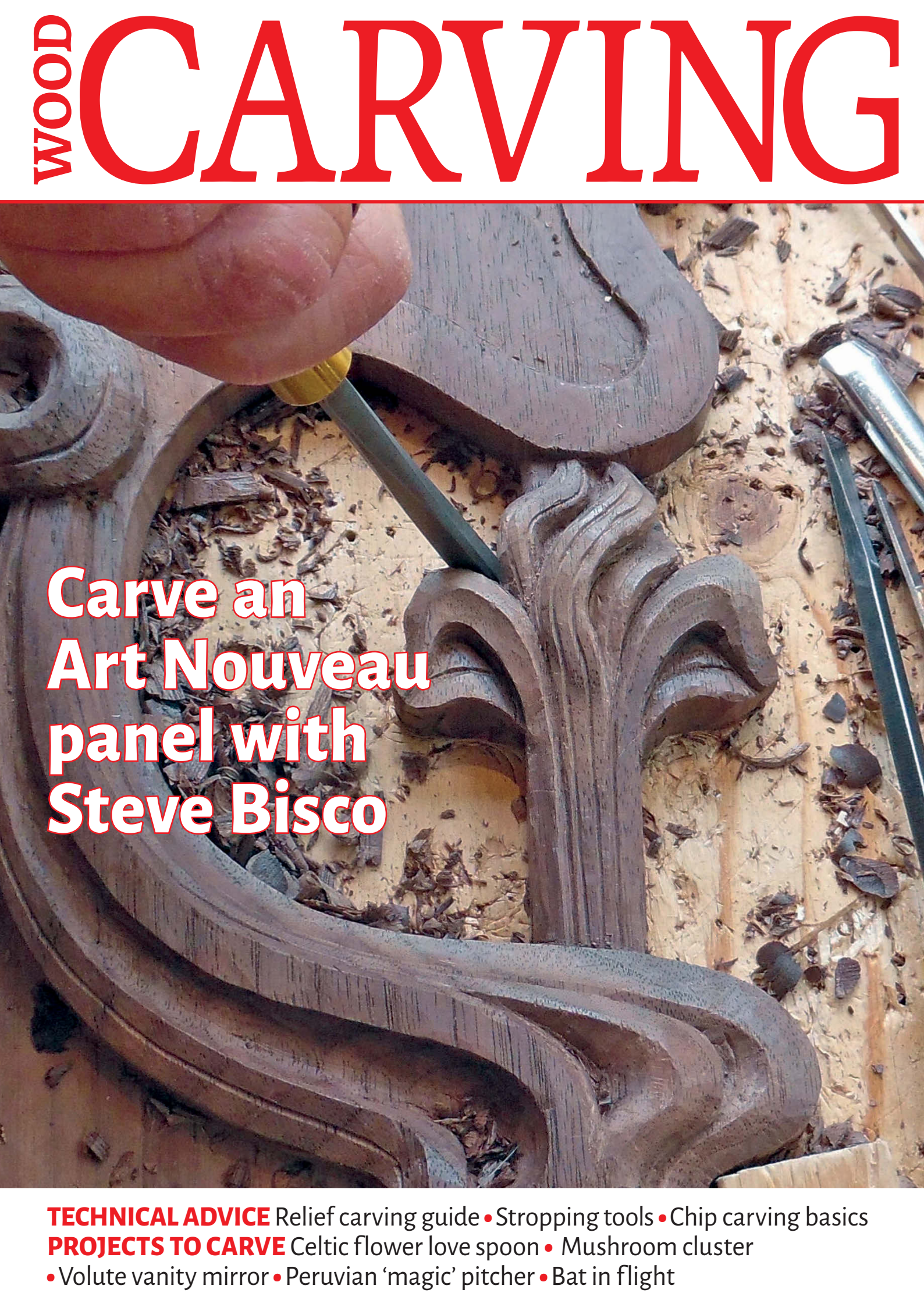


# WOOD CARVING



**Carve an  
Art Nouveau  
panel with  
Steve Bisco**

**TECHNICAL ADVICE** Relief carving guide • Stropping tools • Chip carving basics  
**PROJECTS TO CARVE** Celtic flower love spoon • Mushroom cluster  
• Volute vanity mirror • Peruvian 'magic' pitcher • Bat in flight



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# Welcome



PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK IAN FORTUNE

**A**s Christmas is upon us, and for those for whom it will already have passed by the time you read this, after an unpredictable and worrying 2020, we wish you a happy New Year.

Let's kickstart 2021 with a positive vibe, as the Cornwall Woodcarvers strive to teach and inspire a new generation of young woodcarvers.

Cedric Boyns adds a magical touch and, with a flourish, demystifies his trick water jug, and John Samworth begins a technical series revealing the art of realistic relief carving.

It's not too early to begin your lovespoon for Valentine's Day and Dave Western shares a design with four levels of detail to cater for all abilities.

Carve some box mushrooms with Zoë Gertner and be inspired by Steve Bisco's Art Nouveau walnut panel, while we interview woodcarver Nate Elarton.

There are two very different mirror projects – a musical-themed vanity mirror with a beautiful volute (pictured above) from Mark Fortune, and a fun wall mirror entitled Flight of the Bat,

featuring bats in your belfry, by Alan Denham.

In From the Community we announce a prize draw offering the chance to win a high-quality leather apron from BeaverCraft Tools, so to be in with a change to win, please email [WCeditorial@thegmcgroup.com](mailto:WCeditorial@thegmcgroup.com).

As always, we love to see what you've been carving. Maybe you have spare time over Christmas and plans to pursue your projects, or have made some gifts which may have to be posted rather than exchanged.

Happy carving!



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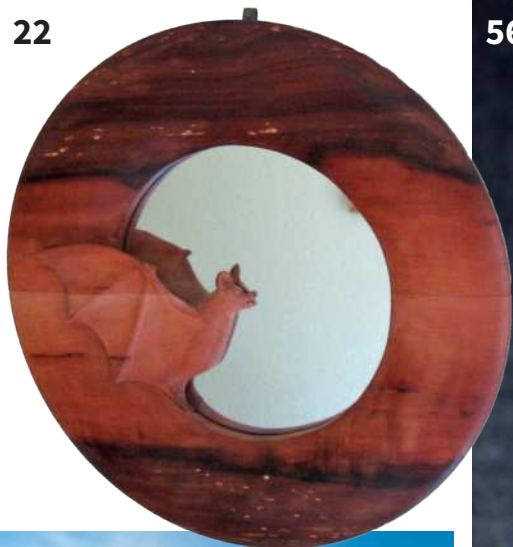
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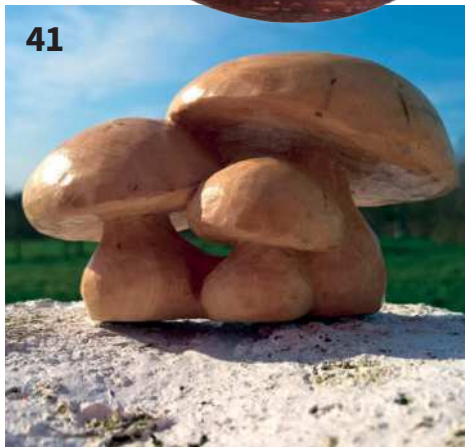
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# Celtic flower lovespoon

Dave Western shows how to create a popular Valentine's love spoon



PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVE WESTERN

**W**ith Valentine's Day approaching much more quickly than anyone is likely prepared for, now is a good time to get to work on a special gift that will amaze and delight that special person in your life. Over the years, this Celtic flower has become something of a favourite among my spoon clients and has rescued many of them from Valentine's Day ignominy. The design itself is a heavily stylised version of a single stem flower, such as a rose or tulip. The Celtic knot at the crown is elegant and stylish, but is not so over the top that it can't be accomplished by even the newest carvers. The design also manages to find a nice place in the middle ground between the lovespoon and utilitarian spoon camps, and so can be enjoyed by carvers from either side of that great spoon divide.

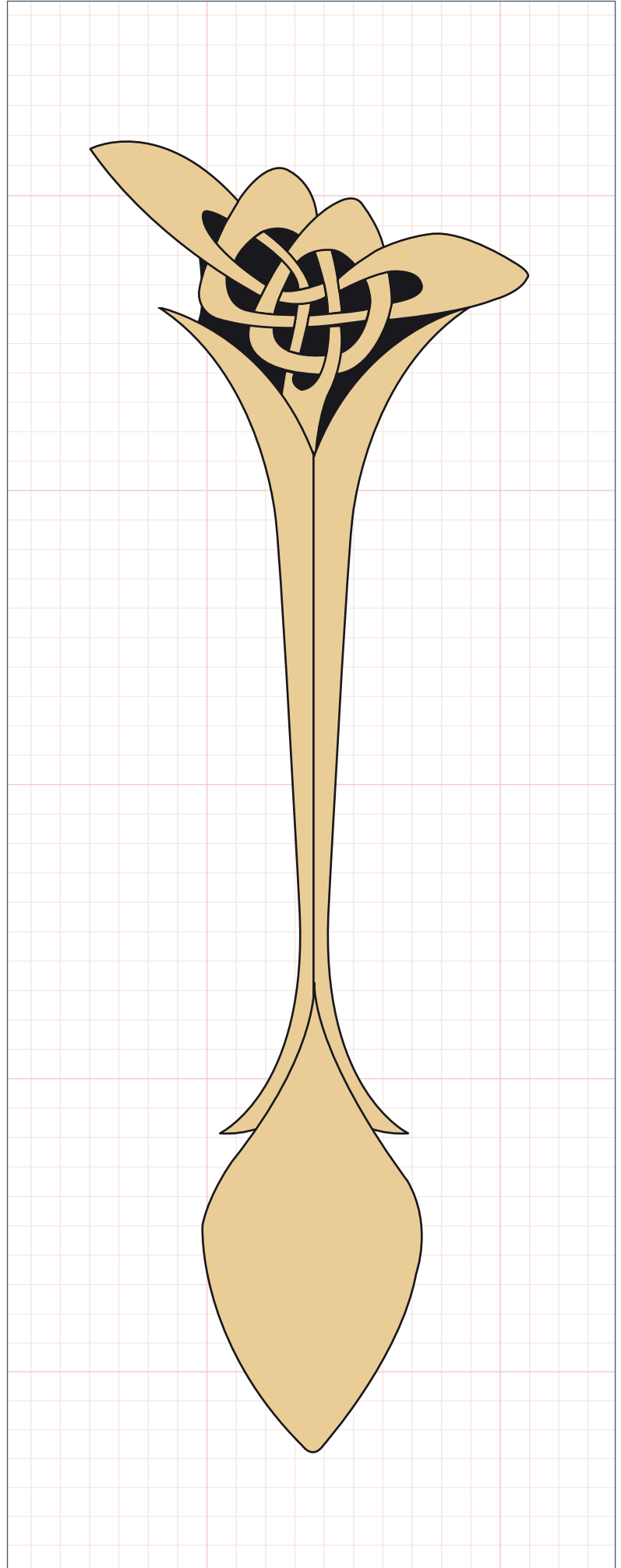
For this article, I have carved four versions of the design. Two versions feature a low relief carved Celtic knot and the other two a fretted knot. The handles and stems are left flat on the simpler spoons, while the more complicated versions have handles that are domed, curved and hollowed.

It doesn't take long to make a rudimentary version of this spoon, but it is a design that profits greatly from extra little fiddly features, such as doming of the handle, fretting of the knotwork and gentle (but not excessive) rounding of edges. As with all woodcarvings, the amount of effort, thought and careful workmanship that goes into the project inevitably pays an equal or greater dividend in the completed piece.

### Things you will need

#### Materials:

- Paper pattern and glue stick
- 1/4in straight knife
- 3/4in straight knife
- Bent/hook knife (could substitute No.7, 3/4in gouge or similar)
- Axe or bandsaw/scrollsaw for rough shaping.
- No.1, 3/4in flat chisel for shaping stem (straight knife also works)
- Small 1/4in straight chisel or similar for shaping knotwork
- Scraper
- Needle files
- Drill and bits for clearing fretted areas
- Scrollsaw/jeweller's saw for shaping fretted areas
- Selection of fine (150-1000 grit) abrasive papers
- Danish oil and/or beeswax polish for finish



**1** The first part of this article will be devoted to the making of a simple, straight-handled spoon with a low relief carved Celtic knot at the crown. This is the simplest of the four carved examples and it can be made both with the fewest tools and in the least amount of time. Although it does lack some of the elegance and visual appeal of the more sophisticated curved, fretted and domed versions, it nevertheless yields an attractive spoon that will garner plenty of accolades. For those wanting to take things up a step or two, instructions for jazzing up the spoon will follow in the latter part of the article, but should probably be read before proceeding with any carving.

**2** Begin the project by tracing the pattern, making a freehand drawing or by gluing a photocopy to the working face of your material. I like to make use of a bandsaw or scrollsaw to cut out the pattern, but this job can also be undertaken with handsaws and/or a stout straight knife. Work to the line, aiming to keep the long run along the stem and handle as straight as possible. If clearing away this material by hand, be conscious of keeping the edges as close to 90° to the front face as possible.

**3** With the spoon roughed out, carving of the Celtic knot can commence. Low relief carving offers the easiest method by which you can achieve an attractive knot without the need for too many tools. There are several ways you can clear the stock between the knots and I have shown two here. Use a finely tipped straight knife to remove the material inside each knot loop, either by cutting downwards at an angle in the manner of chip carving to form a neat cutout, or scribing straight down beside each line and then angle cut out a small chip to create a raised centre in each loop.

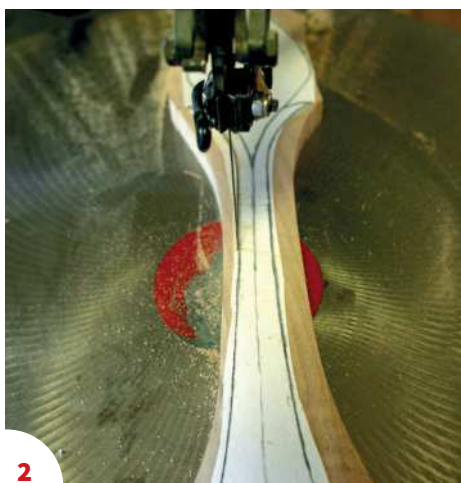
**4** The two versions in completed form.

**5** With the knotwork defined and the excess stock between each strand removed, you can begin to define the points where the strands overlap one another. I recommend cutting to a depth of about 2mm using the tip of the fine straight knife. How vertically you hold the knife will be dependent on which method you used to clear the spaces inside each strand loop. If you've chipped out a hollow, then tilt the knife to accommodate the angle of the cut in the loop. If you have opted for a raised centre, then hold the knife at 90° to the strand.

**6 & 7** Once all your lines have been neatly scribed, you can begin removing stock from the strands to start creating the 'over and under' effect of the knotwork. I use a variety of small flat chisels to achieve a nice, clean cut. Begin the cutting with a fairly short and shallow 2mm x 2mm type cut, then once all the knotwork has been cleared and you are satisfied all the 'overs and unders' are in order, begin fairing the cut back along the strand to make it look smoother and less abrupt. Grain directions vary widely, so don't take too deep a cut at any one time and constantly guard against chipping.



**1**



**2**



**3**



**4**



**5**



**6**



**7**



8



9



10



11



12



13

**8** With all the knotwork shaped, you can begin removing any remaining paper or pencil lines and shave off a shallow layer of wood along the entire length of each strand. Aim to create a smooth flow to each strand as it passes over and under its neighbours. Use a sharp chisel or scraper and shallow cuts to avoid tearing out grain or damaging neighbouring strands. Neatness at this stage will save a huge amount of time later in the project by avoiding the time-consuming process of going back over your work to tidy up sloppy strands and clumsy intersections.

**9** Having satisfactorily carved the entire knotwork pattern, I like to go over everything once more and give all edges a very gentle rounding off. Be careful not to take off too much material or you risk losing the knotwork's elegant ribbon-like appearance and instead will wind up with it looking like an overworked shoelace – approximately a 1mm round over is plenty. Later the edges will be faired with abrasive paper, but by cutting first, you save sanding time and ensure yourself a more even and flowing edge finish.

**10** The next step is to carve out the spoon's bowl. I prefer to rough out the bulk of the material with a couple of gouges and then follow up with a bent knife to smooth out any bumps and dips and refine the curves. Some carvers prefer to do the entire job with gouges and some with curved knives; my feeling is go with whatever you are most comfortable with. I put a good deal of effort into ensuring the bowl is fairly and smoothly curved, and has an elegant, thin edge that is visually appealing.

**11** A thick lip and bowl back makes a bowl appear heavy and distracts from the rest of the spoon's design. Aim for something as thin and sleek as you feel safe carving. Constantly check the depth as you carve to ensure you don't break through the wood and to make certain you leave enough material for rounding over the back of the bowl. The bowl's appearance is critical to the success of your spoon, so spare no effort to make it as perfect as you can.

**12** Turn the spoon over and begin shaping its back. A stout straight knife is the best tool for this operation, but take care to avoid removing too much material at once as you risk chipping out excessive cuts or snapping the bowl at the junction with the stem. Controlled, steady and shallow cutting results in a more refined and symmetrical bowl back. Frequently feel the thickness of the bowl by pinching the wood between the forefinger and thumb. Your fingers are staggeringly sensitive measuring devices, capable of detecting all manner of irregularities or areas that have become dangerously thin, so don't be afraid to make use of them.

**13** Use the same straight knife to shape the shoulders of the bowl where it joins the stem. Cut carefully to avoid a slippage that could chip the edges of the stem and work towards creating a symmetrical curve on both sides. To round the little section between the two halves of the stem at the tip of the bowl, it may be necessary to use a small flat chisel to clean up hard to reach areas.



**14** Although this spoon can certainly be left 'from the knife', I think that really smoothing and fairing both the bowl and the stem with a range of abrasive papers achieves the sleek, elegant look that will give this spoon a heightened sophistication. Carefully sand with the grain, beginning with 120 grit abrasive and working through to 320. This will give the spoon a silky finish that will really come alive with the application of the finish. If you do commit to sanding, be sure to take your time and see the process through to the final stages. Spoons left partially or poorly sanded will show all their scratches and blemishes to the worst possible effect and this is something that will definitely reflect badly.

**15, 16 & 17** Having completed both the knotwork and the bowl, now is the time to carve the stem portion of the spoon. I like to scribe a shallow (2mm) line down the centre of the stem that will help to guide me when I shape each side of the handle. Then I use a  $\frac{3}{4}$ in chisel or No.1 gouge to shape the curves at the top and bottom of the stem as well as put a slight chamfer along the handle's length. Be cautious cutting the curved sections at top and bottom as it is easy to run foul of the grain and chip out a chunk. Proceed carefully and be prepared to change cutting direction depending on the orientation of the grain in each section of the handle. Give the stem a thorough sanding or scraping to ensure it is fair and straight and then redefine the centreline through any areas that may have been heavily worked. Aim to maintain a steady 2mm depth of cut and about the same 1.5-2mm width.

**18** At this point give the entire spoon a good once over with a scraper and/or very fine abrasive papers to ensure it is as well finished as possible. Finish the spoon with beeswax polish or a couple of coats of penetrating oil lightly sanded between coats with 600-1000 grit wet and dry abrasive paper for an inviting, satiny sheen.

**19 & 20** If you have decided you'd like a more refined version of this design than the simple flat spoon, consider doming and curving the face surface of the spoon before applying the pattern and beginning your cutting. Your goal is a flowing, symmetrical curve that runs from side to side at the crown end of the spoon. The addition of a nice curve linking the bowl to the crown also adds another level of style to the handle and creates a nice vibrant look and feel. Once you have made your saw or knife cuts, take some time to smooth the face of the spoon before applying the pattern.



**14**



**15**



**16**



**17**



**18**



**19**



**20**

**21** Fretting the Celtic knot also heightens the appearance of the spoon, but does require considerably more cutting and carving than the low relief version. Undertake the fretting while the spoon still has a flat, straight back. If you wait until you have shaped both the front and back faces of the spoon, you will find the fretting becomes much more difficult and hazardous than working with a level back, which sits tightly against the bench. Use a drill to rough out guide holes for your scrollsaw blade or for the tip of a small straight knife.

**22** The Celtic knot usually looks best when cut with a scrollsaw, but there is no reason you can't achieve similar results with a jeweller's saw or a carefully handled straight

knife and some needle files. The neater the cutting is at this stage, the easier the cleaning and carving of the knotwork strands later. I believe if you commit to fretting the knotwork, then spend the time to carve both front and back faces, the knot looks much nicer for it. But be careful to reverse the 'over and under' pattern for the back face.

**23** Shape a nice flowing curve into the back that matches the front face curve and then gently hollow the crown section to emphasize the front face doming. The result is a truly graceful spoon that feels good in the hand, looks good to the eye and demonstrates in spades the skill and effort that has gone into its carving.

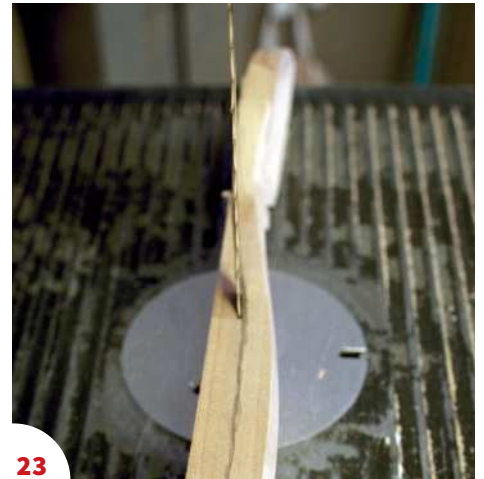
**24, 25 & 26** The last three photos show the differences between the four spoons when viewed from the front, back and side. From the front, it is difficult to visualise the difference the doming and bowing make. But viewed from the side, the differences between the spoons are profound. The back view serves to show the difference some detailing can make to the overall appearance of the spoon, especially if the knotwork is fretted through, a centreline is applied and the back of the bowl is fully shaped. However you choose to carve this design, you can be assured that your Sweetie will love it and you'll have created a meaningful gift that knocks spots off overpriced chocs and third-rate flower bouquets. ▶



21



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25



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# Relief carving introduction

John Samworth takes a look a relief carving, the technique of illusion

**M**any people, me included, attempt a relief carving as one of their first carvings. Simple really, just copy a favourite picture, or so I thought. Sadly no, that's not the case and it went horribly wrong. I no longer have my first relief carving. The purpose of this article is to explore why it went wrong, what can be done to prevent this and allow people to quickly develop their skills, without my mistakes.

