of light-coloured wood (e.g. lime), 60mm x 50mm x 25mm. Make the block as square as possible and sand the two 60mm edges flat as these will be involved in the glueing to other sections of the body. (b) A block of slightly darker wood (e.g. beech), 50mm x 30mm x 25mm. Flatten one of the 50mm edges for bonding. (c) The light piece in the eye region (lime) will come from an offcut of the main body block (a) when it is cut out. (d) A block of very dark wood (e.g. iroko), 40mm x 25mm x 20mm. This can be a bit thinner because it forms the beak and this region is going to be tapered quite a lot.

Wings, tail and crest

3 These are cut out of much thinner blocks of wood and in order to be able to use a bandsaw safely to cut out each part, I made those thin blocks big enough to allow plenty of spare around each template. If using other saws this may not be necessary. To safely sand them on the belt sander I stuck a 'handle' on with hot-melt glue, it is then easily removed later.

Wings (elm) A 5mm-thick piece of wood is needed, large enough to have two areas of dimensions of roughly 85mm x 30mm. The grain runs lengthways down the wing.

Tail (iroko) A 6mm-thick piece at least 55mm x 45mm. The grain runs lengthways.

Crest (cherry) A 6mm-thick piece at least 30mm x 30mm, but I used a piece about 180mm x 30mm. The grain is better across the crest.

Constructing the body

4 Copy and cut out the template of the main body with the crest attached. Glue body part (a) to body part (b) using a suitable wood glue. They can be clamped but I did not find this necessary as long as both the long edges being bonded are perfectly flat. I used a belt sander, but planing or hand sanding should allow for a decent join. Allow this bond to set.

5 Put the template on this part of the body lining up the join between (a) and (b). Draw around and cut out the body, being careful to get the line faces between (b) and the eye region (c), as well as between (b) and the beak section (d), as straight as possible. They need to be perfectly flat for glueing (see later). Keep the offcut.

6 Sand the upper face of (b) flat before glueing part (c) in place. This small piece of wood needed is part of the waste cut away from part (a). One face of this should already be flat.

7 When dry cut out the body as far as the join with the beak. You should now have the first three sections of the body assembled. After sanding the last join line flat, glue on the beak section (d). If you have made this block a bit thinner, check that it is glued centrally.

8, 9 & 10 Allow to dry. After drawing in the outline with the template, cut around the beak to complete the construction of the body section.



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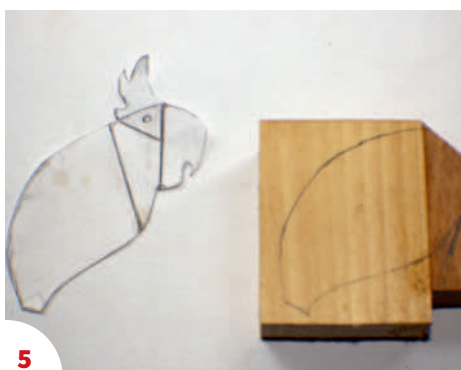
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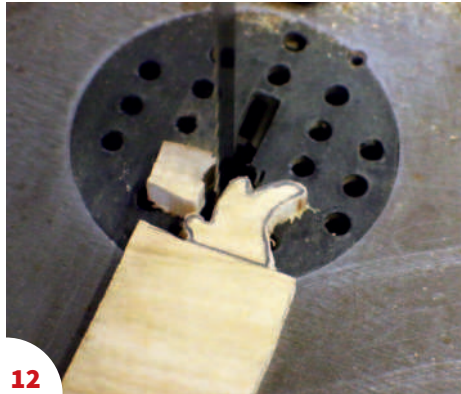
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Making the tail, wings and crest

11 These are drawn on the blocks using the appropriate templates and cut out on the bandsaw. After shaping, they are all sanded down to 400 grit. The preparation can be carried out during the time taken for the glue to set during the making of the body section.