By its very nature, relief carving is a 2D project where the subject matter being depicted is 3D. Painters have struggled with this phenomenon for centuries – not until the 15th century was perspective and the use of vanishing points discovered. As carvers, we too must follow these rules to achieve a true likeness for the viewer to interpret the project as having depth, an illusion to trick the mind into believing

the third dimension is present.

Definition: Perspective 'the art of representing three-dimensional objects on a two-dimensional surface so as to give the right impression of their height, width, depth, and position in relation to each other' (reference Google dictionary 2020). Since the 15th century perspective has become widely understood and classified according to the number of vanishing points.



One-point perspective



## One-point perspective

One-point perspective shown above is typically used to represent views. The vertical lines remain vertical and parallel to one another, but the horizontal lines converge together in what is known as the vanishing point. This is true for all views, being Italian street view on the left or Canadian tree lined quay sides on the right. Here the vertical lines of the buildings and trees are parallel to each other, while the horizontal lines of the street and quay side slope inwards, converging together, meeting somewhere in the distance beyond the green ivy. There is only one vanishing point, hence one-point perspective. The illusion is so convincing, if this were painted, blurring the red brick street into the grey brick harbour side, stretching the buildings' shadows to the right and bringing the tree line left over the street you could believe this to be a real image.

## Two-point perspective

Two-point perspective is typically used when the artist wants to place the viewer at the corner of an object such as a building. Here we are looking at the corner of Duomo Pisa. Again, the vertical lines remain parallel to one another (almost), but the horizontal lines converge to one of two vanishing points, to the left and right of the object. There are two vanishing points, one to the left and one to the right, hence two-point perspective. Neither vanishing points need actually be within the image. Ignore the tower to the right, it's just wrong!

## Three-point perspective

Three-point perspective is typically used when the artist wants to place the viewer above or below an object. This time, as in two-point perspective, the horizontal lines converge into vanishing points but also the vertical lines converge into their own vanishing point. Here we are close to the corner of the Udine Lodge of the Lion, Italy, and it is the sheer height of the building which emphasises the third vanishing point.



Two-point perspective



Three-point perspective

Including perspective is not normally where carvers trip up. If you copy a picture you will copy its inherent perspective. All photographs will have perspective automatically.



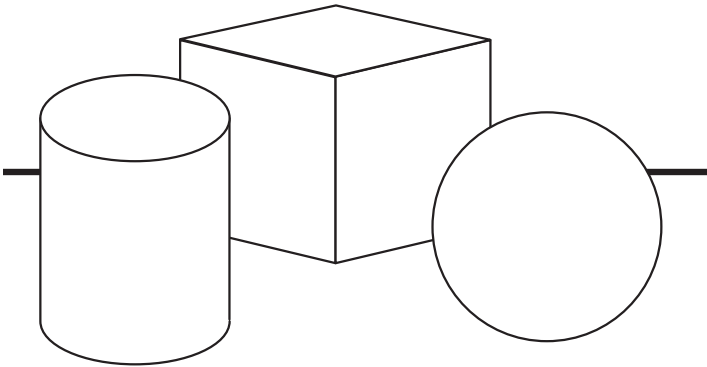
Can you now draw in the vanishing points to the Hotel Duke of York, Toronto?

Another technique to create depth, when the clear lines of a building or a road are not available, is foreshortening. Note that foreshortening is part of the perspective but can be simply used without clear lines.

### Foreshortening

Definition: Foreshortening 'to portray or show (an object or view) as closer than it is or as having less depth or distance, as an effect of perspective or the angle of vision' (reference Google dictionary 2020).

A simple example of foreshortening can be seen in the drawing of geometric shapes. The angling back of the bases and tops of the shapes tricks the eye into seeing these objects as solid. An interesting exercise is to carve this classic artist exercise of geometric shapes. I tried this, with mixed success. Some adjustment of design is necessary to create the appearance that the objects are sitting on a surface, which is typical in relief work. While the cube and the cylinder appear to work as solid objects, however the sphere lacks the illusion of depth. For the viewer they are unable to distinguish between the sphere and a disc. A little detail on the sphere; wrapped in a ribbon or partitions as a football and the illusion is complete.



Foreshortening illustration and test carving below



Carvers can also foreshorten by adjusting our cuts. In this example of a Cornish engine house (pictured above right) the illusion of depth within the engine house is created by carving the side walls very short in relation to the front and the gentle curve of the stack across the front becoming much steeper to the sides as indicated by the elliptical opening at the top.



Five illusions

In the yacht picture we perceive one yacht is closer to us than the others. There are at least five illusions here. Can you identify them?

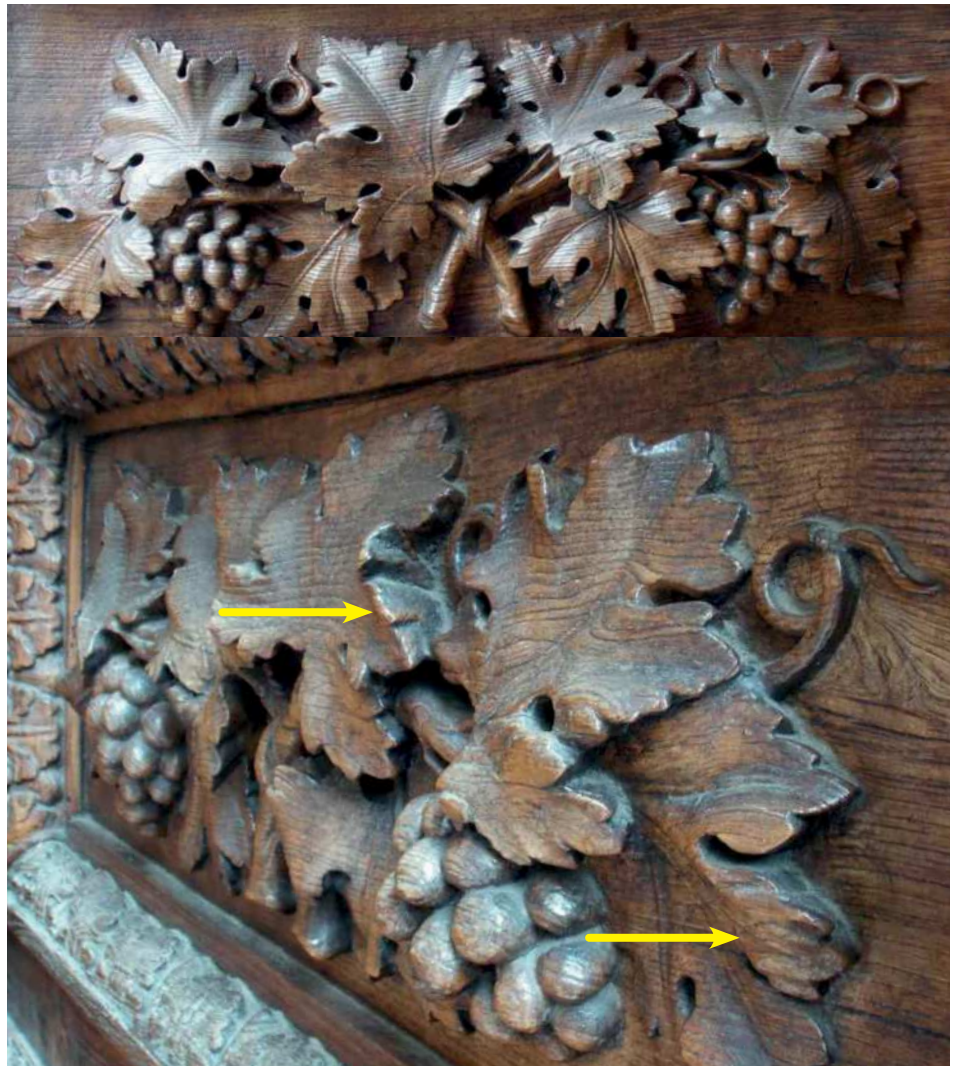
Foreshortening: by making yachts smaller than the green keel yacht, they appear further away than the green keel yacht. Over-lap by allowing one yacht to obscure another we perceive one as in front of the other. Foreground: we automatically identify objects low in the foreground as being closer than those higher in the background. Colour: the green keel jumps forward while the darker sails recede into the background. Detail: detail is clearer on closer objects. Those closest are seen in greater detail, while those further away may appear faint or blurred.

### Shallow relief work

In this shallow relief work below, a door panel from Duomo Florence, how many techniques can you identify?



In this shallow relief (pictured right) from a door panel Duomo Pisa, the carver has used under cut & shadow on the leaves to create a feeling of depth. Look closely at the 'eyes' of the leaves and how the dark shadow prevents any visual clues as to the true depth of the piece. The Undercutting too throws a deep shadow defining the leaf outlines lifting them from their background. The side view reveals the true depth, and just how little undercutting (follow arrows) is necessary for the illusion to be complete. It should also be noted that larger shadows are cast by object near to us, but we can barely perceive shadows cast from distant objects.



The height variation technique can be seen in this door panel below. Did you spot it? The carver has used height variation. By carving the mirror handle higher, undercutting to allow the tip to float in the air it appears much closer than the piece of cloth which has been carved so shallow (to the right) that the cloth is nothing more than a fine line in the wood. This makes this area faint to the eye, a little blurred from clear sight – a phenomenon associated with objects in the distance. For the same reason, carve detail into close objects rather than on distant ones. Their detail, being distant, is small and difficult to see.



## Sloping the horizon

The final technique I want to list is sloping to the horizon. The carving of the Cornish Engine House (shown below left) was an early one of mine inspired by cliff-top walks close to home. Many of the techniques outlined above are included: one-point perspective vanishing point on the horizon; foreshortening the chimney stack; overlapping the foreground fields in front of the engine house; undercutting the horizon, shoreline and windows; use of foreground and background and the final technique for sloping the ground away to the horizon. My mistake here was not to slope the sky down to the horizon. By leaving the sky flat the piece has an uneasy feel to it. Not even the brewing storm clouds can save the piece from the flat sky.

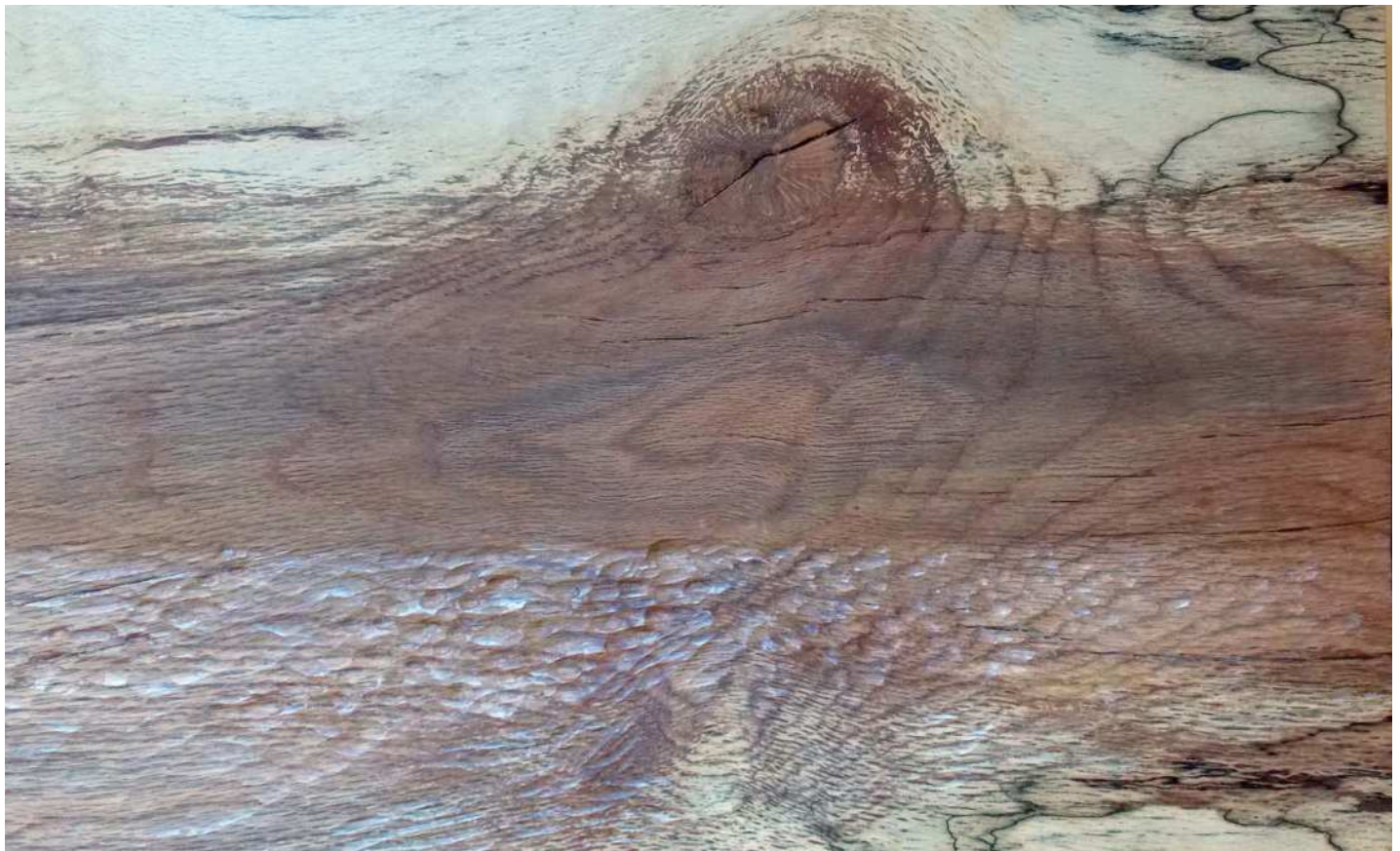
## My first relief carving

My very first relief carving – where did it fail? On none of these points I might add. I had religiously trace copied Dante Rossetti's masterpiece of *Proserpine*, 1874, model Jane Morris (copyright prevents reproduction) on to the wood and carved it in fine detail, for a first piece. When near completion I decided that more work was required on the face, to make

a more natural appearance. Using my knowledge of the structure of the face I set about the task. My downfall; every relief carving has a viewing point or angle, normally from the front. If you look from the side you see all the compromises a carver accepts to create the view from the front. Once I had made my adjustments, the view of the face from the side was fine, but all the rest failed. And from the front, all the carving worked except for the face. The moral here is only view the piece from the intended view point to appraise it. From any other angle it will rest uneasy on the eye. Some carvers go further, arguing that this is the key to success. Before attempting a relief carving, it is imperative to plan where it will be displayed, what light is present creating shadows and where it will be seen from.

Occasionally, the focus of the carving is on the light reflected, not the shadows. In this piece below, a simple celebration of the beauty of the wood, the piece is displayed with strong light angled across the face creating a shine in the heavily waxed lower portion.

Try for yourself at every opportunity you can. Examine the piece from the side and identify the compromise and, more important, how they were resolved. One day you might need these solutions too.



## Everyday examples

Finally let's take a close look at some of the best relief carving I've ever seen – money. Metal engravers are able to work to much finer tolerances than woodworkers. Here the entire carving is a fraction of 1mm in depth. Many techniques mentioned above are all present, most work but there are a few areas where they don't. For example, on the 10p coin, the lion's three feet on the ground are arranged with the front paw and the rear back paw on the same horizontal line, while the other back paw is very slightly raised (test it with a straight rule). Recall that items in the lower foreground appear closer than those higher. This is subtle but works effectively. Where the coin fails for me is that all four feet stand out as bold as each other. I would like to have seen the lion's two right side paws very slightly less prominent as the two left side paws are. Have fun with this exercise. ▶

# Facing the facts

Woodcarver and pastor Nate Elarton loves carving faces and fantasy figures. He shares his woodworking journey



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***‘Being in the shop surrounded by wood and good music motivates me’***

**T**ake a look at Nate Elarton’s carving gallery and you’ll see faces everywhere. Bold Native American braves, old men in hats and beards, mystical Green Men peeking out of greenery, and many more. ‘Carving realistic faces is my main interest,’ Nate says. ‘The greatest challenge is getting the depth and proportions of faces accurate. I use photographs as a reference when I carve. A great challenge I encounter is carving unique-looking faces that don’t resemble each other. I tend to carve faces I am comfortable with, but some of my greatest work has been when I have practised new techniques. I have been moving into carving full busts in the round. This is a whole new challenge and I am finding it fascinating.’

He adds: ‘I also enjoy carving Green Men,

because there is a large creative expression within the leaves and vines. I tend to freestyle carve those. I like to pick projects that challenge me and push my abilities further. One of the goals I have set for myself this year is to have a non-face project that I am always working on, so I continue to learn new genres of woodcarving.’

Nate has only been carving since 2007, when a friend he was visiting in Tennessee invited him to carve into cedar wood. ‘When I took a chisel and ran it up that piece of wood I was hooked,’ he says. ‘I loved his shop, the smell of the wood and the experience in its entirety. After my first experience carving wood I began to buy books and watch videos on woodcarving. My children were little, so I did not have much time in those first years to carve, but

I still loved everything about it and would spend time learning whenever I could.

‘The same wonderful friend who introduced me to woodcarving gave me lessons on faces and eyes while he was learning. We carved and learned together. He has since passed away, but I continue to use the techniques he taught me and hold the pieces we worked on together dear. As I have continued to learn through the years, I have had several lessons with the talented wood sculptor Alec LaCasse. I continue to learn and grow every chance I get.’

The first project Nate completed was a little face in the corner of some basswood. He says: ‘It was rough, but I still have it and hold it as a reminder of my humble beginnings. I thought my first carving was amazing, but now I look at it and chuckle.’





### Setting up shop

Nate's first workshop was in the basement of his home in Temperance, Michigan, US. 'I found that I didn't carve much there in those beginning years, but it was a good space for a season,' he says. 'When my children began to graduate and get married my carving increased, and I needed a workshop with more space. I moved from the basement into my detached garage outside of my house about five years ago.'

'My workshop was built to fit Model T cars so there are two doors that open to the outside and many original windows along with windows I have installed. Since moving into the garage, I have added insulation and heating for winter carving. I have a few tools to hold my projects in the

workshop: an easel that I made, mostly used for carving cottonwood bark, a gun-stock carver's vice, an Eli ball vice and another wooden homemade vice from a friend.'

'I received a wonderful gift of the John Burke sharpening system that sits on a workbench from my church for Pastor Appreciation Day. I have a small fridge out there also stocked with soda and water. The windows in my workshop allow for good natural light, I also have some LED shop lights and a light I can adjust around my work to see shadowing and such. I have no plans on moving anytime soon.'

For his carving Nate uses a range of chisels and knives, including brands such as Flexcut, Pfeil and some older tools he has acquired. 'Swiss-made Pfeils tend to

be my favourite. They hold an edge longer and are precise. The handles fit my hands well for secure gripping and they stay sharp longer while complementing my carving techniques. Keeping my knives razor-sharp is a skill in itself that I maintain consistently. Carving tools must be sharp to be safe and effective because they are the main tool that I use in my craft.'

When it comes to woods to work with he loves cottonwood bark best. 'It is a great medium to shape and form because it is soft wood, yet it holds perfectly.' Other woods he has enjoyed include butternut and driftwood. Nate adds: 'Basswood seems to be every carver's go-to wood but it isn't the prettiest. I am currently working on a medieval dragon in cherry and I'm also



starting to experiment with black walnut. I am completing a bust in butternut. I love the look but the grain is a little tricky.'

Another tricky thing is getting the finish right – 'it can ruin a beautiful piece if the wrong one is picked', he explains. 'I prefer a finish that is not shiny. The shine can take away from the shadowing, which has been given consideration while carving. When light hits a very glossy surface, the shadowing is altered, and it actually can change the look of the carving and the perspective.'

I do use a few different finishes and oils, but none of them are glossy. I like to use lacquer, boiled linseed oil, Howard Feed-N-Wax and Danish oil. Some cottonwood bark carvings

look better without any finish, as it can darken the carving.'

### **Carving a community**

Nate's day job is leading two churches he and his wife Wendy started, which have a combined attendance of around 1,000 people. 'Woodcarving has helped me pastor because it has disciplined me to slow down and create,' he says. 'The creativity that is sparked through woodcarving has helped me "create" and write sermons and teachings. I also need and appreciate the peace of God I sense when I carve alone. It gives me a special "refuelling" so I can continue to give to people, which is needed in my line of work. I feel refreshed when I spend time in my

workshop and after long days spent with many people, it is a place of solace.'

And he adds: 'A unique way that woodcarving has intertwined with my profession as a pastor is the small group that meets regularly with men from my church. Men who have joined have begun woodcarving as a hobby through this group and it has been enjoyable teaching those I pastor how to carve, and carving with them all is a great time. Woodcarving and pastoring both bring me peace and life. Preaching, teaching the *Bible*, helping people and woodcarving have all been gifts to my life and it is what I know I was created to do. I consider myself a very blessed man.'

A regular routine of making sure he spends time in his workshop five days a week keeps the inspiration flowing for Nate. 'The love of carving and being in the shop surrounded by wood and good music motivates me. Other artists inspire and motivate me as well. I love seeing other artists and how creative humanity can be. I find more inspiration by looking online, reading books, and magazines.'

He is currently working on a Mysterious Green Man project (pictured left), which may be his favourite carving so far. 'Carving the 31 leaves has been a mighty challenge. I feel that this piece shows the years of practice that have brought me to this piece.' But he tries not to play favourites: 'I tend to focus in on the project at hand. I try to never desert projects completely, even when I make mistakes, because I have learned that almost all mistakes can be corrected and often result in something better or unique.'

He also loves challenging himself to boost his skillset. 'The most challenging project I have worked on seemed to be the Native American Chief in cottonwood bark I did for our local art show in 2019,' he says. 'At that time, it was challenging and stretched my skills in a great way. I took my time, which is always my personal challenge, and really detailed the headdress, feathers and necklace. I felt like it pushed me forward and gave me another level of confidence. It took second place in the sculpting category to the Blue Ribbon, which was another one of my carvings.'

Once he has finished two green men carvings he is currently working on – one with eyes open, one with eyes closed – Nate plans to carve Gandalf, the wizard from JRR Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* novels, and a whimsical man carved from an upside-down cedar root. Going forward he hopes to continue learning and to pass on some of his knowledge in workshops.

'I have sold many carvings and enjoy the fact that others would pay and find happiness in my art,' Nate says. 'I would love to meet some of the incredible carvers that have encouraged me from books, videos, and online at national shows some day as well. Carving is something I see myself doing for the rest of my life.'

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**3YR**  
GUARANTEE

# Little owls in lockdown

Peter Benson shares his tips on carving from a photograph



**F**or all my life, since the age of 12 or thereabouts, I have been involved in woodcarving in one way or the other as a part-time activity. In the early days it was as something to do in what spare time I had. There was no television available, generally, until the very early fifties and, even then, the screens were minute and the programmes very limited and in black and white. For a small boy there were much better things to do than watching television. For me, nearly all the daylight hours were spent riding and tending to horses at the local riding school, and the evenings were taken up by my carving activities. I didn't have any kind of shed so my carving was mostly in my lap in the house or garden. My mum allowed chips on the carpet as long as I swept up every last bit when I finished. Needless to say, I spent a great deal of time on my hands and knees with a dustpan and brush.

I have managed to continue with my personal carving projects but have concentrated mostly on teaching others to carve since I retired from full-time school teaching 24 years ago. With all the necessary preparation, dreaming up new projects, and cutting out the required patterns etc. I haven't had as much time as I would like for my own work.

All this changed with lockdown. As I am now well into my eighties I am considered vulnerable and advised not to go out unless

absolutely necessary, staying in voluntary isolation. My classes at home ceased and the College and Arts Centre closed, so all my time was my own (except for all the 'honeydo' jobs around the house that have been waiting to be done for years).

As the days have been spent doing these jobs and my classroom and workshop turned into homes for all the tools and material necessary, work on my larger pieces is on hold and my carving has reverted to the type of work I did as a child. It is getting a little difficult these days to work on netsuke, as I find it necessary to use a magnifier in good light, so I have been working on the sort of things that I can do in the armchair or on my lap.

Like many other carvers, every now and again I see a picture or photograph of something that I really want to carve. This is not something I recommend as a general practice as, not only can it be very difficult to work from only one picture, but much of the joy of carving is the creative element and this generally comes from completing a piece of your own design.

But another such moment occurred in the early days of lockdown. My wife showed me the overall winning photograph in the Comedy Wildlife Photography Awards 2017 – I am sure many of you have seen it (picture on next page). I thought that it was absolutely asking to be carved as a miniature.

## Carving from a photograph

As I feel very strongly about reproducing the work of others, I set about tracking down the photographer and subsequently contacted him, explaining what I wanted to do and asking his permission to do so. I explained that I would not sell the finished piece and would give him full accreditation should it be featured in any publication or exhibition.

His name is Tibor Kercz and he lives in Hungary. He responded very promptly and was happy to give his consent, for that I thank him, and am keeping him in touch with progress. I will also show him a copy of this article before it is submitted.

I had a very nice 6in square and 2in thick block of lemonwood in my wood store just waiting to be turned into something special, so this dictated the size of the piece – ideal for carving indoors.

While I cannot show this as a step-by-step article for readers to reproduce I will cover some of the issues I came across during the carving process.

Fortunately, there are no foreshortening or perspective issues with this photograph as it is taken pretty well square on, so I was able to print it and cut an accurate outline on my block. I needed to make some very subtle alterations and additions to make it possible

to carve and mount on some sort of base.

Also, I didn't cut it out completely in order to avoid any likelihood of breakage in the early stages. While mistakes and accidents can always happen when tackling a carving there are many precautions the carver can take to minimise the danger. You just need to spend a little time trying to recognise where the possible dangers might be. In my case the free foot and the slim branch needed protecting, so plenty of wood was left for the foot and extra wood left supporting the branch as shown in the picture below.

When undertaking a carving like this you will need much more reference material than is contained in the original picture, so I collected as many pictures of little owls as I could find that showed all the different angles of the bird. Details of the way the birds sit and where they place their claws are obviously important. For example, when owls sit on flat ground they have three toes forward and one back. When perching, they generally have two forward and two back – their outer claw can be placed in either direction. I understand this sort of knowledge may be considered somewhat nerdy but I find it a fascinating part of the carving process and it can obviously make the difference between a carving looking right or wrong.



Subject picture



Research images

## Roughing out

Eventually these areas will have to be tackled but this can be left until much of the waste has been removed.

The early stages of the carving were really taken up by removing as much waste wood as I could while keeping the block as strong as possible. I was concentrating on locating each individual owl and getting the angles right in relation to the branch, adjusting both the owls and the branch until everything seemed to be in the right place. This involved looking at as many pictures as I could find of owls in roughly the same positions. I have seen so many carved birds in positions that birds would never get into, that could so easily be put right with a little observation. A few minutes' checking can make all the difference to a carving. It is very often almost impossible to reproduce a picture or photograph accurately in a carving and, in my opinion, it is better to adjust for a better finished result than to stick doggedly to the original. In the end, I suppose, it depends on what you require from your work.

Once I had got the basic shape of each owl I was able to remove the supporting section of wood from underneath the branch and start to carve the rest of the tree. At this stage I was mainly concerned with getting the shapes of everything right before adding any detail. Note the lump of wood left for the hanging owl's foot. This will be carved right at the end as it is the most vulnerable part of the whole carving and would be very difficult to correct if any of the toes got broken. Obviously more care will need to be taken from now on as the branch itself is more fragile, but most of the more vigorous carving has been done. Many carvers get very nervous when handling a delicate piece like this but really, the biggest risk is of crushing the piece in your hand, and as long as you are constantly aware of this you shouldn't have any trouble.

It is at this stage that I generally like to fit the eyes as they bring the whole thing to life and set the character.

Getting the eyes located can be a lengthy process and constant checking that they are in line and level is important. You may well have to draw them on several times before they look right. Owls cannot move their eyes in the sockets and, when hunting, keep them level with the ground. Your carving will not look right if you have the eyes sloping, even though there are occasions when this might happen in



Rough out showing wood left for safety



Safety area removed as carving progressed

real life. Once you are happy with the positioning you can decide exactly what you want to do.

- 1 You can carve the eyes and leave them as they are
- 2 You can carve them and then paint them – putting a drop of clear nail varnish on the painted surface can give a very realistic effect.
- 3 You can make eyes from horn, clear acrylic or amber, inlaying or painting a black pupil.
- 4 You can insert a glass eye of the required colour and size. The problem with this is that seldom are eyes circular and eyelids have to be made with modelling putty to get the right shape. This is fine if you intend to paint the carving.

The eyes on owls are, fortunately, round, but in this case, only 3-4mm in diameter. I spent hours trying to make suitable eyes using all the first three methods. I carved the eyes first to be sure of the location and tried painting them – unsuccessfully – and then spent hours trying to make suitable eyes using all the first three methods. After losing a few on the carpet and even then not getting them to fit right, I gave up and trawled the internet, eventually finding someone who could supply 4mm clear glass eyes. Ten of these for under £5 seemed a good deal so I ordered them, painted the back of each one yellow and, I think, they look fine.

If you are using glass eyes, the larger ones come in pairs on a thin wire. With the very small ones that I used they have a short length of wire on them that allows you to hold them safely while fitting.



Carving continues with eyes carved but free foot still left for safety

## Finishing touches



Eyes ready to fit

I made a hole with a very small gouge and carefully adjusted this until I got a snug fit, offering up the eye back to front while holding the wire.

Each was carefully fitted in place, initially with Blu Tack, until I was happy with the result and then finally removed and refixed with a setting modelling clay – epoxy glue would do equally well.

The rest of the process has been fairly painless. The finishing and final detail work has been slow as, once the 'escape routes' had been removed, I had to be very careful not to break off the more vulnerable parts. Tools have to be ultra-sharp and you need to support the wood as much as possible when cutting.

The biggest problem when carving in your hand, especially if you wear safety gloves, is that the wood gets very dirty either with grease from your hands or dirt from the glove. It is possible to wash the finished carving with warm soapy water or to wipe it over with white spirit or methylated spirit. Don't be tempted to put on any finish until it is clean as it will never look right.

Having thoroughly enjoyed doing this little carving, I decided to do a larger, single little owl in lime as a step-by-step project and hope to show this in the next issue. I think they are fascinating little birds with real attitude and it is quite a challenge to show this in a carving. ▶



Eyes fitted with Blu Tack only until very end



Reverse of the finished owls

# Flight of the bat

Alan Denham lets his imagination take flight with this quirky mirror celebrating the winged nocturnal creature

I like doing mirror frames. They require a certain amount of planning, but can be very rewarding – not least because you can get away with only carving half of something – the other half is in the mirror. They are also functional, as well as artistic and fun.

But all that planning...

I am offering several variations on a basic theme – a bat in flight. Let's look at that first, and decide which variation you prefer. Pictures 1 & 2 show the Basic Bat. It is not entirely biologically accurate, it has been drawn to give an impression of 'bat' and to fit inside a suitable frame for carving. To me, that has generally meant a circle, giving a first impression of a bat caught flying across the face of the full moon. It also means cutting in relief, so certain distortions are necessary – but because it is a functional mirror, it will normally only be looked at from approximately 'straight on', and the key factor in relief work is what the eye of the observer will accept.

That imposes some restrictions, but also allows some deviation from precise anatomical accuracy.

So there are three major variations on this theme, each with sub-variations – take your pick. The first is the Basic Bat, as picture 1 or picture 2. They are virtually the same, except that Picture 1 has a thin circular frame, Picture 2 a much broader frame.

Which of these you prefer depends largely on what sort of wood you are working with. Picture 2 uses the grain of the wood (a stained and wormy piece of steamed pear) to hint at clouds around the moon, and the bat has been moved back to the left slightly to expose more of the (rather small) mirror, and give extra strength to the bat. This version has the grain running horizontally – for other versions I advise running it vertically, mostly for reasons of strength at various attachment points.

The second version is the same (picture 3), but with the addition of the bat's breakfast. Again, two variations – the moth can be made separately and attached, or it can be carved from a single piece – I will provide a sketch of the profile for the blank later. (Sketch 4)

The third version goes in a rectangular frame (picture 4), suggesting the bat is flying past a window in a brick wall.

Your choice – there are good and bad things about all versions.

Once you have chosen which frame you prefer, you must also decide the scale to use. Versions shown in pictures 3 & 4 were cut to take a 25cm-diameter mirror in 4mm glass, because I had some available (and much of this was prepared during lockdown), but the project works well down to a 15cm diameter mirror (e.g. the version shown in picture 1). Please note that below about 18cm it needs thinner mirror, which is sometimes difficult to obtain. And while talking about sizes, anything larger than the 25cm that I have used can create problems with the wood warping in a centrally-heated house. Beware.

1



2



3



4



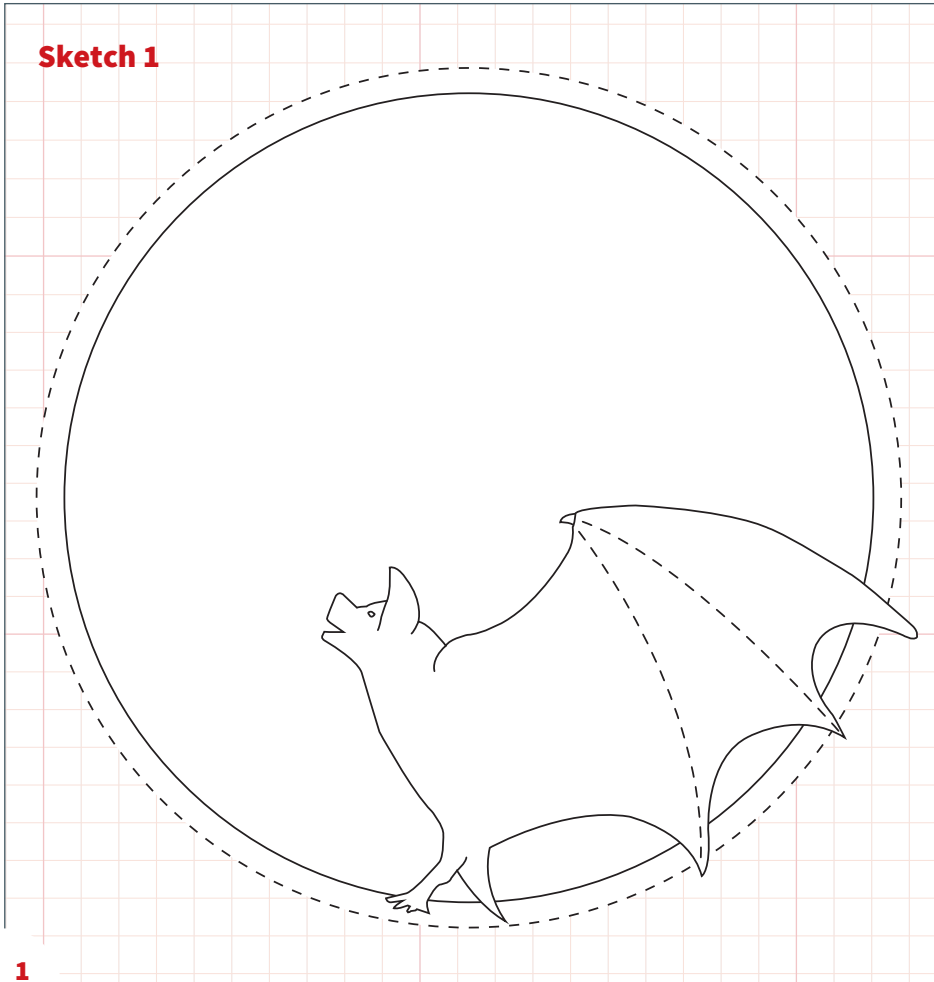
## Things you will need

### Materials:

- A wood blank, main dimensions to suit your preferred outline, 2-4cm thick – preferably between 2.5cm and 3cm
- Circular mirror. Dimensions can be scaled to suit, but if less than approx 18cm diameter, then thinner than 4mm is advisable. See text

### Tools:

- A lathe of sufficient capacity, or router with circle-cutting guide
- Bandsaw and scrollsaw – not essential, but saves a lot of hand work

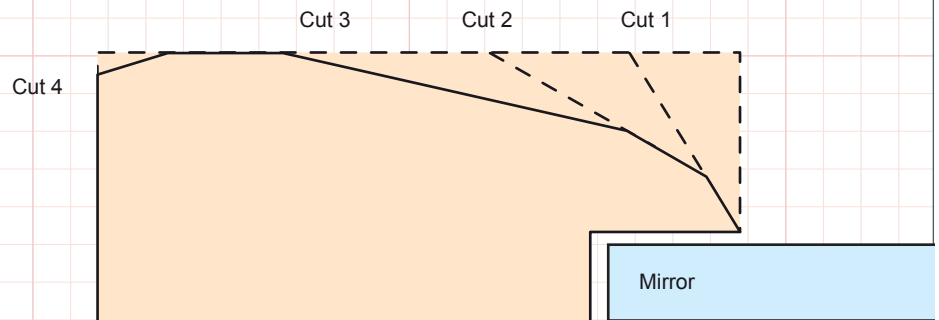
**Sketch 1****1**

**1** Once you have chosen your version and obtained suitable wood and mirror, the first job is to prepare your blank. In all cases, you will need a carefully cut outline (for the round ones this can be done on the lathe, or using a router with a good circle-cutting guide) and a recess to hold the mirror. This recess can also be done with lathe or router, but if working on the lathe make sure the bottom of the recess is flat – the whole of the bat's body needs to press lightly against the glass (no bulges, no gaps – they would show). The width of wood needed to form a frame around the mirror is governed by necessary strength as well as appearance. For a 25cm-diameter mirror I advise 3.5-4cm all round, so you would need approximately a 32cm-diameter blank. Picture 1 was cut rather narrow artistically, picture 2 much broader, but that was a special case.

Leave some extra space in that recess to allow for shrinkage with central heating – depending on the wood you use, that could be up to 2%. For a 25cm mirror, leave 1mm all round, maybe a little more.

Prepare a paper template from sketch 1 and glue it or trace from it into the recess. Note that at this point you are working from the back – so which way is the bat facing in the final version?

**2** Cut it out, ideally with a scrollsaw, but it can be done with a coping saw provided you have sufficient depth to the saw frame.

**2****Sketch 2****3****4****5**

**3** One problem to be aware of is the foot position. If you are doing Bat in Front of the Moon then you do not want the rim of the frame to reflect in the mirror – curve it down to the profile shown in sketch 2. Mark a line for cut 1, and cut it with a steeply curved gouge (No.7 or No.9) to minimise the risk of splitting. Make cut 2 similarly, with a broader gouge, and cut 3 with the shallowest that will fit – a No.3 or No.5. Smooth off, initially with coarse sandpaper.

**4 & 5** Then the bat's foot rests close to the mirror, largely inside the frame.

**6** If you are doing Bat Crossing a Window, the inner edge of the frame is square (brickwork). It will reflect, so the foot cannot rest in that position, it would look as if the bat was actually within the opening, not crossing in front of it, so the foot must be as shown in picture 6 – it will be easier for the eye to accept. This requires some cutting back of the brickwork to provide for the foot to sit on top of it. A longer leg also helps.

### Basic science of mirrors:

The image is as far behind the mirror as the object is in front of it. And the reflective part is the back of the glass. What this means is that if you are using standard 4mm mirror, then even an object pressed against the glass (such as the bat's body) will have its 'other half' 8mm away. Sometimes (e.g. the trees in my *Oriental Mirror*, *Woodcarving* 174, May/June 2020) that can be useful, but for this bat, it is a bit of a problem. If you can get thinner mirror, do so. If you are cutting a frame for a mirror 15-20cm diameter or less, thinner mirror is essential.

### Carving the bat

**7 & 8** Measurements given are for the latest versions I have cut, which were on 25cm-diameter mirrors. If you are working with a different size, adapt the thickness measurements accordingly.

First, the head. The ear needs to be quite large, and the high point (about halfway down the leading edge) stands up from the glass by about half the distance from shoulder to nose. With a 25cm mirror, I have a bat 17cm from wing tip to nose tip, and the thickest point is about 1.5cm from the glass – all very approximate, because the right answer isn't in mm, it is in 'What the eye will accept'. The thickest point on the head, just in front of the ear, is about 3mm lower, running down to a lower jaw that is pretty well as thin as you dare make it – the thickness of the glass will give a wider final appearance than is anatomically accurate anyway.

Shape the ear from the front of the carving (pictures 7 and 8 – note the wedge of softwood behind the bat head, because this needs support, it is not resting on my carving table because of the mirror recess). Then turn it over and shape the back (mirror side). Leave some space between the ears, angle the front outwards slightly, and hollow the front of the ear, leaving a large lump in the middle (it is called a tragus, and is an important component of the bat's echolocation ability). Depending what wood you are using, a very small (dental?) burr in a mini-drill is probably the best way of doing this.



6

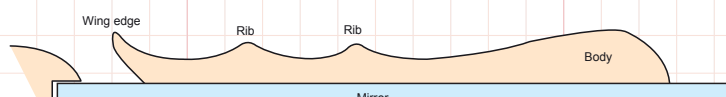
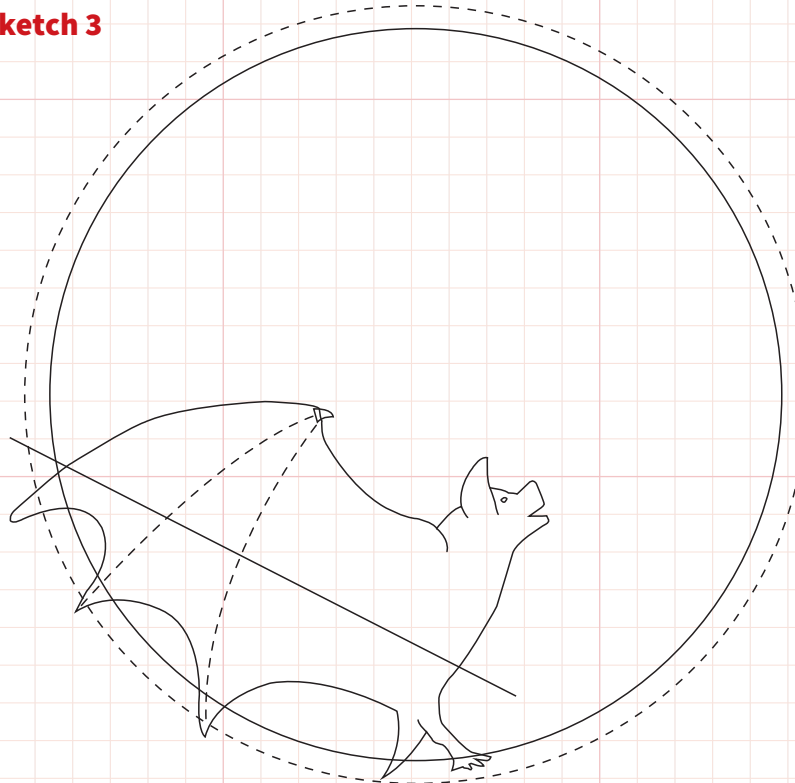


7



8

### Sketch 3



**9** Carve the ribs on the wings – they are actually finger bones, but don't try for too much detail. The base of the claw and tips of the wing bones need to be the full thickness of your wood, their mid-points need to be cut down by about 3-4mm – points A, B and C on picture 9. The wing membrane in between is deeper again by about the same amount at the deepest point. The trailing edges of the wing membranes start from near the bone tips, but are also curved down towards the mirror. Carve away in gentle curves to give the impression of a taut membrane, the outer panel first, then the middle. Start on the inner panel to get the rib to look right, but deal with the body, shoulder and leg before trying to finish it.



9

Those are your next problem. The position of the foot helps define the position of the leg, but don't allow the lower body to become too wide – on the Brickwork version, this will not be easy. A bat body 6cm long (the scale of my original) should ideally be less than 1cm thick from the glass (nearly 3cm in appearance) (sketch 3). The Window version needs a slightly longer leg than the Moon version. Referring back to pictures 4, 5 and 6 will help.

With the lower body defined, move to the neck and shoulder – keep the neck fairly thin, and note that the shape shown for the shoulder is largely symbolic.

**10 & 11** Shape the front of the body. Your saw cuts would have been perpendicular



10

to the mirror, but as you carve the body to shape there should be no perpendicular parts remaining – the body needs to be well rounded. The same applies to the back of the neck. Round it and start to cut the shoulder and back of the wing. You do not need to cut the back of the wing very far down – only the top 2cm or so will be visible in the mirror, and the same applies to the back of the body, behind the shoulder (picture 11) – in reality, the wing bones just disappear into a furry body.

**12** Blend in the top of the leg, working from the front of the bat – the back of the leg gets a little complicated. An actual bat has a small tail, with a membrane stretching down to both legs. It is used to control flight, and to catch small insects for lunch. Duplicating that on a carving is difficult. The tail needs to be pressed up against the glass, the membrane stretches to the back of the leg. Cut it as thin as you dare, and open a small gap between the membrane and the frame – giving the light a little space to spread itself around greatly improves the overall appearance.