12 & 13 Cut around the outline of the crest but leave the base of it attached to the block from which it was fashioned. This not only allows the safe use of the bandsaw to do this, but also allowed me to hold such a small piece in my vice for shaping using a No.5, 6mm fishtail gouge. A knife or rotary tool could also be used for all the shaping in this project if preferred. Note the direction of the grain and shape with, or slightly across, the grain. Take particular care not to knock the peaks off the crest. Saw the crest from its block. Once detached its base must be sanded flat ready for glueing to the head, which must also be given a flat area in the correct position as shown in the drawings.

14, 15 & 16 Once cut out the tail section can be shaped and tapered towards the edges and the tip using the gouge and coarse abrasive. How much tapering is a matter of personal choice. An additional bit of detail can be added to the outer face in the form of some grooves, using a small veiner or parting tool. Finally, the base of the tail must be perfectly flat for glueing to the tail end of the body, which must also be flat. Because this is a potentially weak end grain to end grain joint, I used a tiny 2mm dowel to help strengthen the joint. This is whittled from a scrap of beech using a carving knife. 2mm holes were drilled centrally in both surfaces, ensuring that the tail is positioned correctly when it is glued on later.

17, 18 & 19 The wings are cut out with the bandsaw and tapered using the No.5, 6mm fishtail gouge, or whittled with a carving knife depending on whether you have a suitable vice for secure holding while carrying this out. There should be more tapering as you move away from the leading edge of the wing. The 'peg' to attach the wing to the body is rounded to fit into a 4.5mm hole. Be careful not to make it too small at this stage as final adjustments can be made when the holes have been drilled later. A series of grooves can then be cut on the outer surface of each wing using a veiner, to add some detail.

Shaping the body

20 Use a No.5 fishtail gouge to round down the square edges all around the body until you have the desired shape. Take care to cut with the grain. The tail end needs to be tapered further, but be careful not to take off too much wood at this stage as the tail itself must be glued on before the final shaping is completed. The face and beak are shaped to the correct profile but be careful with the grain once more as iroko (if you have used it for the beak) has a tendency to splinter rather easily.

21 Using a coarse grit abrasive (100) rough sand the whole body at this stage to confirm that it is even and symmetrical on both sides. Make any adjustments needed. Put the groove in the beak by making a small cut with the bandsaw.

22 & 23 Glue on the tail and check that it is at the right angle. Once dry the tail end of the body can be carefully shaped to meet the tail itself using a gouge or detail knife and smoothed off with 100g abrasive. Again check that it is symmetrical.

24 Mark the positions of the holes to be drilled for the eyes and the wings. With a 3.5mm drill make a hole 5mm deep in the centre of section (c) on each side of the body. I have a V-section jig that I made to hold round sections of wood, such as dowels for drilling. This enabled me to hold the body at an angle of about 45° which is about the right angle for all the holes. The 4.5mm holes for the wings should be deep enough to allow the pegs to be fully inserted into them. They should be at a point about 18-20mm behind the base of the crest. The angle needed is again about 45° from the vertical centreline. I use a pillar drill and my V-shaped jig but they can be drilled by eye with a hand drill and the body held in a vice. The wings can either be removable or glued in, but before putting them in place, now is a good time to do the final sanding down through the grits to 400. Then attach the wings.

25 The eyes are made from a scrap of black walnut whittled into a dowel 3.5mm in diameter. A short length is glued into each eye hole, pared down when dry with a gouge or knife, and then sanded to leave them just proud of the body surface.

26 Attach a short length of fishing line to hang the parrot up. The goal is to get it hanging with the tail pointing vertically down. The point of attachment will be somewhere just in front of the wings. To find this point you need a short length of narrow masking tape, into which you cut a small slit to halfway across it. Take the length of fishing line and put a figure-of-eight knot close to one end. With the line through the slit, the knot can be temporarily stuck to the centreline of the back, and the bird just raised gently off the bench top to see how it hangs. Minor adjustments may need to be made until the point where the hole needs to be drilled can be ascertained. Drill a 2mm hole, 6-8mm deep at this point. The knotted end is then pushed down into the hole and held firm with a drop of superglue. In addition, a small plug can be whittled from a scrap of lime wood to fill the hole and trap the line, creating a better finish. Take care not to damage or break the line if you choose to do this. Put a loop in the other end of the line to allow it to be hung up.