**13** Once you have the shoulder and leg sorted, finish the large wing panel. A steep scoop under the bone of the leading edge (maybe a No.7 gouge) gives a good 'look' to the wing, the rest of it is very gently curved to meet the fixed points you now have around the edges.



11



12

**14** Turn the carving over and work from the mirror side. The back of the wing will only ever be seen in the mirror, and looking 'straight on' into the mirror, the viewer will only see a little of it – so there is no need to carve the whole wing down to a realistic thickness (not just paper-thin... remember that extra-thin 'onion-skin' paper that Bibles used to be printed on?). Refer back to picture 11. The leading edge has a bone, so it needn't be paper-thin, and you will need enough thickness to carve the joint with the claw. Away from that edge, round it off, but don't try to make it too thin – it won't be visible. The trailing edge is harder for the ordinary viewer to see, but this does need to be thin. Ideally, carve down to a knife edge, but be aware of the need for strength – if it is 1mm thick at the edge it will still look right. Maybe even if it is 2mm... but it mustn't be 3mm. Away from the very edge it can thicken quickly, for strength, and near the ribs leave as much as you can – these are the support points for the bat, and strength is needed, so long as it doesn't show too much. See picture 14. Note that I also need to scrape or sandpaper away the residue of the paper template. Once that is done, all that remains is an awful lot of sanding, working your way down the grades until it is ready for finishing.



13



14

## The frame(s)

**15 & 16** If you are working Bat Only then the curved surface shown in sketch 2 is all that is required. Getting the curve right where the wing points lie on top of the curve might be a bit demanding (picture 16), but meeting the challenge is what carving is all about.

If you intend to add a moth later, maybe in a contrasting wood, then make it from the instructions below, and attach when ready. If you want a moth carved from a single piece, actually part of the frame, then you need to make the blank carefully right from the start – see sketch 4.

## The moth

Cut circle with a bandsaw, leaving bulge attached, or rough out on a bandsaw, then use a router or lathe. Cut mirror recess, but cut the outer circle to approximately 2cm depth, leaving the bulge forward of this thickness. On the front, draw bat and moth, then with accurate depth control, drill marker holes and gouge away to constant thickness. Then carve bat and moth, and remove waste around moth.



**17**

**17** You now have the bulge on the rim for the moth, but the rim is too thick everywhere else. Drill lots of holes of consistent depth – ideally in a drill press with a good depth guide. With a suitable gouge (and I won't say exactly what that is, because it depends on what sort of wood you are using) cut down to the depth of the holes, and round over as in sketch 2. Cut round the outline of the moth with a V-tool, in stages down to the depth of the curved surface of the frame. Cut the visible surface of the wings, which lie almost (but not quite) flat, and undercut them slightly round the edges, meeting the slightly curved surface of the main frame. The front pair of wings lie slightly on top of the rear pair, and all grow from the thorax. With a sharp knife, define the head, thorax, and abdomen. Sand and polish along with everything else.

And finally, if you want to do the Brickwork version, then planning gets complicated. First, a suitable size – I worked (approximately) to the Golden Ratio, 1.618:1, so my piece came out to 31cm x 49.5cm.

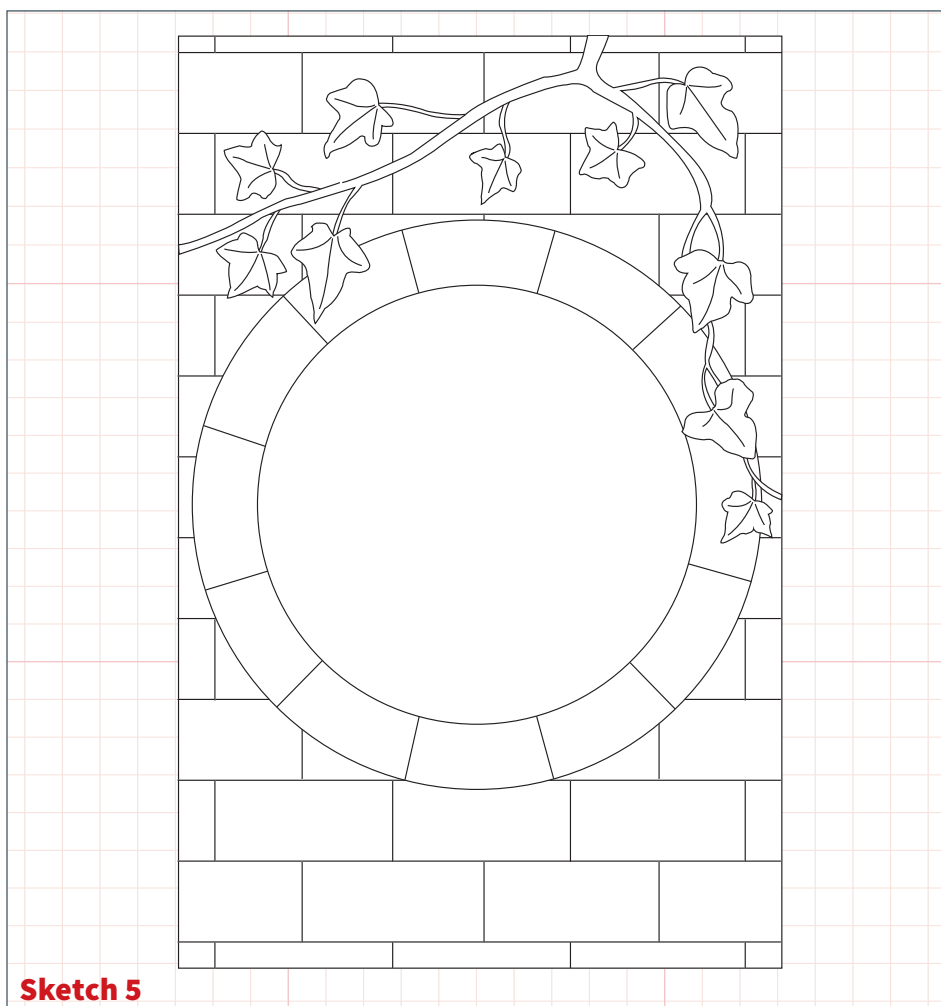
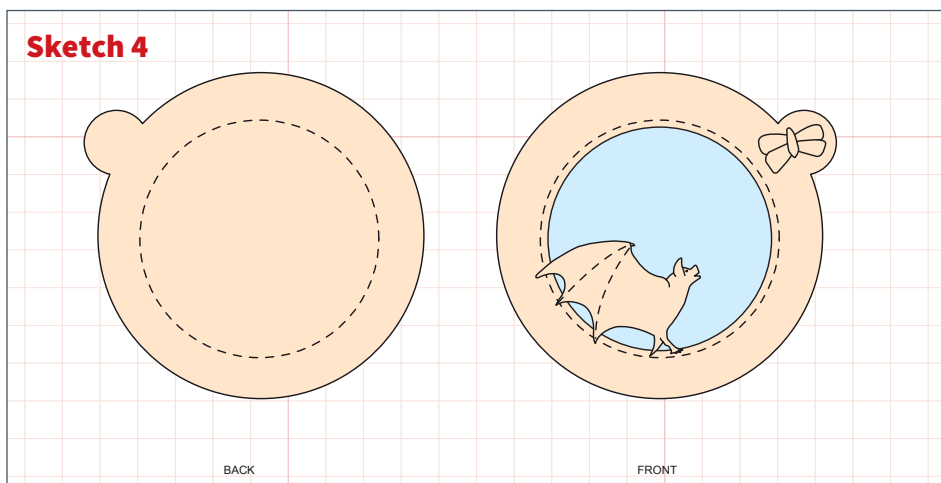


**15**



**16**

## Sketch 4



## Sketch 5



18



19



20

If you want to tweak my design, fair enough – but read the design points below, and draw your design out in full before setting tool to wood.

### Sketch 5

A circular window in brickwork will normally have a set of bricks around it. The problem is to define a brick size that will look right – and then to design a pattern that won't look glaringly wrong. I find it best to have a course of bricks rather than a mortar line running across the centre, and a run of mortar close to, but not exactly at, the top and bottom of the frame. So take 1cm off top and bottom, and divide the rest of the frame by an odd number of courses of brickwork – I had 11. Put a vertical mortar line in the centre of one of the courses and break up the course, making the height:width ratio acceptable. On a real brick that is about 1:3, but 1:2 will look okay – or anything in between. The height must approximately match the size of bricks around the circle, and that is defined by how many you fit into the circle. I fitted 12 bricks ( $360 \div 12$  gives  $30^\circ$  each) and the main ones were roughly 9cm wide by 4cm high. Adding leaves adds interest, but don't overdo it unless you have a lot of depth to play with. I chose ivy leaves because they are appropriate, and have an interesting shape. Note that I did this on a piece of 18mm mahogany (payment in kind from a previous job) and it was only just thick enough. 22-25 mm would be easier for all aspects except the leg, described elsewhere. When carving the ivy and the bricks, remember that the key is 'what the eye will accept'. There is no need to cut all the bricks back to allow for a 2 or 3 mm-thick ivy leaf or stem – but if you do cut a 2mm-thick leaf, then the slope running down to it needs to be at least 30-40mm wide, preferably more, so it doesn't look cut in.

**18** The points on the trailing edge of the wing stand 2mm proud of the brickwork, so the cut-down to them needs to be 30-40mm wide for it to not be glaringly obvious.

**19 & 20** Similarly round the ivy leaves – cut around them with a V-tool or make stop cuts with a knife, then fade the background in behind them. Note this is the same leaf – the pencil marks on picture 19 have become joints in the brickwork in picture 20. ▶



**The finished Bat on Brickwork**

# Stropping – is it cheating?

## What is stropping?

Generally it's taken to mean polishing an edge, but it's not really that clear cut. In truth it's very hard to define the point that an abrasive grit turns into a polishing grit – they all abrade metal to some extent. High-end bench stones can have a finer grit than some polishing compounds. So, for the purpose of this article, I will define stropping as a paste or compound applied to a separate backing, usually flexible, with buffing being the power tool equivalent. It is important to remember that a compound that has a heavy cut will remove metal quite effectively but dimensional accuracy is lost. A compound with a light cut will polish the steel and be used for finishing.

## Nic Westermann explains the pitfalls and best practice for stropping

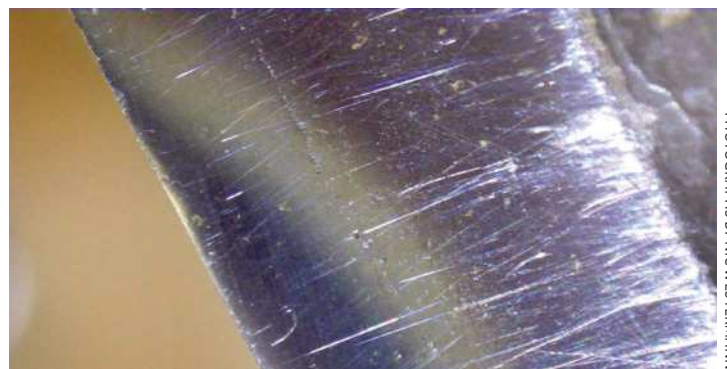
**W**e've all done it, realised a tool is blunt and given it a quick strop to bring back the edge – often this will be using a mop on bench grinder. The edge is restored in seconds and, feeling relieved, we carry on carving. However, the edge, although sharp, has less bite this time and loses its edge even quicker, and each time you repeat the process it gets slightly worse.

So, what's going wrong? Well, first we need to look at how a blade is normally sharpened and how stropping differs.

The bevels that form an edge, as I have said over many, many articles, should be cut to shape with abrasives. A quick and accurate cut means the form you require is maintained. It is just a question of working down through the grits to remove scratches, yet still keeping the same edge geometry.

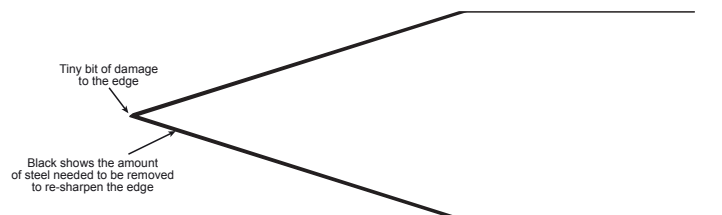
As your grits get finer the amount of metal you can remove get progressively less, but as you are just removing metal to the depth of the previous grit's scratches it isn't really an issue. It is quite common to finish off a blade with a strop – this, if done carefully, will give a high degree of polish without affecting the edge geometry.

The problems occur when you try to resharpen a blade just by stropping. If there is any appreciable degree of edge damage, then it will not be possible to remove the metal needed and maintain the form.

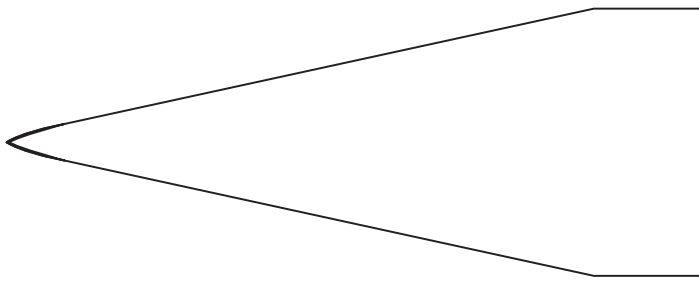


PHOTOGRAPHS BY NIC WESTERMANN

The flat bevel of a sloyd knife, showing minor edge damage and a micro bevel that has also been formed by stropping. Note that the savage scratches are caused by inadvertently using a strop that had a few grains of coarse grit trapped in it.



Damaged blades and the amount of steel needed to be removed to accurately resharpen them. So, the reality is that to resharpen a blade just by stropping we are likely to be subtly altering the form



Micro bevel

It's not always a big issue, but each time you strop the micro bevel will grow. There are ways to limit this, by varying the hardness of the material that the polishing compound is applied to. The harder it is the less rounding there will be, but also it will be more difficult to remove enough metal to actually sharpen the

edge. Applying compound to a very hard backing such as MDF is a bit difficult as the compound has to sit on the MDF, not in it as it would in the grain of leather or suede, but it can work very well and is often used for sharpening gouges as a groove can be cut with the gouge meaning it will fit perfectly.

MDF with compound applied can also

be used for straight blades. However, in reality this is only really useful as part of the overall sharpening process, not touching up blunted blades. Leather or suede with compound attached are much more useful, however often stropping set-ups are too soft and the rounding effect on the edge is too much as a consequence.

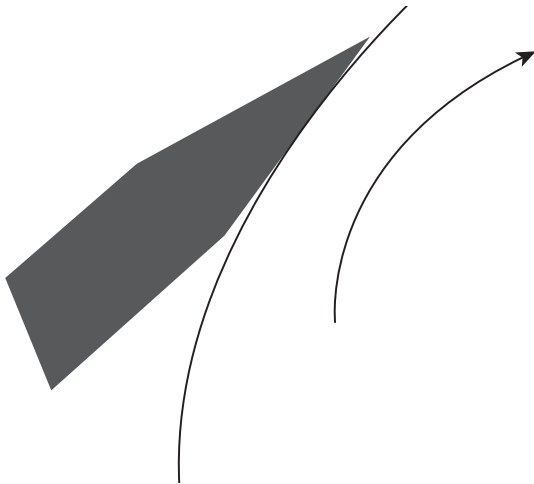


MDF strop for a gouge. The white compound has been quickly blackened by the metal it has removed

### Power stropping or buffing

In theory, using a wheel to polish an edge should make it easier to keep the bevel form, as it should actually hollow rather than round. In practice though, it's not that simple – it is very easy to apply enough pressure to deform the wheel so it rounds the edge, however it is possible

to use different hardnesses of wheel to mitigate this to some extent. Stitched cotton mops are much too soft, but felt wheels, although expensive, are much better, they are also available in different hardnesses. I have found harder felts perform better on edges.

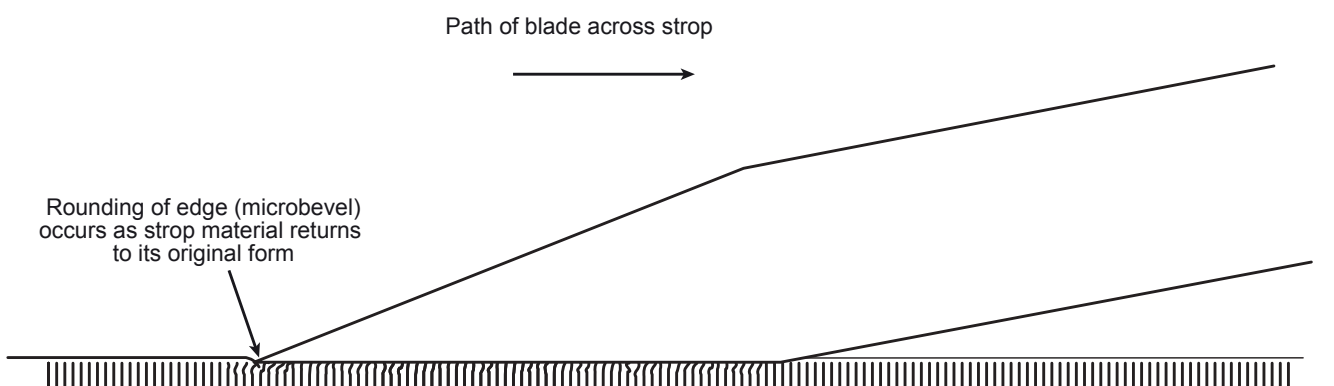


Buffing on a wheel. Note you must always have the wheel turning away from the edge. In theory the wheel should just polish a small section of your bevel, in practice it will deform enough to polish the whole width of it



Buffing the outer bevel on a gouge. This is slightly convex so a larger wheel is used. With pressure this will deform slightly to follow the bevel

### How stropping produces a micro bevel



Tools which have a flat bevel are most sensitive to being over stropped – a knife which relies on bevel support to guide the cut it makes will not function well with a micro bevel. A harder strop will limit this rounding action, but will also make it more difficult to fix any edge damage.

Conversely, a tool with a curved bevel such as a tracery chisel will not be affected as much by micro bevel, and a strop that is slightly softer and will deflect to follow the form of the bevel will be more effective. Trying to use a very hard strop will not be easy.

One way to vary the hardness of a strop is to use different thicknesses of suede or leather. If this is relatively soft then a thicker cross section will deflect more, a very thin section can obviously not deflect as much.

However, if you try pressing a fingernail into leather it will always mark – it is intrinsically quite soft and only a tiny amount of deflection will round a bevel. I have been experimenting with hardening leather and the results have been very good. It is possible to get suede to be almost as hard as MDF, yet as the grain is still present compound can be retained much better so the cut is increased.

Something I struggle with in my workshop is contamination. If a single piece of coarser dust or grit drops on the strop, it can get embedded in the suede and leave a terrible scratch every pass you make, ruining an otherwise perfectly polished bevel. On a similar note, regular cleaning of a strop, even if you are using it in a sterile environment, is important. If you are using a white compound

you will easily see it turning black as the metal is cut from the bevel. Over time you will end up with a compound that is glazed, it will be black and shiny and isn't cutting well, this needs to be scraped away and new compound applied. A freshly applied compound will have noticeable drag as it cuts and will even, if you listen very carefully, make a slight hissing noise. It is possible to just add another layer of compound but you end up, as with MDF, the compound sitting on the surface rather than in it. Building up layers of compound is not good, and you will often find the glazed surface mixed with new compound will make your blade grab and the skate. As I started by saying, to some extent all stropping is cheating so it is best not to compound your error.



Cleaning a glazed strop. I use an old knife, but a paint scraper is also very effective

## How to strop effectively

- Finish your edges with conventional abrasives so you have to do the bare minimum with the strop. Don't expect to remove leftover scratches or repair edge damage with a strop.
- Keep your strop clean – don't let it get contaminated with other grits, and remove and reapply compound frequently.
- Try to match the flatness of your backing to the edge you are stropping – a flat bevel needs harder, a curved bevel needs a softer backing that will deflect around it.
- Don't use excess pressure as this will deform the backing and round the bevel.
- Concentrate on keeping the bevel located and flat on the strop or mop.
- Work away from the edge not into it, getting this wrong is very dangerous on buffers.
- Be realistic, stropping will give limited returns – at a certain point you need to cut the edge true again before stropping. ▶



A range of polishing wheels, strops, compounds and pastes. Compounds are a bit less messy to use, especially when buffing



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

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# Art Nouveau walnut panel

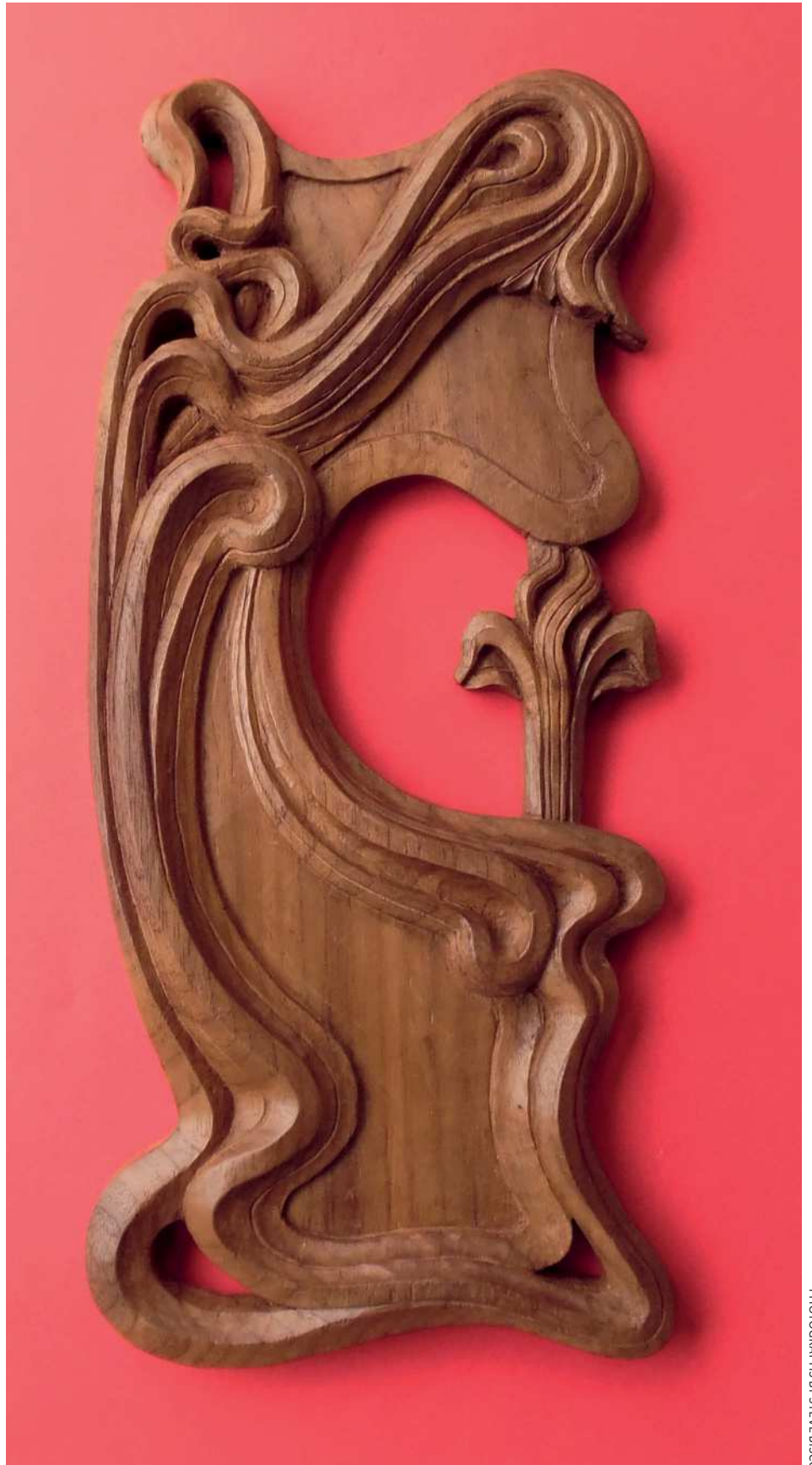
Steve Bisco carves a design in the style of Belgian architect Victor Horta

Some wag once said that a book titled *Famous Belgians* would be very short, but the truth is this small country has produced many outstanding luminaries in the arts and sciences. One such example is architect and designer Victor Horta (1861-1947), who was one of the leading exponents of the Art Nouveau style that dominated architecture and design from the 1890s to the First World War.

The keynote of Horta's style was an organic fluidity of line that could give a rigid material the abstract flowing curves of liquid treacle. He made wood, wrought iron, and even stone twist and contort like a living plant, and incorporated these forms into columns, capitals, stair rails, balconies and furniture. His wooden banister rails, with their elbow bends and hollow whiplash loops, were his artistic signature, and it is these in particular that inspired this pierced panel. I have taken several typical Horta features from his own home in Brussels and combined them into a panel that encapsulates the essential features of Art Nouveau in general and Horta in particular.

In Art Nouveau, the decorative properties of the material were central to the design, and woodcarvings and furniture usually used a wood that was rich and dark, such as mahogany and walnut. It happened that I had a suitable piece of American walnut (*Juglans nigra*) that had been kicking around in my shed for several years waiting for the right project to come along, and its dark lustre was ideal for this job.

When you are working in the Art Nouveau style for the first time it can be difficult to visualise the individual elements of the carving and how they relate to each other. Their shape does not correspond to objects you will have seen in the real world, so you quite literally have to 'go with the flow' and follow the curves wherever they take you. Once you get the feel of it you will become quite absorbed in the process.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVE BISCO

**AMERICAN WALNUT**

American walnut (*Juglans nigra*), also called American black walnut, is native to the US and Canada but is readily available from hardwood suppliers in the UK. The timber is generally a dark chocolate-brown colour with a fairly straight grain. It has the hardness of oak and mahogany, but it turns and carves well and is used extensively in furniture and cabinetmaking. It is also a popular wood for gun stocks, luxury car interiors and veneers. It polishes to a high finish and develops a lustrous patina over time. A fuller description can be found in Terry Porter's *Wood – Identification and Use*, published by GMC Publications.

**Things you will need****Materials:**

- American walnut (*Juglans nigra*)  
430 x 190 x 30mm
- Antiquax Brown wax polish

**Tools:****Gouges:**

- No.3, 10mm
- No.3 fishtail, 18mm, 10mm
- No.5, 13mm curved
- No.7, 10mm
- No.8, 8mm
- No.9, 20mm, 16mm curved
- V-tool, 6mm straight, 2mm straight

**Chisels:**

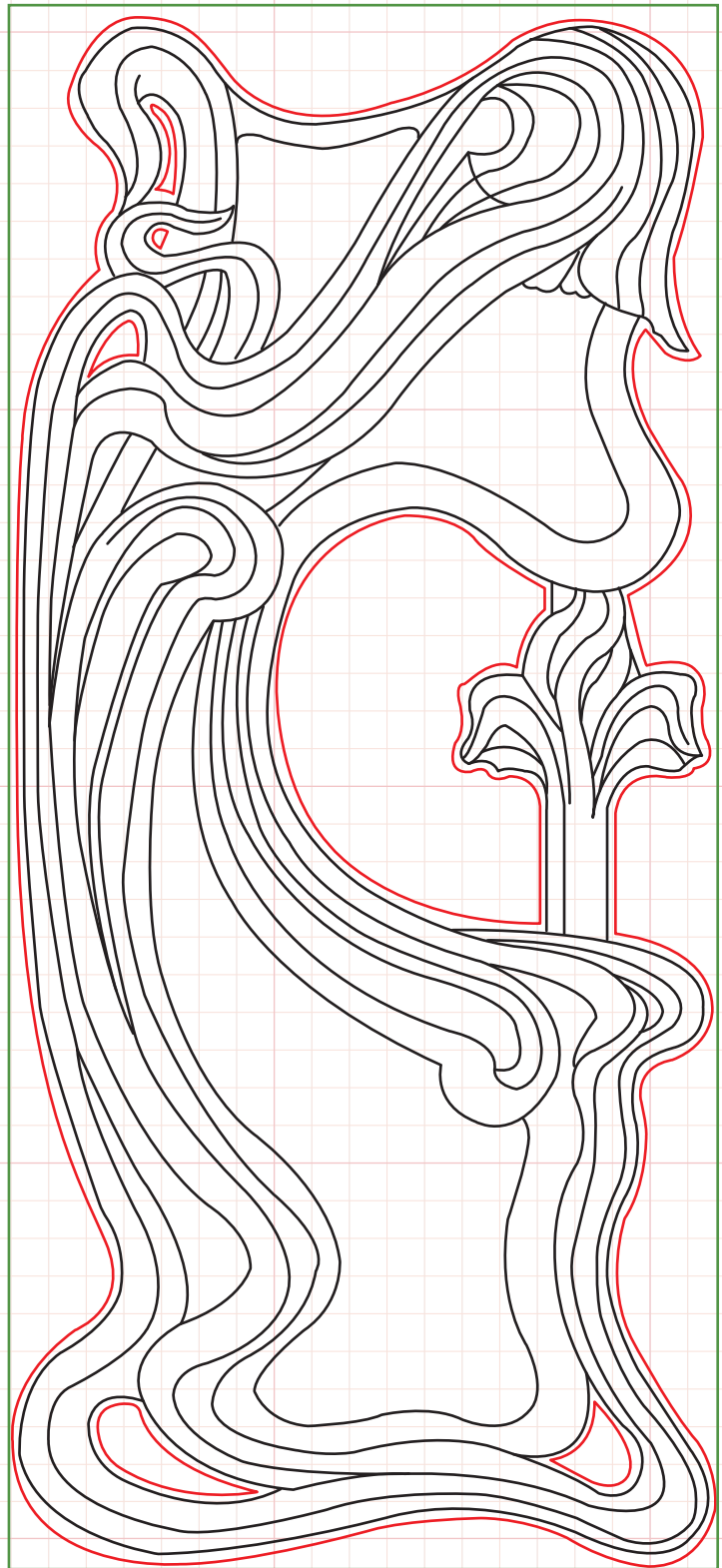
- Flat chisel – 20mm, 6.5mm, 3mm
- Skew chisel – 10mm
- Hooked skew chisel – 16mm

**Other:**

- Jigsaw, bandsaw, padsaw

**VICTOR HORTA**

Belgian architect Victor Horta (1861-1947) was one of the pioneers of the Art Nouveau style and was greatly influential in introducing the style to the wider world. He is credited with designing the first Art Nouveau house, in Brussels in 1893. He used wood, wrought iron and stone to create structural and decorative features in fluid, stylised organic forms that resembled twisted vines and contorted roots in a way never done before. His houses were illuminated with coloured Tiffany glass in fantastic roof lights, conservatories, and glazed doors. He did not allow his imagination to be constrained by the materials, and he had iron, glass, wood and stone formed into any shape that his mind could conjure up. His former home at 25 Rue Americaine, Saint-Gilles, Brussels, Belgium, is now open to the public as the Horta Museum (Musée Horta/Hortamuseum) – <http://www.hortamuseum.be/>



## PREPARATIONS

**1** Get a piece of American walnut (*Juglans nigra*) 430 x 190 x 30mm and make a full-size copy of the drawing. Trace the pattern on to the wood with carbon paper, taking care to display the grain and figure of the wood to the best advantage in relation to the pattern. Mark your cutting lines in red. Also trace the pattern on to transparency film to help you redraw it as you carve down.

**2** Cut out the internal voids with a jigsaw, using a narrow blade for the tight turns. The blade may flex a little in the 30mm thickness of the board, so make allowance for this. The blade may also overheat and snap in the hard wood, so have a spare or two.

**3** Cut round the outer edges using a bandsaw if you have one to avoid the flexing problem, or continue with the jigsaw if you don't.

**4** Set up the work on your bench, using wooden strips to hold it still. If you don't have a bench you can easily walk around, set up the work on a backing board and use quick-release clamps to turn it around on the bench. Approaching a cut from the right angle makes carving much easier and gives a better result.

## ROUGHING OUT

**5** Use a V-tool to separate the principal elements and the main groups of stems. This makes it much easier to visualise the pattern. It also creates a 'stop line' that reduces the risk of splinters running across the pattern as you carve down.

**6** Reduce the level of the three 'background panels' to about 15mm below the surface at this stage. Go carefully to get a feel for the brittleness of the wood and the rise and fall in the horizontal grain direction. It is best to cut across the grain with a deep gouge near the ends to stop the excavated material running off into the higher parts of the pattern.

**7** Rough out the tree-like element to the right of centre. Its ends must come down to the level of the background panels (about 15mm) but leave the upper 'branches' a bit thicker.

**8** Rough out the flow of the curves in the top left of the carving to fit in with the lower background areas and the upper details. Don't remove any wood you may need later.

### TOP TIP

To get an even depth to the background areas, make a simple depth gauge by inserting a screw through a flat piece of wood so the tip protrudes 15mm. Place the wood flat on the upper surface of the panel and slide the screw around over the background area. The screw will make scratches on the parts of the surface that are not yet down to 15mm. Continue shaving and checking until the gauge no longer leaves any scratch marks.



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**9****10**

**9** Rough out the flow of the main stems and corners down the left side of the carving and across the bottom. They should be at a slightly lower level than the main features.

**10** Repeat this process on the right-hand side. Note how the outer stem turns inward along the edge of the central void and descends to the 15mm line of the background area above the void.

**11** Rough out the form of the main stems across the middle of the carving. On the right-hand end the curl is at the full thickness of the board, but it descends towards the curl of the left-hand stems.

**11****12**

**12** Now rough out the main stems on the left side of the carving, which use the full thickness of the board. This takes a bit of working out as the stems flow into one another and twist and turn as they go, so proceed cautiously and make sure you leave enough wood in the right places to form the details later.

**13** Finish the roughing out with main upper section. Where the big leaf curls over at the end, wrap it right round to the underside of the board to form a good ball shape. Also form a hollow ball shape in the middle of the swirl.

### **DETAIL CARVING**

**14** Start the detail carving on the same section. Separate the big leaf ball into several convex strands separated by deep vein lines. Separate the main lines across the top into strands with convex, concave and flat profiles. 'Plane' along the surfaces with gouges and chisels of the right size to get them as smooth as you possibly can. To accentuate the flow lines, carve narrow veins along the middle of the broader strands with a 2mm V-tool.

**13****14**

**15** The curling stems in the top left are based on Horta's wrought iron work, and are like flattish ribbons that twist and turn, often sideways on to the viewer, then pass beneath the main stems. The narrow voids inside the turns can now be opened out with drills and gouges.

**16** Complete the upper section by carving the two flat background panels, which are designed to display the colour and figure of the walnut. Use a 2mm V-tool to cut the edge of the border, 7mm wide on the top panel and 12mm wide on the lower panel. Chisel out the wood to a 2mm depth, then bring it to a smooth, flat finish by scraping the edge of the chisel towards you in a vertical position. Shave the border strips so they slope outwards a little. ▶

**15****16**

**17** Now carve the long curving stems down the left-hand side. Try to capture the 'sway' in the double S curve, which leans first to one side then the other as it lurches round the bends. Run vein lines along the broader surfaces, and open out the void in the corner.

**18** Refine the detail on the main stems, which run across the middle of the carving. The highest stem has a cove along the middle of it, and the other two step down from it with a double elbow bend at the right-hand corner. The stem that runs along the edge of the void at the 15mm line merges in with the border on the upper edge of the void.

**19** Finish the stems that run around the lower right corner. You have to merge them in with the stems coming down from the left side, and with the shallow cove that borders the central flat panel. The ridge along the bottom runs across the grain, so it is best to finish the vein line with a 16mm hooked skew chisel to avoid crumbling.

**20** Chisel out the large flat panel in the central area, and scrape it smooth in the same way as the upper flat panels. This large area is important for showing off the colour and figure of the walnut, so bring it to a good finish.

**21** The last area to be carved is the tree-like feature on the right-hand side. Its branches wrap and curl around a vertical stem. Detailing is difficult on this small scale, so go for bold, deep cuts and add some vein lines from the small V-tool.

## FINISHING

**22** Finish off the panel by placing it upside down on a soft surface to tidy up the underside edges. Cut a 3mm chamfer around all the outer edges and the voids. Tidy up the sides of the panel to remove any saw marks and irregularities caused by the jigsaw flexing.

**23** I rarely use abrasives on hardwoods, but the Art Nouveau style normally has soft edges and smooth surfaces, so use 400 grit abrasive to soften the sharp edges and make sure all surfaces will look smooth when polished. Give the whole carving, front and back, two coats of a good wax polish (I used Antiquax Brown) and buff it up to a soft sheen.

**24** The wax polish brings out the warm colour and figure of the walnut. Hang it in a place where the light strikes it sideways to enhance the shadows.

### TOP TIP

To carve hard woods like walnut you need to use the mallet a lot of the time, but far from being a 'blunt instrument' the mallet can give you much finer control over the gouge than hand pressure can. When carving around a curve, or adding fine detail, gentle taps with the mallet can ensure that each cut only goes as far as you want it to. When pushing the gouge with hand pressure on hard wood, a slip can send it skidding off into wood you wanted to keep.



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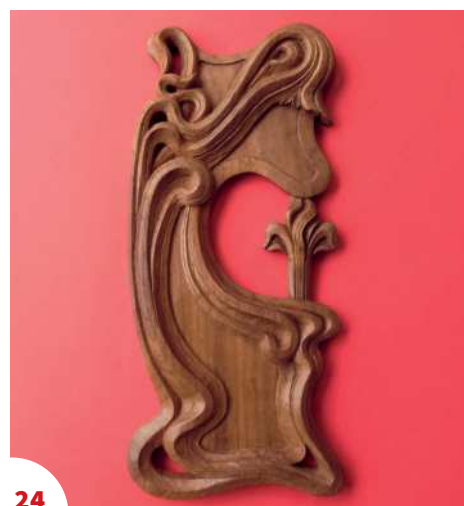
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**Cedric Boyns** joined a carving evening class in 2010 which started him off. He also joined a local woodturning club and he enjoys combining the two skills in his projects. Travelling abroad in recent years has provided much inspiration for his carving work. He has no formal training in art or design, but feels he has learnt a great deal by 'giving it a go'.



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# Mushrooms in boxwood

Zoë Gertner carves an autumn cluster of fungi



**F**rom puffballs to truffles, exotic to common supermarket edibles, the varieties of fungi are fascinating. So many different types, ranging from everyday fare to costly delicacies, growing both below the ground and above where they can be seen. Although button mushrooms are widely cultivated for commercial reasons, I can

often find small groups of wild ones growing in fields near the South West Coast Path, a particularly favourite walk of mine. Carving this small cluster of mushrooms will introduce you to creating spaces in your carvings and perhaps inspire you further with working 'in the round'.

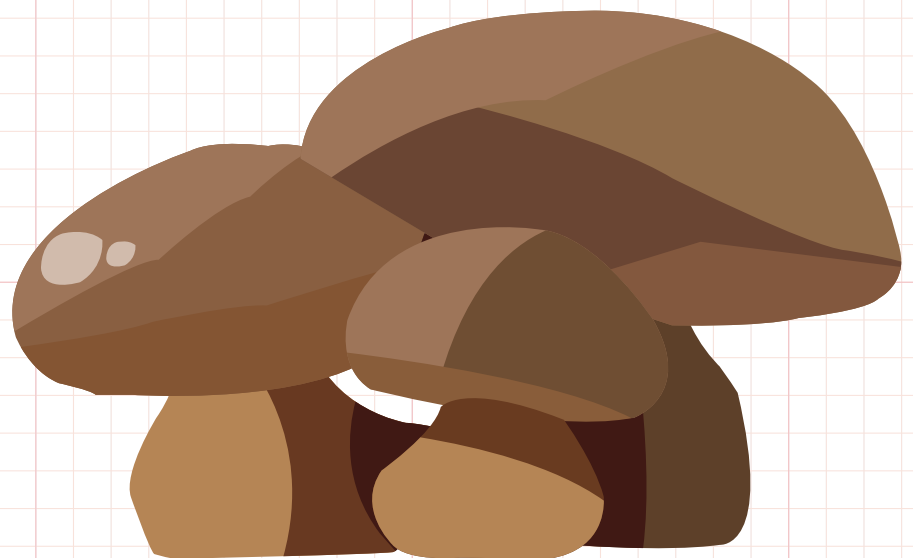
## Things you will need

### Materials:

- A short length of boxwood

### Tools:

- Mallet
- No.9, 1/4in gouge
- No.5, 1/2in gouge
- No.5, 1/4in gouge
- No.3, 1in or wider gouge
- No.3, 1/2in gouge
- No.3, 1/4in gouge
- No.3, 1/8in gouge
- Small handsaw
- Cabinet scraper and redundant No.3, 1/4in gouge honed, with its burr remaining
- Wax polish



PHOTOGRAPH BY ZOË GERTNER

## Preparation

**1** For the demonstration I used a short length of boxwood, approximately 2.5in and about 3.5in at its widest, intending that the grain of the wood should run upwards from the base of the cluster, thus along the length of the stalks for strength. Any other close-grained wood such as yew, cherry or sycamore could be used as an alternative, but it must have the grain running vertical, i.e. along the lengths of the stalks from the base to caps, otherwise the caps of the mushrooms could accidentally break off from their stalks.

## Starting the carving

**2 & 3** Draw the outlines of the mushrooms on the top surface of your timber with the larger (1) overlapping the smaller ones (2 and 3). The exact placement and shape of your group will depend upon the outer shape of your timber, but try to fill the area as much as possible. You can reduce and shape the circumference of your timber to that of the outlined group with a ½in or wider No.5, 6, or 7 gouge, using it with a mallet to carefully split thin slivers downwards along the grain. Be sure to keep the corners of the gouge free of the wood, use only the middle of its cutting edge and drive the tool downwards and in line with the grain (i.e. not tilting it), then the slivers should be released easily.

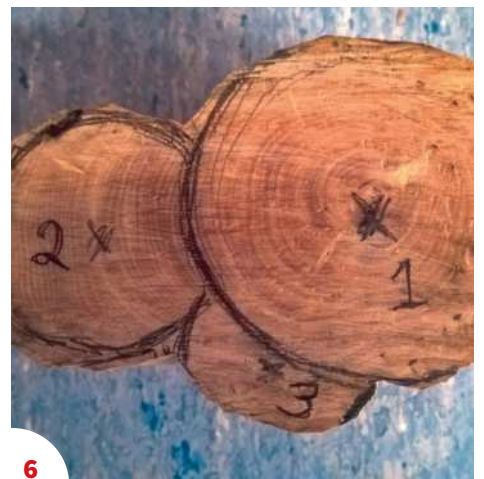
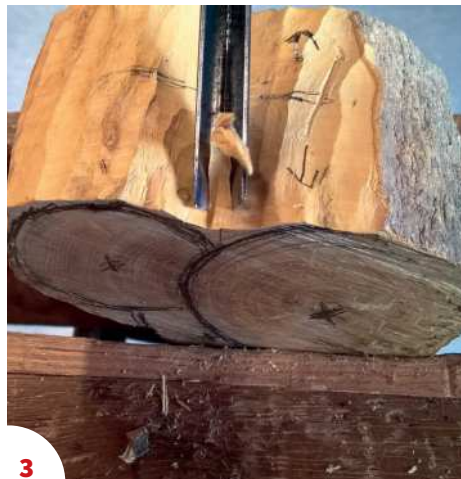
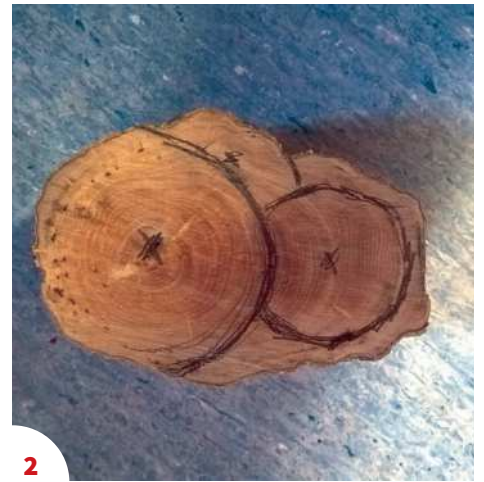
**4** Next, the triangular areas between each mushroom are removed. Begin by cutting outwards towards the base, starting from the middle of the timber, then repeat from here, working towards the caps using the ¼in V-tool, so cutting a deep V channel along the grain between each of the mushrooms. With the ½in No.5 gouge and starting from the middle of your wood as before, tilt the corner of its cutting edge alongside the V channel and remove that side of the channel, cleanly cutting along the grain outwards along its length. Repeat from the middle in the opposite direction to finish that side of the V channel.

**5** Repeat the sequence of cuts along the opposite face of the V channel and gradually shape each side of the indent, making it rounded lengthwise when seen from above. Start by cutting outwards from the top outer edge, working in that direction back to the middle, then repeat the cuts from the opposite edge, the base, meeting them up at the middle.