27 After a final sanding with 400 grit abrasive, if necessary, it is now ready for you to add the finish. I used two thin coats of Danish oil, applied with a soft cloth. The finished bird should look like this. ▶



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Our contributors



Adrian (Ade) Lloyd is a full-time designer, maker and teacher of traditional heritage handcrafts based in North West Cumbria and also does some blacksmithing and edge tool making. He is currently Chair of The Association of Pole-lathe Turners and Green Woodworkers. www.adrian-lloyd.co.uk adrian@adrian-lloyd.co.uk



Cedric Boyns joined a carving evening class for a couple of terms in 2010 which started him off. He also joined a local woodturning club which was brilliant and he enjoys combining the two skills in his projects. A lot of travelling abroad in the last 10 years has given much of the inspiration for his carving work. He has no formal training whatsoever in art or design, but feels he has learnt a great deal by 'giving it a go'.



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



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



Mark Gough is a self-taught woodworker, woodcarver and stickmaker who runs a small business making commissioned sticks and other design projects. Previous jobs include timber building, construction and signwriting & narrowboat art. www.stickcraft.info mark@stickcraft.info Facebook woodstickcraft



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



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



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

Editor Mark Baker
E: markb@thegmcgroup.com
Editorial Assistant Karen Scott
E: karencs@thegmcgroup.com
Designer Claire Stevens & Oliver Prentice
Chief Photographer Anthony Bailey
Advertising
E: gmcadvertising@thegmcgroup.com
Publisher Jonathan Grogan
Production Manager Jim Bulley
Subscriptions: pubs@thegmcgroup.com
Marketing Anne Guillot
Printer Precision Colour Printing

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Next issue...

Steve Bisco creates a stunning tulip tree pierced panel



Dave Western completes his Icelandic bedboard



Zoe Gertner carves an adorable sleeping dormouse

Murray Taylor explains what you need to begin carving

Oak & laurel frame

Mark Ivan Fortune carves this beautiful wood surround in the Black Forest style



Sourcing interesting wood that's suitable for carving can prove a challenging task. I will often put out posts on social media following a big storm enquiring after fruit trees that have toppled and something of interest will usually present itself. Once the wood is sawn into manageable lengths for transport, I seal the end grain and leave it out of direct sunlight, under cover in a well-ventilated area, until I have time to cut it into blanks on the bandsaw. Occasionally I come across larger pieces, which I take to the local sawmill for planing. Last year I was lucky to be given a small quantity of windblown ancient yew that had been milled and air dried. In a similar way to my carving –

where I aim to have a piece in design, a piece being carved and a piece being finished – I keep a steady flow of wood to plank, wood drying and wood ready for carving.

In this miniature frame carved in ancient yew, I have attempted to create some interest by the use of two distinctly contrasting leaf styles. Even if you don't carve this project, I suggest adding the leaf techniques to your bag of tricks.

It is imperative to the life of the carving that each leaf is allowed to take on its own individual identity. Allow your own sense of form to guide you through the modelling and detailing stages.



Things you will need

- Bandsaw
- Scrollsaw
- Padsaw/jigsaw
- Router
- Marking knife
- Paint scraper
- No. 4, $\frac{3}{16}$ in gouge
- No. 6, $\frac{1}{8}$ in gouge
- V-tool
- No. 8, $\frac{1}{2}$ in gouge
- No. 5, $\frac{1}{8}$ in gouge
- Skew chisel
- Small veining tool
- No. 6, $\frac{3}{16}$ in gouge
- No. 9, $\frac{1}{4}$ in gouge