**6** Repeat the process along the indents between the two remaining mushrooms and trim them until each mushroom is rounded along its length when seen from above.

**7** With the No.5, ½in gouge taper the lower section of the wood towards the base from where the stalks will emerge, cutting and scooping outwards to reduce the circumference of the base.

**8** Draw the approximate outlines of the caps of the three mushrooms and number them 1 (tallest), 2 (next tallest) and 3 (smallest). With a small handsaw, cut horizontally across the top of 2 as far as the edge of 1 and mark the area to be removed above the cap of 3.



**9****10**

**9** Remove the unwanted area above the cap of 2, carefully splitting thin slivers downwards and along the grain into the horizontal saw cut using the No.5, 1/2in gouge as described previously.

**10** Round over the cap of 2, lifting your gouge hand as you cut and working towards its highest point from all round its edge.

**11** Round over the cap of 1 in the same way, keeping its edge attached to that of 2, but leave a flattened area on its top so the carving can be held securely in the vice.

**12** Remove the unwanted area above 3 up to the edge of the largest cap using a No.5 or 9, 1/4in gouge. Repeating step 10, cut towards its top from each side, at the same time rounding and reducing it until it projects from 1 as the smallest of the group. Then taper the stalk areas again as described before.

**13** Draw the lower edge of the largest cap, then with the No.3, 1/2in gouge inverted and tilted downwards and away from its edge at an angle, make a first set of cuts along its circumference around it. (It is better not to use a V-tool here because the cut would be across the grain of the wood and a V-tool could tear if it is not razor sharp).

**14** With the gouge bevel held as normal, i.e. down, cut in from the stalk area and make opposing cuts towards the first set of cuts, cutting a V channel around the edge of the cap.

### Defining the shape

**15** Shape the stalk into the V channel made around the edge of the cap of 1 and continue rounding and reducing the tops of 2 and 3. Again using opposing cuts with the No.3, 1/4in gouge, work in the same way round the lower edges of 2 and 3 and shape their stalks.

**16** On the underneath of your group of mushrooms draw the outline of each stalk, keeping them attached to each other on the base.

**11****12****13****14****15****16**

**17** With the No.5, ¼in gouge reduce the edge of the base to that of the outline drawn underneath, cutting outwards first, then round over its edge to remove any sharpness.

**18** Continue with steps 13 & 14 beneath the caps and around the circumferences of the stalks for each mushroom. Tilting the gouge beneath the cap, gradually work around the top of each stalk, then towards here from all round the stalk area, shaping the stalk at its attachment beneath its cap. When access becomes restricted as you work towards and into the smaller deeper spaces between your mushrooms, you will need to reduce the size of the base and the top of the 3 cap again, as described above.

**19** When the stalk of each is partially rounded, draw the outlines of the gap between 1 and 2, and tilting the No.3, ¼in gouge sideways from around the stalk, cut inwards to begin making the gaps and spaces between them.

**20** Use the No.3, ¼in or ½in gouge to remove the areas between, cutting a little at a time from all round each of the stalks and beneath the largest cap, starting to make a triangular-shaped hollow.

**21** If your tool becomes obstructed by the adjacent mushrooms as you deepen the gap, again reduce their caps and the circumferences of their stalks, keeping them rounded as you do so. By inverting the No.3, ½in gouge, its corner can be used in a slicing action at the back of the smaller caps to round the back of them and thus maintain the division between their caps and the stalk of the adjacent mushroom. Continue cutting away from the stalks towards the middle of the gap from all aspects until daylight appears through a small hole.

**22** Now insert the point of a 1/4in skew chisel into the hole and, with a twisting, slicing action of your hand, enlarge and shape the sides of the gap and the rear of the main stalk, cutting with the grain from top and bottom within the gap itself. (For a similar task some years ago I adapted two No.3, ½in gouges to scoop sideways to left and right in confined spaces [see photo inset] grinding and sharpening them to LH and RH angles).

**23** Continue deepening the gap by working around the stalks of 1 and 2 by cutting away from them from each side towards the back of the smallest cap. Here, using a No.5 or No.3, ¼in gouge with a scooping action, open up the space around the main stalk towards it, then when there is room enough, invert the No.3 gouge and continue shaping the top of the cap to a convexity. Working the tool through the gap and slicing at an angle upwards towards its highest point, at the same time using the width of its cutting edge, pare and slice the wood away from the stalks of the other mushrooms. Once it appears to be rounded when seen through the gap, work over the rest of it in the same way from all round until the whole cap is completely convex.



**24****25****26****27**

**24** Reduce the outside adjacent edges of 2 to give more access and begin shaping that cap underneath the edge of 1, the largest cap. By tilting and scooping down and outwards from underneath this (2) cap with the No.3 or No.5, 1/4in gouge, then towards the upper end of the stalk from along it, enlarge the gap as described above, working from each side until the inner surface of cap 2 is rounded and adjoins the largest cap below its edge.

**25** Return to the space between the stalks of 1 and 2 at the back of 3 and cut around and across the inner surfaces of the adjoining stalks, widening the space yet retaining the shape of the stalks.

**26** Across the back of 3 draw the inner edge of its cap, lining this up with its outer edge. Then make opposing cuts along the inner edge using the No.3, 1/4in or 1/2in gouge and remove the small triangular area beneath, giving some depth and shadow beneath the edge of the cap. As before, you will need to repeat cutting around and across the inner surfaces of the adjoining stalks to retain their shapes and give greater access while deepening the small triangular area below the cap.

### **Finishing touches**

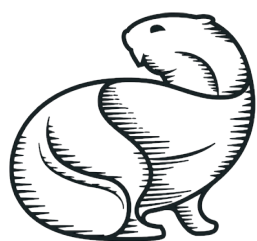
**27** Finally, shape the top of each mushroom to a smooth dome and remove any remaining flat areas. With the No.3, 1in gouge held inverted, carefully pare upwards from all round towards the highest point of the cap, at the same time making slicing sideways cuts over the surface using the full width of its cutting edge. Press the tool edge firmly against the surface, twist your wrist as you push forwards and upwards, across and over the surface, making small paring cuts. Take care not to score the surface with the corner of the gouge by twisting the tool excessively. Its corners should always be outside the shape as you move it forwards.

**28****29**

**28 & 29** Finally, remove any unwanted deep cuts or digs, check that where stalk meets cap on each mushroom is cut cleanly then smooth the top of each cap with a cabinet scraper, working from all round towards the highest point of each. In the more confined areas between the stalks a redundant No.3, 1/4in gouge honed with the resultant burr remaining along its edge can be used as a miniature scraper. Although I preferred not to do so, the gills on the underneath of the caps can be marked using a 1/8in V-tool. Then a colourless wax polish was applied and the finished carving buffed to a shine using a lint-free cloth. ▶

# From the community

A collection of letters and news from the woodcarving community



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## My favourite memory of Mark Baker

As Mark was very much aware, I am not that good at keeping to deadlines – this copy was meant to be in the previous magazine. I'm glad I missed it, however, as it was so informative to read other impressions of Mark. We all saw different facets to his character, hearing about them allows us to appreciate what a well-rounded person he was. Obviously he was an excellent editor and a skilled woodworker, and you will have read about his genuine enthusiasm, which made his demonstrations so special. Mark

made time for everyone, whether it was a member of the public who wanted to show him their work or, like me, a craft person who was trying to find a way of writing about their work. Mark always surprised me – he was capable of working a room like a stand-up comedian and then talk with great authority about the subtleties and pitfalls of Thai spices and herbs. We spoke of our mutual love of fishing, he was a valued friend providing business and personal advice and support and even while ill was always so positive. My

favourite memory of Mark is a time I didn't meet him. I bounded up to the GMC stand at Harrogate immediately asking where Mark was, only to be told he had taken the year off to go fishing – I was so in awe as at first I thought he had taken the whole year off. However that was never going to be the case, but I was glad he had taken some time out from work, to pursue a hobby he loved, something he always encouraged others to do. I'll miss you buddy.

*Nic Westermann - Hewn & Hone*

## European kestrel

I thought you might like to see my full-size carving of a European female kestrel. It's in limewood and took about 50 hours to carve and burn. I look forward to getting my *Woodcarving* magazine every couple of months to see what articles have been included. I particularly like the step-by-step projects and interviews.

*Kind regards, George Stopps*



## Project Freedom

Like many clubs we in Shropshire have tried to keep in touch and maintain activity. A group challenge is one way of doing so. In this case the obvious theme was what we all wanted, and still do; the opposite of lockdown – FREEDOM.

There was lots of amazing work to choose from but space only allows Peter Scholfield's Countdown from Lockdown, shown below.



## Branching out

I had been making wooden toys for our young grandson and my wife asked if I could make something for her – yes I said do you have anything in mind? Her reply was "I would like a tree for the wall on the landing near the top of our stairs."

My reply was "Yes" thinking of something A3/A4 in size, but then she added "No" I would like it to the top of the window on the landing!! I got my tape measure out – 7ft to 8ft tall – what do I do now I thought, not quite panic but almost. I don't have any timber that size in my garage I said and after a little while and looking at images of trees on Google I had what I thought was a brain wave.

I found pictures of silhouettes of various trees which I printed off and scaled up to suit the size and space, drew it out onto some wallpaper, pinned the drawing into position on the wall and bingo, my wife liked it. I bought a sheet of 24mm birch plywood, the builders merchant kindly cut it to a width that I could get in the car & the rest is history as they say.

Hope you like what I have done, my wife is very pleased with it and so am I. It was good to do something a bit different. Best Regards, Don Hare.

## Woodcarvers – Bryan's Quest



Two years ago, Andrew Heser, the founder of Bryan's Quest ([bryansquest.org](http://bryansquest.org)) set about a project to aid blind and partially sighted people like Bryan (above) to learn about and enjoy nature through the use of their remaining senses.

With a small amount of funding and support from Lloyds Bank Social Entrepreneurs Start Up Programme, Andrew has an enterprising plan to grow Bryan's Quest, providing support for visually impaired people to gain knowledge about wildlife, using tactile models. Carved wood, life-size and scale replicas of all wild animals is an excellent technique to demonstrate the shape, size and distinctive features of birds, mammals, insects and sea creatures. How else can a blind person know what a wolverine or a Cornish chough is like without a model to hold?

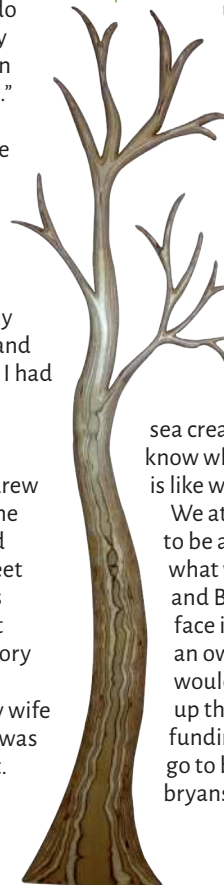
We at Cornwall Woodcarvers are proud to be able to donate the first carving, of what we hope will be many to Andrew and Bryan's quest. The smile on Bryan's face is the first experience he has had of an owl with its wings extended. If you would like to carve a piece to help build up the educational collection (modest funding is available), or to know more just go to [bryansquest.org](http://bryansquest.org) or email Andrew on [bryansmission@gmail.com](mailto:bryansmission@gmail.com).

## Lockdown carving



I learned to woodcarve in 1969 and let it slip at the end of the 1980s. Keeping this short, I started again last September and in March I was shielded in lockdown and was knocking a woodcarving out every two weeks. Here is some of my work.

*Yours sincerely, G Lowrey*



# The Three Oaks bench carving project

Woodcarving chainsaw artist Carrie Yuen was hired to design and carve three benches



**A** howl of dismay reverberated around the village of Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire, in January 2020 when the villagers learned that an old oak tree of indeterminate age (estimates varied from 150-300 years) was to be removed as part of a major road improvement scheme. The much-loved tree had to be removed on safety grounds. A protest gathered pace – and signatures – as the roads company did everything it could at its own expense to see if it was possible to save the tree. Despite its best efforts the old oak still had to go.

Sympathetic to the sorrow of the villagers, Ground Control and Highways England offered an olive branch. What about getting a local woodcarver to create some benches for the children's playground and breathe new life into the three main stems of the ancient tree? The Three Oaks project was conceived and woodcarving chainsaw artist, Carrie Yuen, was hired to design and carve three benches.

However, coronavirus descended on the country in March and the project had to be mothballed for three months.

Time can often incubate and develop initial ideas and Carrie emerged from lockdown with a plan to represent the life of the oak tree in three ways:

- The first bench was to be adorned with oak leaves and feature a range of

flying creatures that would have been seen around the branches – butterflies, moth, dragonfly, bat, and bees.

- The second bench was given over to carving the bugs and creepy crawlies of the oak habitat – caterpillar, spider, stag beetle, worm, millipede, woodlouse and snail.
- The third bench was for the animals – fox cubs, badger, rabbits, mouse, squirrels, owls and mole – that live around the tree.

Ground Control will also be sponsoring Carrie to make more carvings from the tree to support the charities of Higham Ferrers Council and its mayor.

Reflecting on this tree that keeps on giving, Carrie said: 'No carver wants to see a living tree come down, but when there is no alternative an artist can show the fabulous internal beauty of the tree that would never be seen unless it is opened up – the grain. This oak is beautiful and hopefully its lovely grain and newly-created sculptures will be enjoyed for many years to come.'

Highways England Construction assurance manager Dave Marlow said:

'It is fantastic to see these wonderful artworks in place for all to enjoy. Carrie has done some incredible work in creating the benches and I'm sure they will be admired by local people for many generations to come.'



**MAIN:** The back of bench 1 **ABOVE:** The first cuts made on bench 1

'We were very disappointed that we could not retain the Three Oaks despite all of our efforts, so we are delighted to have been able to play our part in ensuring its unique legacy continues.'

'Thanks to the town council for helping us find the perfect home for the artworks and giving the tree a second life.'

Carrie would like to thank Dave Marlow and Highways England for this amazing commission and the opportunity to create carvings in the form of benches for the local community.

The £24m A45/A6 Chowns Mill improvement scheme will tackle congestion at the bottleneck junction by creating a half hamburger layout with a new link road connecting the A6 South and A5028 with the existing roundabout. All approaches are being widened to provide extra lanes and capacity.



Bench 1 finished showing the leaf details



Creepy crawlies emerge on bench 2



Bench 3 close-up



The side of bench 3



From left to right: Phil Keane, Carnell Group operations manager (East); Jeremy Willis, Ground Control construction manager; Dave Marlow, Highways England construction assurance manager; Paul Valentine, Carnell public liaison officer



From left to right: Jeremy Willis, Ground Control construction manager; Tina Reavey, Mayor; Carrie Yuen, chainsaw artist; and Justina Bryan, co-ordinator of the Save the Three Oaks Higham Ferrers group



Local villagers enjoy the carvings



Close-up of the rabbit and badger

PHOTOGRAPHS OF CARVINGS IN-SITU PROVIDED BY PROFILE PHOTOGRAPHY, NORTHAMPTON, 10604 464000

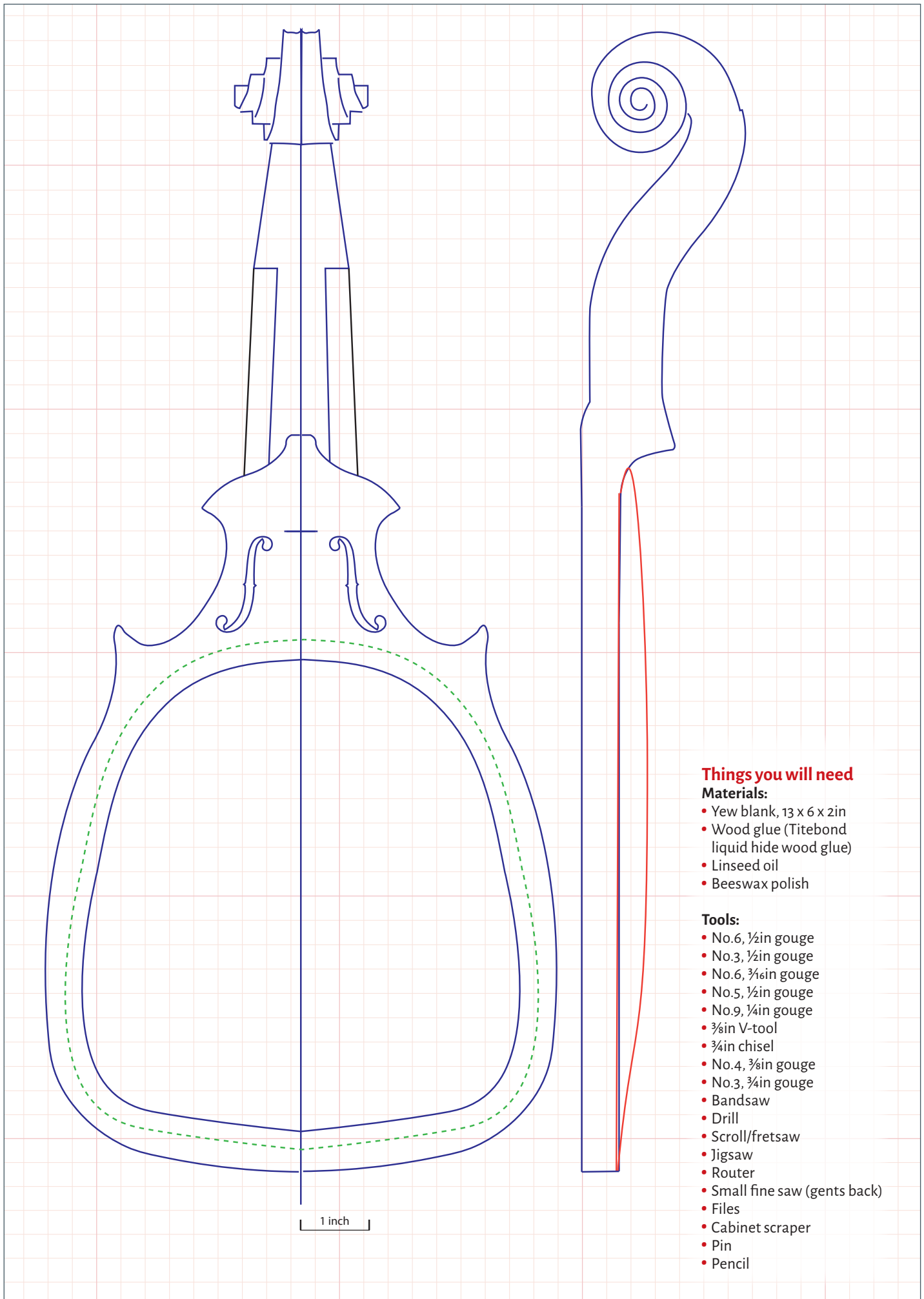
# Volute vanity mirror in ancient yew

Mark Ivan Fortune shows us the steps in creating this unique hand-held vanity mirror



**A**s woodcarvers, we have the ability to bring a touch of beauty to everyday objects. Whether it be simple chip carving on a chair back or an exquisitely carved applique to liven up an old dresser, most objects can be given a level of decorative interest to enhance their beauty.

Here I have carved a hand-held vanity mirror to reflect the lines of my instrument, the double bass. The volute is a very complex and challenging form to carve. While the aim is not to reach the level of perfection of the luthier, much can be learned from this pleasing subject.





1

**1** Cut the profile of the frame section on the bandsaw. (The backing may be cut from the waste.) Then cut out the inner frame.



2

**2** Returning to the bandsaw, first cut out the side view. Cut a small block of wood and tape it on with masking tape to support the now floating frame section. Cut out the top.

**3** Rout the back of the frame to accept the mirror to  $\frac{1}{4}$ in from the face. Drill the circular holes with an appropriate-sized drill before cutting the "F" holes with the scrollsaw.



3

**4** Holding the template against the side of the volute, make several light pin holes penetrating through the paper and into the wood. Join the dots with a pencil and repeat this on the other side, taking care to align the template for a well-formed volute. The top and back of the volute can be marked in a similar way but require a little creative initiative.



4

**5** With both profiles clearly marked and using a fine saw, cut as much waste away as possible without removing any pencil marks. This is best done in small increments, switching between this step and step 6.



5

**6** Using a slicing cut, carefully pare the volute to the line at  $90^\circ$  to the face with a No. 6,  $\frac{1}{2}$ in gouge. It is imperative that it is neither undercut nor overcut, ensuring both sides of the volute align. With a No. 3,  $\frac{1}{2}$ in clean up the ramp of the spiral.



6

**7** With a small No. 6,  $\frac{3}{16}$ in gouge, using a slicing stab cut, stab in the smaller section of the volute before sawing the waste, this will help prevent the more delicate part of the volute from breaking away.



7

**8** Take a fine file and file in the chamfers along all edges of the volute. Aim for precision with an angle that you find pleasing.



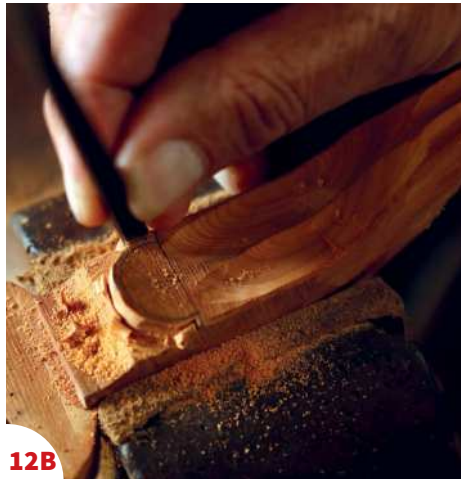
8

**9A****9B****10****11**

**9A & 9B** With a No.6,  $\frac{3}{16}$ in gouge, clean the ground of the ramp leaving it concave with a camber leaning toward the centre. This will create tension and gives the volute a stronger presence. Work your way down the spiral moving to the larger No.5,  $\frac{1}{2}$ in gouge at the wider section. Release the chips with a No.3,  $\frac{1}{2}$ in gouge.

**10** Now the front side of the head using a No.9,  $\frac{1}{4}$ in. It is almost a certainty when making this cut that the gouge will shoot forward into the body as the grain is very stubborn at this point. A sacrificial splint can be placed in the groove. Be sure not to cut past the chamfers, ensuring the centreline stays true and well defined.

**11** Now to the back of the head. Saw away the waste as before.

**12A****12B**

**12A & 12B** Using a No.6,  $\frac{1}{2}$ in gouge, stab in the rounded section at the back of the head. With a  $\frac{3}{16}$ in V-tool stab the corners, keeping them sharp and clean. File in the chamfer.