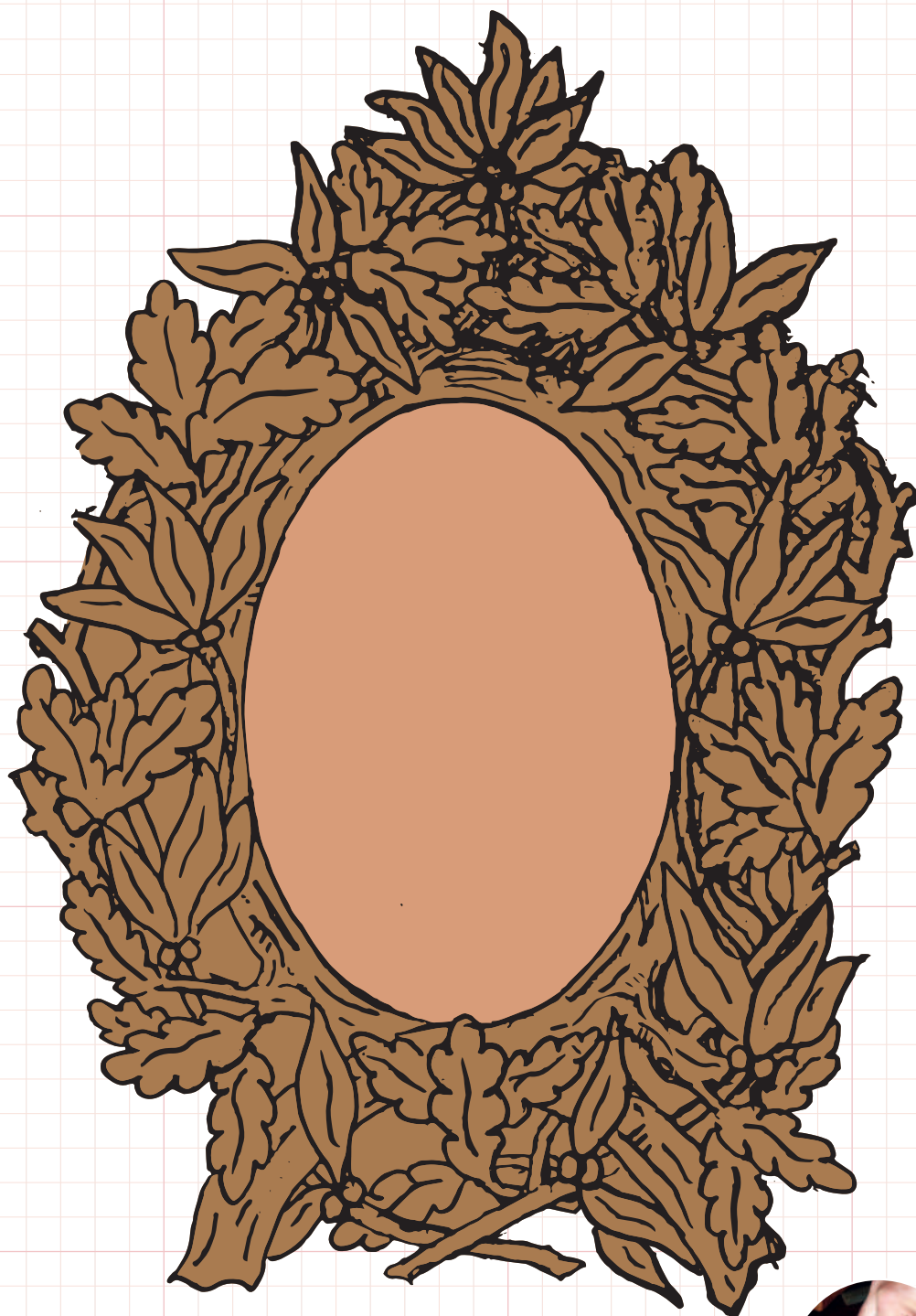
Materials:

- Blank – 9 x 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 3 x 4in
- Backing – 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ x $\frac{1}{8}$ in
- Beeswax polish

DRAWINGS

Keep your working drawing to hand as, once the removal of wood commences, pencil lines and direction are easily lost.