**13** Cut the two concave flutes on the back of the head using a No.9,  $\frac{1}{4}$ in gouge. The cut is made from both directions at the meeting point of the opposing grain. It is imperative that the centreline where the two cuts converge remains centred and well defined.

**14** With a card scraper, round over the face and sides of the frame and body.

**13****14**



### CABINET SCRAPERS

Cabinet scrapers are an invaluable tool, especially for finishing swirly or difficult grain. They come in an array of shapes, thicknesses and sizes and are simple to prepare. They are capable of leaving a very fine finish with relative ease.

**15** Using a No.1, 3/4in chisel stab in the fret board and pare the waste horizontally.

**16** Stab and pare the waste of the neck support with a No.4, 3/8in gouge. The fret board area should gently taper into the neck support.

**17** Insert the mirror and place some foam or bubble wrap behind it to prevent it rattling in the frame. Glue on the back and clamp with as many small clamps as possible. With a flat No.3, 3/4in gouge, round over the edges on back of the body.

**18** File any difficult grain to a homogenous form.

**19** With a cabinet scraper, clean up the back. This should be smooth and convex in form.

**20** Rub the whole frame with raw linseed oil, using a brush to get into any tight spots. Allow to dry before rubbing down with beeswax polish – an old toothbrush can be used to apply the beeswax to the awkward spots. Allow to dry, then polish with a bristle brush.

**21** The finished item from behind. ▶



### THE GENT'S BACK

Sawing waste, where appropriate, can be an expedient way of removing waste. The gent's back saw is the perfect complement to the woodcarver's tool kit and ranges from the tiny 3in to a large 10in saw. Their fine teeth create little resistance, making them ideal for sawing in close proximity to delicate detail.

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# Peruvian Inca ‘magic’ pitcher

Cedric Boyns shares an interesting party piece



PHOTOGRAPHS BY CEDRIC BOYNS

## It should work like this



**1**  
Fill it from the bottom



**2**  
Turn it the right way up, keeping the spout uppermost as you turn it over



**3**  
No liquid comes out (hopefully) even though there is a hole in the bottom



**4**  
It can then only be emptied by pouring the liquid out of the spout. That's 'magic'!

Since my letter about this project was published in issue 171 of *Woodcarving*, I have had many people ask me how this works. As I explained in my letter, the inspiration for making this combination of turning and carving came from the pottery vessels – Inca-style jaguar pitchers – made in Peru. These date back to the Inca civilisation when I believe they were made to hold wine. They have a handle and a spout both featuring the head of a jaguar, and they are still made as souvenirs. I have seen them in Peru and my daughter brought one back from Cusco, but there is no clue as to what the inside looks like. The idea is that the pitcher fills though a hole in the bottom and retains the liquid when it is turned the right way up. It can then only be emptied by pouring the liquid through the spout. I was

fascinated to work out what the inside must look like, and whether I could make one in wood. I therefore set about making a few sketches and started work on a prototype as a solely turned item. This seemed to work. I was then able to work on the planning of the carving of the handle in situ and chose to base this on a sea lion rather than just making a copy of the jaguar. I chose a sea lion because of the ability of these animals to use their flippers to raise their body clear of the ground (thus allowing very rapid movement), and this would give the form of a handle.

I have made a few of these vessels in various sizes and various woods, including pear, oak and cypress. I was recently asked to make another one out of two small holly logs that I had been given.

## Things you will need

### Materials:

- 2 holly log cylinders, one 200mm long, 110mm diameter, one 160mm long, 90mm diameter
- Wood glue
- Masking tape
- Abrasives down to 400 grit
- Sanding sealer
- Polyurethane waterproof varnish for inside surfaces
- Other finish of choice for outside (wax polish)

### Tools:

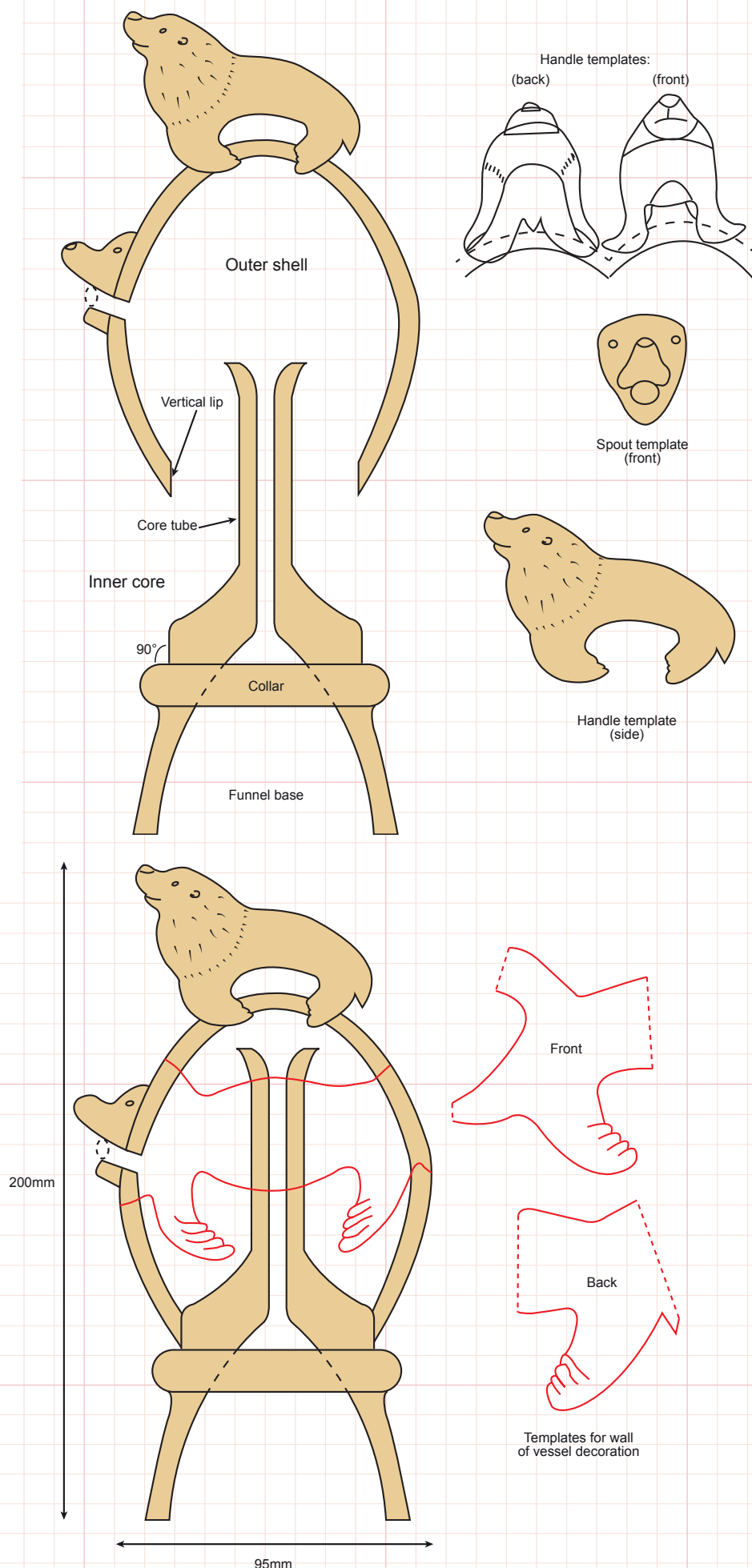
- PPE – eye and dust protection

### For the turning:

- Marking and measuring equipment
- Roughing gouge
- Bowl gouge (10mm)
- Spindle gouge (6mm)
- Parting tools (3&6mm)
- Hollowing tool
- Side scraper
- Twist drills / Forsner bits

### For the carving:

- Handsaw & bandsaw
- Shallow gouges No.3 & No.5 (3, 6 and 10mm)
- Fluter gouges No.11 (0.5-10mm)
- Detail carving knife
- Rifflers
- Holding vice – all completed using my homemade chops





1



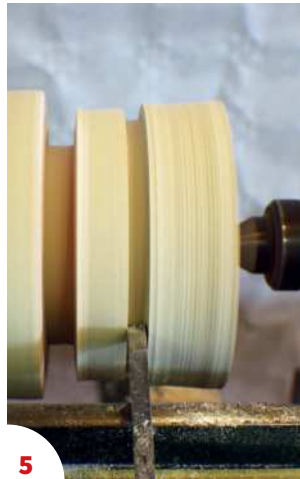
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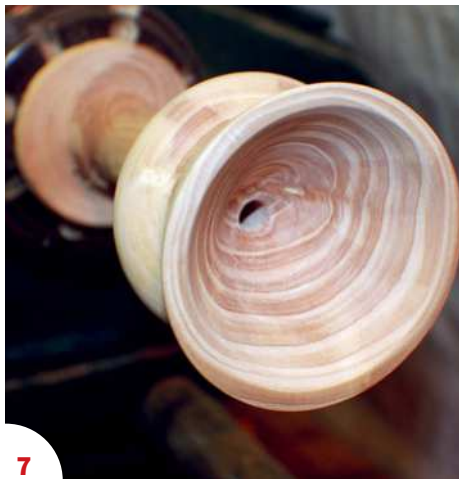
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8



9

## Turning – this involves two parts (consult diagrams)

**Outer shell/casing.** This is a simple hollow form with the addition of the carving on the top, which needs wood left for it. Mount the log on the lathe between centres and round down to a cylinder 90mm in diameter using the roughing gouge. It can be a bit bigger or smaller if you wish but you will need to make the appropriate changes to the subsequent sizes given.

**1** Put a spigot in one end the correct size for your chuck. Mount securely and square off the other face (base).

**2** Mark 50mm from the base for the widest part of the vessel and a further 50mm where the portion to be carved will be left as a rounded section. Cut in to a depth of 15mm with a 3mm parting tool. Shape the outside from the mid region up to this point with a bowl gouge. The lower part is now rounded down to a diameter of 60mm at the base. It may be that the lower portion can be made slightly more bulbous than the upper portion, although this is not vital.

**3 & 4** Hollow out the vessel. I start by drilling a hole with a series of drills and complete the process with a hollowing tool. Take care not to hollow beyond the 100mm depth otherwise you will have problems with the carving stage. Reduce the wall thickness to about 7mm, although it can be a bit thinner or thicker if you wish. A perfect finish on the inside surface is not crucial as it will not be seen in the finished article.

There needs to be a straight/vertical lip measuring about 10mm at the base. This is where this outer vessel will join the inner workings and the join will need to be a good fit (see later). Sand the outside to 240 grit and apply a coat of sanding sealer if desired. This outer part of the vessel can now be removed from the chuck.

**Note:** You will need to replace it in the chuck later so it would be wise to mark the spigot and chuck so it can be put back accurately and will turn without wobble.

**Inner core section.** This log is mounted on the lathe as for log 1, turned down to a diameter of 80mm with a roughing gouge, and a spigot put in one end. It is mounted securely in the chuck as before and the free end squared off.

Drill a 7.5mm hole through the centre of the log. The drill will probably not be long enough to reach the whole length required, but drill it as deep as you can at this stage. It should be possible to go deeper later once the funnel-shaped base has been formed. The final length will need to be about 140mm.

**5** Mark out the shaping of the inner core on log 2 with a pencil then a parting tool, using information from the drawings.

**6** The general shape can now be cut out using a bowl gouge and spindle gouge. The central core is not made too thin before the base is refined. With a bowl or spindle gouge shape the outside of the funnel to create a base for the final vessel. Shape the collar, which should be about 10-13mm deep.

The forming of the next part of the core is crucial as this will form the join with the outer casing. It should be a straight face about 10mm long and meeting the collar at 90°. Take care to ensure the diameter is no smaller than the diameter of the opening of the outer shell. It needs to fit tightly to give a watertight seal when glued. I have found it easier to make it a tiny bit larger and then enlarge the opening of the hollowed outer shell afterwards.

**Note:** The 90° angle will help to create that watertight join, but also help to hide the join in the finished piece.

**7** The hole drilled down the centre is opened out with a spindle gouge to form a funnel-shaped base. The top of this can be level with, or just beyond the collar. This will allow the length of the hole to be increased if needs be, as the drill chuck can pass up the funnel.

**8 & 9** The final length for the tube of the inner core must be determined by measuring the distance from the opening to the top of the hollowing of the outer shell. There should be a gap of about 10mm between the top of the tube and the top of the hollowing. The core tube can now be completed but do not make the walls too thin – leave them about 6mm. The tube can be slightly opened out at the top once the final length has been calculated. Sand and apply a coat of sanding sealer, but not on the area to be glued. It can then be parted off.

**10** Return the outer shell to the chuck and check it is running true. Offer up the inner core, which hopefully will be a fraction too big (please – not too small!!)

**11** Use a side scraper to pare down the opening of the outer shell until the inner core fits snugly inside.

**12** Hopefully a good fit has been achieved.

**13** Before removing the outer shell from the lathe, reduce the thickness of the remaining wood cylinder from which the sea lion will be carved to about 60mm.

## Carving the sea lion handle

**14** The outer casing is secured in the chaps as shown.

**15** Remove waste from the rounded section and the spigot to create a flattened section on to which the sea lion can be drawn using the template. I cut the sides of the block at a slight outward angle using a handsaw. The width of the remaining wood should be about 55mm and centrally located.

**16** Line up the template and draw in the sea lion as accurately as possible from both sides. Waste from the top can be cut away either using a bandsaw, a fretsaw or appropriate gouge.

**17** Start the shaping, working around the animal removing wood with a small shallow gouge. Work slowly and keep checking with the templates, redrawing frequently as you go.



10



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**18** Begin shaping between the flippers so that they start to become isolated from the body. Remember that the flippers will eventually become the only parts attached to the top of the vessel. I used a range of sizes of No.11 fluters to start undercutting the body.

**19** I then used a small drill to further clear the wood beneath the body on the sides, and from the front and back to eventually isolate it totally from the top of the vessel. This needs to be done very carefully so as not to drill too deep and damage the underside of the body or pierce the hollowed vessel.



20



21

**20 & 21** Clear the wood between the body and the top of the vessel with No.11 gouges, as well as a selection of small shallow gouges, and finish the shaping of the body and flippers. Round over the top of the vessel, making careful measurements to find the position of the top of the hollowing so that the necessary wall thickness of the vessel is maintained.

**22** The head is shaped and the facial detail added. Detailed finishing is achieved with a selection of different shaped riffles, and then with abrasives down to 400 grit. Getting into the difficult areas can be achieved by tearing the abrasive into thin strips.

### The spout

This is made separately and glued in place below the head of the sea lion. At some stage a 5mm hole must be drilled in the side of the vessel just above the widest part – see drawings. I chose to do this before the spout is glued on but it could be done afterwards.



22



23

**23** Making the spout is best done on the end of a block to aid the holding and sawing processes while it is crafted. The idea was to try to replicate the head of the sea lion but make it slightly larger and with its mouth open. I marked it out and cut out the basic shape on the bandsaw.

**24 & 25** I rough shaped it with a small No.5 gouge, then drilled a 5mm hole to create the 'open mouth' needed.

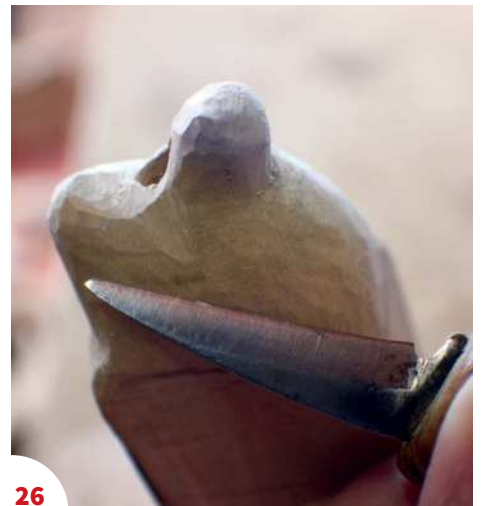
**26** The final shaping was then completed using a detail knife and a No.5, 3mm gouge.



24



25



26

**27** The approximate curve needed was marked before the spout was cut from the block using the bandsaw.

**28** The inner surface was then shaped with a 6mm No.5 gouge and suitable abrasives to achieve as good a fit as possible to the outside of the vessel.

**29** I then sanded the relevant area of the vessel wall before gluing the spout over the hole I had drilled previously so that the two holes lined up.

It would also be possible to leave the drilling into the vessel until after the spout has been put on and then drilling through the 'mouth' of the spout into the vessel.

**30 & 31** Add other details like the eyes and some fur on the mane of the sea lion with a No.11, 0.5 mm fluter or other suitable tool.

**32** I added some decoration representing the body of a sea lion around the spout 'head'. It is difficult to cut out a template to fit accurately around this whole outer shape, so I used two halves to get the basic proportions correct and drew the rest by eye.

**33** Once drawn, the detail was cut in using a No.11, 2mm fluter.

**34** I left the final assembly to the end covering the surfaces to be glued with masking tape before putting a coat of waterproof polyurethane varnish on the inner surfaces which will come into contact with liquids.

**35** When the varnish was dry and, after removing the masking tape, glue was applied to both surfaces and the two parts were then glued together to complete the vessel.

**36** Complete the finishing with abrasive down to 400 grit. Reapply a thin coat of sanding sealer followed by two coats of wax polish (or the finish of your choice) to complete the project and it should look something like this. ▶



27



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# Angelo Ponticelli

The Italian woodcarver shows us his latest work

**W**e first met the artist from Gemona del Friuli (Ud) Angel Ponticelli in our "20 minutes with" in WC139 in 2014.

Now he shares his latest work. Angelo created a sculpture, inspired by Covid-19, that was a labour of love.

He said: "The the sculpture was entirely handmade on lime wood edge finished with neutral wax. I wanted to create this work to honour all health professionals in Italy that fought against this global pandemic."

The work was donated to a retirement home (Ettore Tolazzi) for elderly people in a beautiful town of Moggio Udinese in the Friuli-Venezia region. Has been delivered my wife's last day of work, which was a health worker for 12 years, to land at the civil hospital of Tolmezzo (Ud).

You can also see on my Instagram @woodcarving78

YouTube: [www.youtube.com/user/Intagliosulegno](https://www.youtube.com/user/Intagliosulegno)



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANGELO PONTICELLI



The inspiration



Sketching out



First cuts



Start removing the background



Define the foreground



Finishing the details



The finished piece

## Other projects



Illuminated work based on Austrian symbolist painter Gustav Klimt's The Kiss



Made entirely in lime wood, this frame represents Baroque style workmanship and measures 50x50cm



Judges' view of the Advanced winner



1st Advanced, Loki, Lanner Falcon, by Maggie Port

# News & events...

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

## BDWCA NEWS

**T**he cancellation of this year's show and competition in Bakewell – the Festival of Bird Art – meant that we lost the pivotal part of the Association's year. From a more practical point of view, we also wouldn't have any current photographs of carvings to use in our magazine, on our website and for publicity purposes.

We decided to have a Virtual Competition, which would offer a unique chance for any member, wherever they might live, to enter, and was restricted to one bird per member. This was a fun competition where the winners, judged only at class level – Advanced, Intermediate and Novice – just received a 'virtual rosette' certificate. The championship awards and open categories are being carried forward to the next live show, which we sincerely hope will be in September 2021.

Each entry was supplied as four photographs – left side, right side, front and top – which were pulled into a PowerPoint slide and the entry then judged on a numerical scale on its own merit by the judging criteria of Craftsmanship, Accuracy, Essence of the Species, and Artistry & Originality. This was an interesting challenge for the team of judges, all Advanced carvers who had judged many times

before, and did this remotely in a Zoom Internet meeting.

Members in New Zealand, the Netherlands and the UK entered the competition and should all be congratulated, both for their carving and for taking the photographs that were judged. Special mention should be made of Advanced carvers Maggie Port (1st), Chriss Rose (2nd), and David Askew (3rd); Intermediate carvers Alex Garfield (1st), Ken Newbitt (2nd), and Derek Black (3rd); and Novice carvers Alan Tadman (1st), Alan Martin (2nd), and Ivan Morgan and Peter Langridge (Joint 3rd).

We 'trickle fed' the results on our BDWCA Facebook page – [www.facebook.com/bdwcapage](https://www.facebook.com/bdwcapage) – throughout the Saturday afternoon of the virtual show, the same day that we would have been judging at Bakewell if we had been able to hold the live show, and received plenty of 'likes'. This was a new challenge for us but we feel that it was definitely worth doing.

### Contacts

For further information on the BDWCA, as well as membership details, visit [www.bdwca.org.uk](http://www.bdwca.org.uk). Membership includes three issues of our full-colour magazine, *Wingspan*. 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](mailto:pam.wilson@bdwca.org.uk)

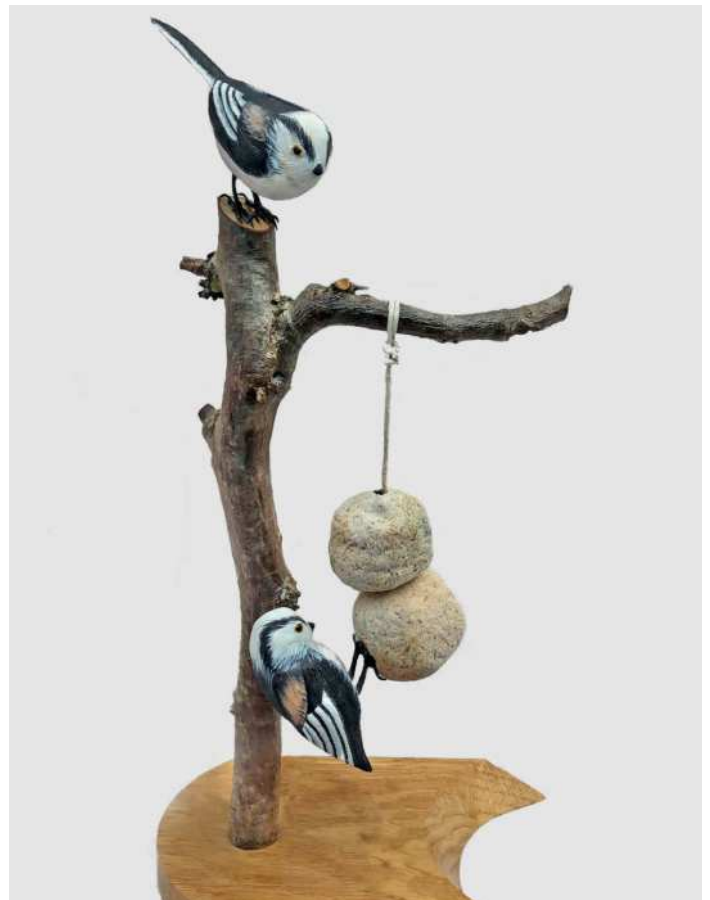


© ALEX GARFIELD FOR THE BDWCA

Description text: 2nd Advanced, Carolina Wood Duck Drake by Chriss Rose



Description text: 1st Intermediate, Owl and Mouse, full size, in lime on Rippled Sycamore Glove, by Alex Garfield



1st Novice, Long-Tailed Tits on Fat Balls, by Alan Tadman

© ALAN TADMAN FOR THE BDWCA

If you have something you want your fellow carvers to know, send in your news stories, snippets and diary dates to Karen Scott at Woodcarving, 86 High Street, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 1XN or to [karencs@thegmcgroup.com](mailto:karencs@thegmcgroup.com)

# Life after British Woodcarvers Association

Stewart Tilley, Chair of Shropshire Woodcarvers, explores life after BWA



**A**ll regional groups of the former BWA faced an uncertain future following receipt of the BWA's notice of closure, dated 20 March 2020. That uncertainty was intensified exponentially by the government's notice of lockdown on 23 March. Wow! Our world had changed in three days.