Rescale the drawing to suit your tools. If you don't have minute tools to fit in all the void spaces, redraw the piece to enlarge it and create bigger pierced sections by omitting some of the leaves.



PREPARATIONS

1 Align the pattern with the wood grain to best suit the elements of the carving. Glue the template to the surface of the frame blank and to the backing plate. Cut out the centre of the blank. (Leaving the frame within the board will assist in holding the work during the preparatory stages and especially when routing the back of the frame.)

2 Looking through the opening from the front, carefully align the backing board. Use Blu Tack or similar to steady the positioning. Hold the backing in place and trace around it with a marking knife, scoring the back of the frame. To prevent the knife grain following, make a shallow first pass, getting progressively deeper.



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2

**3****4**

3 Mark the depth of the recess with a marking gauge and route the recess at the back of the frame to a depth of $\frac{1}{8}$ in to receive the backing. If you do not have access to a router you can achieve the same results by grounding out with carving tools. Ensure a snug fit, then set aside the backing plate.

4 Cut out the frame. Drill and scrollsaw the pierced sections. Making smooth, accurate cuts to save time in the carving stage. It is best to mark waste clearly with a coloured pencil to avoid the potential for mistakes.

**5****6**

5 Gauge a base line for the inner frame $\frac{1}{8}$ in from the now-routed back. Glue the blank to MDF backing with a few sheets of paper sandwiched between. Secure the work to your bench. With a V-tool part the inner frame from the leaves.

6 Reduce the height of the inner frame to the gauge line with a No.4, $\frac{3}{8}$ in gouge keeping some meat on the two off-shoots in the bottom section and staying clear of the two thin laurel stems either side in the middle section.

7 Reduce the height of the two flanking laurel branches to a little more than their width. We shall return to these later.

8 Separate the leaf forms with a V-tool. Note how the cuts are always on the lower leaves and forms. Be sure to make clean cuts as with a busy carving it's easy to lose your way if it becomes messy.

**7****8**

9 Clean up the forms of the leaves by gently stabbing the sharp recesses with the V-tool, relieving the chip with a skew and refining the curves with a No.6, $\frac{1}{8}$ in gouge.

10 With a No.8, $\frac{1}{2}$ in gouge, carefully ground out around the groups of laurel berries. Be sure not to undercut them at this stage—aim for a depth of at least the diameter of a berry. The base of the berries will act as a springing point for the laurel leaves and will dictate the appropriate depth throughout the rest of the carving.

11 With a small No.5, $\frac{1}{8}$ in gouge carefully stab around the individual berries and, with the same tool in hand and where possible working with the grain, carefully round over the tops of each berry.

**9****10****11**

12 Take your time to set in the different heights of each leaf and stem by stabbing and carving with V-tool, gouges and skew while occasionally referring to the drawing. This step is highly individual and the basis for the whole effective flow and contrast of the carving as it hinges on this preliminary outlay.

13 Care must be taken when separating the overlapping branches at the bottom of the frame as one is dealing with delicate short grain. Begin separating the overlap with the V-tool before rounding over the branches with an inverted No.4, $\frac{3}{8}$ in gouge. Do not undercut.

14 Now that we have the basic form and flow firmly established we are ready to move on to the detailing. With stropped tools begin by outlining the ruffles with a veining tool. Try to keep as much of the central material as possible as we want to create a concave middle to the leaf.

15 Now use the inverted No. 6, $\frac{3}{16}$ in gouge (preferably a spade tool) to shape the ruffles. Use a slicing cut following the ark of the ruffles while remembering to keep as much of the material in the middle as possible.

16 With the same tool in hand and inverted, shape the central aspect of the leaf. Use the corners of the spade tool to get right down into the junctions of where the ruffles and central section converge. Follow your creative instincts in varying the forms of the leaves and try to visualise the leaf as the form emerges.

17 Cut the central vein with the veining tool. Once the groupings of leaves have been completed you may finish the berries by first ensuring the correct height then rounding over and finally undercutting.

18 Now we turn our attentions to the oak leaves. With the No. 9, $\frac{1}{4}$ in gouge, using rolling cuts, make two or more deep troughs, either straight across the leaf or at a diagonal. Try to visualise where the leaf might naturally rise and fall.

19 With an inverted No. 4, $\frac{3}{8}$ in gouge round over the space between cuts. Try to avoid your corners digging in but if this happens simply repeat the previous step again to clean up any digs.



**20****21**

20 With the veining tool cut two parallel veins, gently curving to lend some movement to the leaf. Each lobe gets a small vein. The lobes may need to be redefined after detailing.

21 Now cut in the delicate laurel branches either side. Use a No.4, $\frac{3}{8}$ in to stab and remove the waste on the open inner side of the branches.

22 Begin the tight side by stabbing the branch with a small No 4. This space will take a variety of tools to clean out, including a veiner and a small skew chisel. Proceed with caution as small tools are easily damaged in tight spaces if the proper care is not taken.

**22****23**

23 With an inverted No. 4, $\frac{3}{8}$ in gouge round over the main framing branch, working down only as far as our gauged line.

24 Texture all branches with the veining tool. This is done in a random fashion, keeping the long cuts in the direction of growth.

25 Carefully undercut all elements of the frame. When undercutting it is important to maintain the structural integrity of the piece by only undercutting what is absolutely necessary for the visual aspect.

26 Separate the carving from the backing with a paint scraper, carefully and without levering, by gradually wedging it between the carving and paper. Lightly lubricating the blade with coconut oil makes the process a little easier.

**24****25**

27 Apply a thin coat of beeswax polish with a toothbrush and leave to dry before carefully buffing with a clean shoe brush, preferably of natural bristle. ▶

BE PROUD

There is little to be proud of by undercutting the life out of the carving. A carving, by design and execution, should be fit for purpose and longevity with handling and cleaning in mind.

**26****27**

The Amber Room

This month we trace the remarkable history of the 'eighth wonder of the world'



There can be few carvings in the world as beautiful as those in the Amber Room, a richly decorated chamber covered in amber panels backed with gold leaf and mirrors. And even fewer carvings have such an eventful history, involving war, theft and mystery.

The story begins in 1701 when Friedrich I, the King of Prussia, commissioned them from German sculptor Andreas Schlüter and Danish amber craftsman Gottfried Wolfram. The panels were originally installed in the Charlottenburg Palace in Berlin, but when Peter the Great admired them during a visit to Prussia, Friedrich offered them to the Russian Tsar. The Amber Room was then shipped to Russia and placed in the Winter House, St Petersburg. In 1755 the panels were moved again and installed in the Catherine Palace in

Pushkin. Here, the room was redesigned by Italian designer Bartolomeo Francesco Rastrelli using additional amber.

When the German army invaded Russia during WWII, Russian officials at the Charlotte Palace tried to hide the amber panels behind wallpaper. However, their attempts at concealment failed and the Amber Room was looted and shipped back to Germany to Königsberg's castle museum. What happened next to the panels remains a mystery. In August 1944 allied bombing raids destroyed Königsberg and the castle museum, it is not known whether the amber panels were still there or whether they had been sent away.

The story concludes with a meticulous reconstruction which began in 1979 and was completed in 2004. The new Amber Room was installed in the Tsarskoye Selo State Museum Reserve near St Petersburg and is now on public display.



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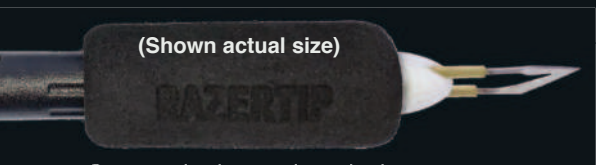


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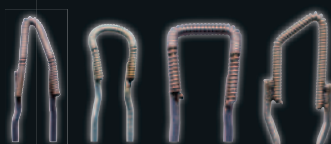
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