Here at BWA Shropshire (BWAS), probably like all other regions, it took a while to sink in. The challenging communication problems didn't help but the reality and urgency did eventually seize us and we began to establish a route through the unfolding predicament. A quick and crude opinion poll of members told us that there was a strong desire to keep going as an independent carving club, so the committee set to work.

## Hurdle 1

The first thing we did was to consult our Constitution which was, of course, both dusty and inextricably linked to BWA – you couldn't be a member of BWAS if there wasn't a BWA. Our Constitution also told us that, if for any reason BWAS ceased to exist, the funds and assets of BWAS had to be disposed of in accordance with the wishes of the members. That meant we had to ascertain the wishes of the members of BWAS while they were still members of BWA, i.e., by 30 June 2020. Wow again.

The committee pored over the options (which wasn't easy via email) and we developed a new Shropshire Woodcarvers (SW) Constitution which was based on a perpetuation of the 'unincorporated association' status that had applied to our previous existence and, most likely, to all other regions and to the BWA itself. An 'unincorporated association' is generally categorised as a group of like-minded individuals who are bound together for a particular purpose by a set of rules; a Constitution. It is not a legal entity so it cannot enter into contracts, sue or be sued. Consequently, all members are, to use the jargon, jointly and severally liable for the actions of any of the members. In other words, all or selected members could be held liable for damages and/or compensation claims by third parties or by other members. Scary to say the least and not many members were aware of that, but that is how the vast majority of community clubs in the UK are managed.

We considered the alternatives of incorporated associations and charitable trusts and we continue to do so, but it will take time to weigh the pros and cons and the cultural impacts of these, more structured, arrangements.

So, we distributed the proposed Constitution to all Members, along with a notice of a virtual General Meeting with only one item on the agenda, that being a motion to transfer the assets of BWAS to SW. The vote in favour was overwhelming and we were over Hurdle No.1.

## Bank account and insurance

Hurdle No.2 was to open a SW bank account to transfer those assets into and we thought that would be fairly straightforward given that we were intent on staying with the same bank. We were so wrong. The bank had other (Coronavirus) problems on its priority list and in effect we were put to the very bottom of the list and assets were not formally transferred until September.

Hurdle No.3 was the PL insurance. The group cover that had been provided by BWA was an essential ingredient in the sustainability of BWAS and we sought several quotations. Our intention was to get reliable cover that would protect the members who were now very interested in damage limitation having grasped the personal implications of joint and several liability. It had to be right and reliable and transparent.

In the event, our requests for quotations weren't very productive and our online applications were not very convincing. We eventually got into detailed discussions with the providers BWA used, who were extremely helpful and we developed a policy underwritten by a reputable UK company, which gave us comfort. It included all the usual PL benefits along with member-to-member cover and cover for the facility we use(d) for our meetings, the woodwork rooms of a local secondary school. This was important because the rooms were packed with hi-tech equipment – computers, tools and the like – and we stored our equipment there. Any claim that we had damaged any of its equipment could have been the end of Shropshire Woodcarvers. It was crucial to get it right and we think we have... but time will tell.

We also looked at the additional responsibilities the committee members

assume. We have a responsibility, and a consequent liability, to act in the interests of our members and to discharge the duties and responsibilities they have vested in us in a responsible and dependable manner. While the committee members accept that responsibility, we also took out Management Protection cover to protect the committee members in the unlikely but possible event that someone makes a claim against them (us).

Together with a modest amount of cover for loss or damage to SW property the whole premium equates to around £10 per member per annum.

## Inaugural General Meeting

In early September we held an actual, socially distanced, Inaugural General Meeting, in full compliance with the Covid-19 rules, to bring all the foregoing issues together and to the attention of potential members. It was well attended, with lively discussion and contribution. The result was that Shropshire Woodcarvers was officially formed and a new committee elected. We now have a viable paid-up membership.

Hurdle No.4 is what happens next and what we are allowed to do, but we are on the case and we are an inventive bunch that will take every opportunity to maintain the camaraderie and carving skills that we have in Shropshire Woodcarvers.

The exercise of forming SW has been valuable because it has required every member to understand and accept their responsibilities to comply with our rules (Constitution, H&S, Privacy, etc.) and to look after their fellow members, the public and anyone else that could be affected by our activities. In so doing we have all accepted the responsibility to correct transgressions that we notice and we all share the ambition to promote, to the world at large, the skills, the friendship, the therapeutic benefits and the sheer pleasure that can be had from a piece of wood, a couple of sharp chisels and a free mind.

We at Shropshire Woodcarvers wish all other regional groups the very best of good fortune and we hope that we can all keep in touch to maintain a national network and to showcase the products of our hobby.

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# Make a chip carving sample board – part 1

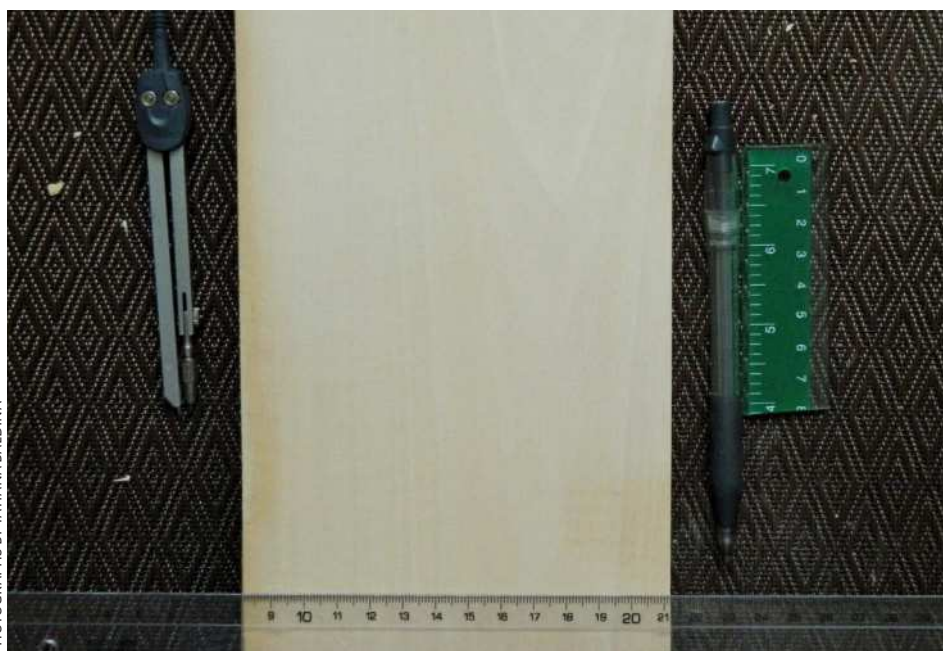
In the first of two articles, Tatiana Baldina demonstrates how to lay out some basic patterns for a chip carving sample board

If you have been carving or working with wood for a long time, then you no doubt remember that you started with the simple but important things, such as observing all safety precautions, learning about wood types, the texture and appearance of the wood fibres, what type of wood to use in your work, how to choose the necessary tools and how to work with them, how to carve simple patterns and so on.

If something seems difficult to you, then try to divide it into simple actions – and then, maybe, you will be able to solve a difficult task. If you look at a complex chip carving design and think that you will never be able to carve it, don't worry. Try to break a complex pattern into the simple elements of chip carving – step by step – and then you will see that the 'complex' pattern is actually made up of many 'simple' ones.

And that's what I would like to talk about in this article – chip carving and its simple or basic patterns – the type of carving I have decided to devote my life to studying.

The article will consist of two parts. In this first part we'll cover the process of drawing the simple patterns of chip carving and multi-level carving, which will be carved out in the second article.



## DRAWING TOOLS AND MATERIALS

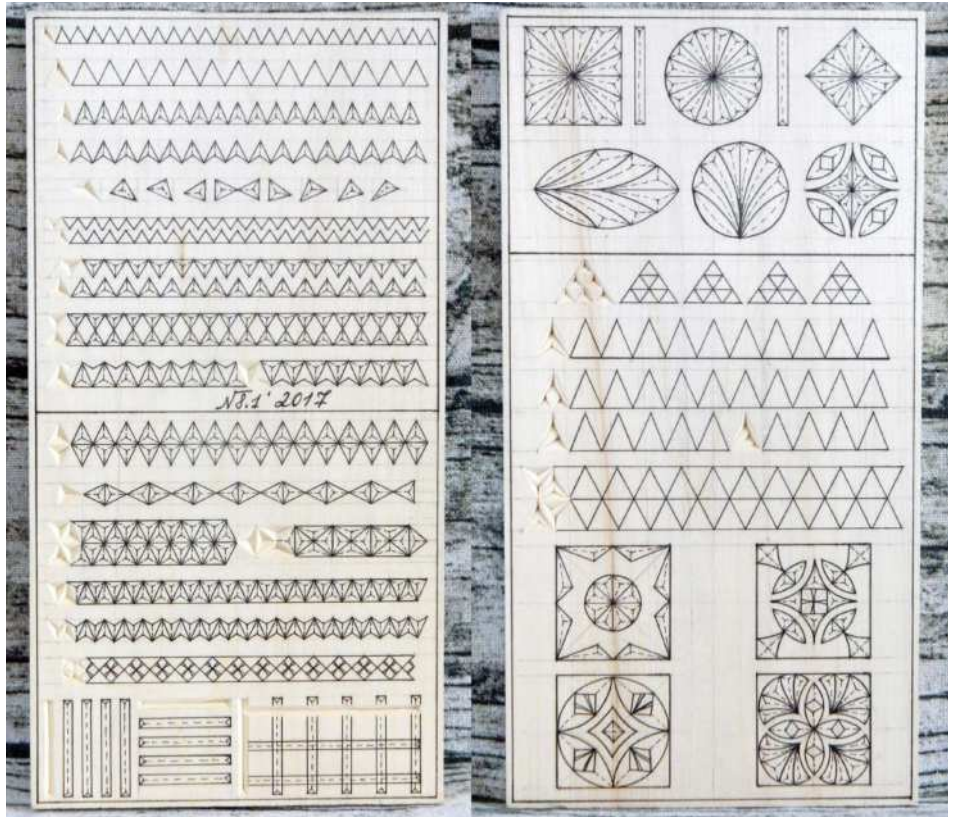
- A basswood board (250mm long, 150mm wide, 15mm thick)
- 0.5mm mechanical pencil with H or HB lead
- Ruler
- Compass

## What is a practice board?

Practice is something that you cannot do without in any craft if you want to succeed in it or simply do it at a good level. And different activities have different techniques for practice. For chip carving, there are at least three kinds of practice boards with different levels of difficulty, such as carving the patterns a) against the grain, b) along the grain and c) carving the patterns in different directions. When you take a basswood (*Tilia Americana*) board and a carving knife for the first time, you need to practise your carving on the patterns that go against the grain – it's the best way for beginners to start chip carving.

Any type of carving begins with the simplest patterns. Perfecting the technique of carving these simple elements is something that I believe is essential to beginning the study of chip carving.

In terms of execution, chip carving is perhaps the simplest form of carving to generate a variety of surface decoration. The main patterns are two-sided, three-sided and four-sided grooves of various sizes and depths. My practice board has four sections with four different levels of difficulty. You can see these sections on the completely drawn practice board on the right.



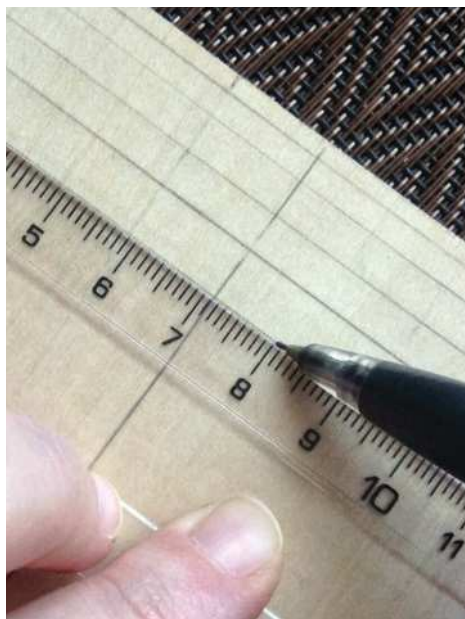
The completely drawn practice board begins with linear geometric or repeat patterns

## PREPARATION

Before you can start drawing the patterns, there is one necessary stage – preparing a basswood board. Many woodcarvers say that it is necessary to grind the surface of the wood before you start carving. I cannot agree with this, since the knife will become dull much easier and faster than if the surface of the wood is not polished before carving goes.

## First section of the patterns

Before laying out the patterns, divide the board in half lengthwise and draw a clear line down the middle of the board. Next, stepping down from the top edge by 5mm, draw parallel lines perpendicular to the centreline to outline each pattern maintaining an even distance between each one. Vary the size of the patterns to gain more experience in layout and carving technique.



Drawing parallel lines for the patterns

## Straight-wall chip pattern

The first pattern to draw is the simplest one in chip carving; a small straight-wall chip. The width between the parallel lines is 5mm and the width of a chip is also 5mm. I prefer not to use additional marks or geometric figures to separate the inner space of the limiting lines. I use dots for plotting and laying down markers then connect them afterwards. Work either side of the centreline as it will help you to maintain an even pattern on the board. Start by placing a dot along the bottom limiting line (the base of a chip/triangle) 2.5mm (equal to a half a chip) either side of the centreline then at 5mm intervals in both directions along the entire base line. Repeat the process on the top limiting line starting from the centreline with an offset of 5mm. Then connect all the dots. Now move on to the second pattern. The width between the parallel lines is 7mm and the width of a chip is 8mm. The offset for the first dots along the bottom line will be 4mm left and right of the centreline then 4mm thereafter. The dots along the top limiting line will be 4mm left and right of the centreline respectively.

TOP RIGHT: Start with a half chip offset on the bottom line

MIDDLE RIGHT: Use a full width chip offset along the top line

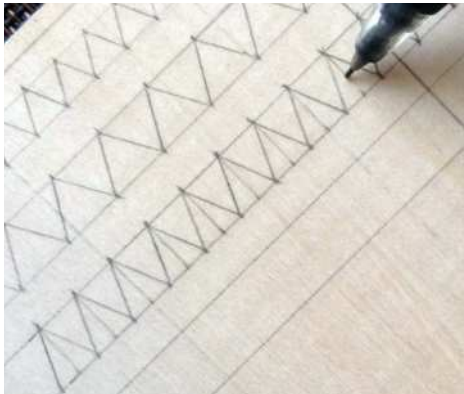
BOTTOM RIGHT: Connect the dots to complete the pattern



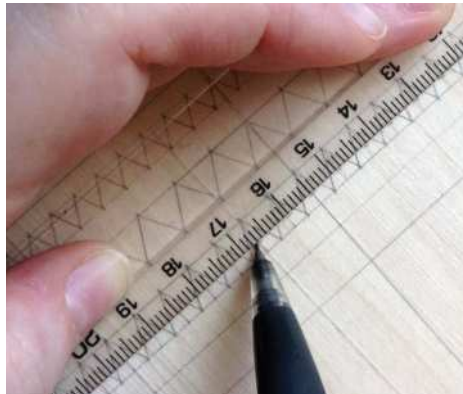
### Triangle pattern

A simple triangle is the next pattern to draw. The parallel lines are 7mm apart and the width of a chip is 6mm. Draw the triangles using the previous technique but this time we're going to add some additional lines that represent the stop cuts for this pattern of chips. Find the centre of each triangle along the bottom line and draw a

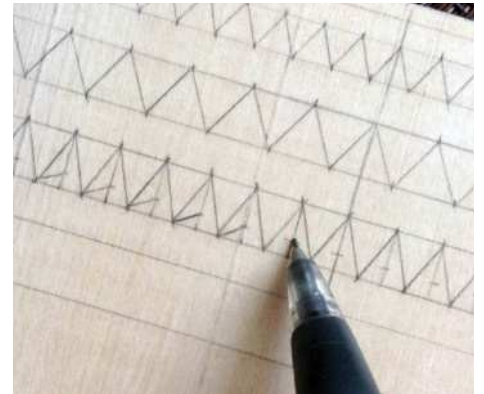
perpendicular line down from the top of the triangle to meet that point. Then, stepping upwards 2mm from the base of the triangles, mark dots inside each triangle on the vertical lines to identify the deepest point of chip. Then connect the dots at the base of the triangle left and right of the perpendicular line.



Drawing the perpendicular lines for stop cuts...



... and dots to find the deepest point of the triangles

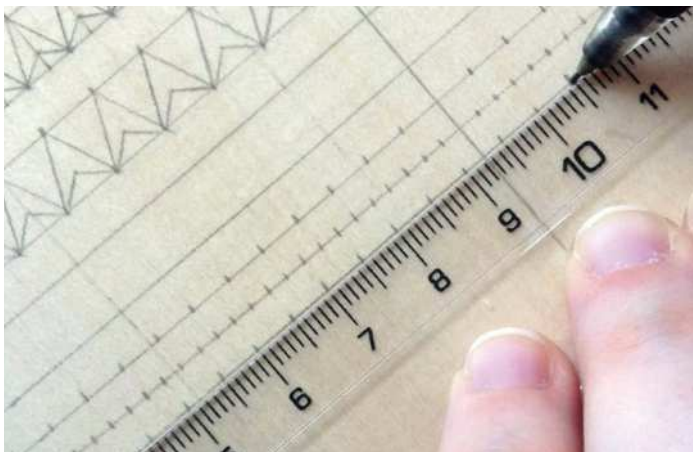


Connecting the dots with the triangles' base

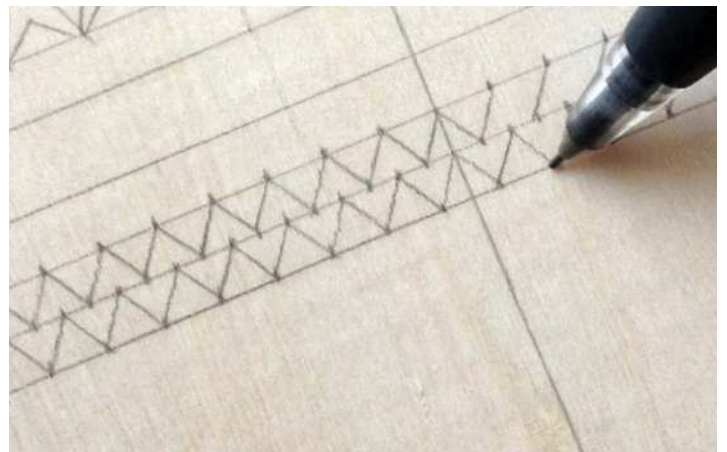
### Snake pattern

The next pattern is the 'snake made of the straight-wall chips', as it's called in Russia. The width between the parallel lines for this pattern is 8mm and the width of the chip is 5mm. So, to draw the full pattern, draw a central line between the parallel lines. Then, as shown in the photo below, start marking the dots. For the top line: starting from the central line of the practice board, draw dots every 5mm. For the

central line of the parallel lines: start from the centre but make the dots every 2.5mm. For the bottom line: mark a dot 2.5mm (equal to a half of a pattern) on the left side from the central line of the board and a dot 2.5mm on the right side, and then start drawing dots 5mm apart to create a straight-wall chip pattern. Then connect the two identical rows of dots as shown in the picture below.



The grid for laying out the 'snake' uses three parallel lines



It doesn't become obvious until the dots are joined

### Second section of the patterns

The pattern I chose from this section to draw and then to carve is a chain of triangles that are connected to each other by bases. As you can see, this pattern goes along the grain.

### Triangle chain pattern

The width between the parallel lines for this pattern is 7mm and the distance between the dots is 14mm (draw an additional central line between the parallel lines in advance for identifying stop cuts). Let's get started with the central line on the practice board: start marking the dots every 14mm on the top and bottom lines, then, connect all the dots diagonally as shown in the photo to the right. Also connect all the tops of the rhombuses with each other. Next, you need to find the deepest point of the triangles: at the base of each triangle, take 2mm steps to the left and to the right of it and mark the dots, then connect them with the bases shown in the inset photo.



Diagonally connecting all the dots and then (INSET) finding the deepest point of the triangles



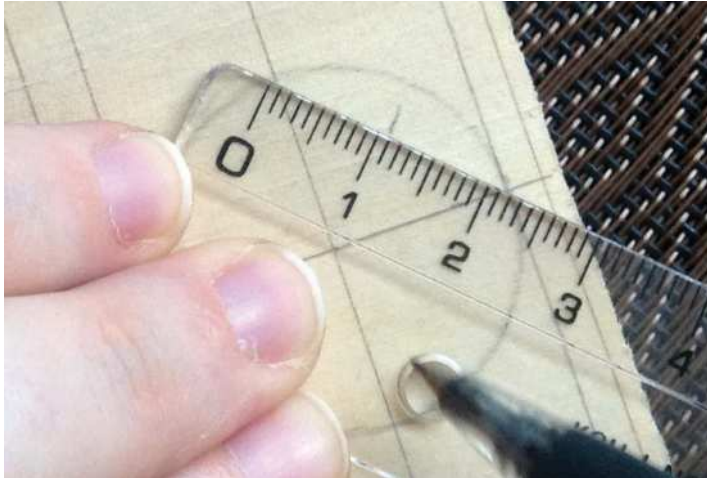
### Third section of the patterns

Now we'll move on to a more complex pattern. You might find this tricky to carve because there are chips that go along the grain, against the grain and have different directions on the wood at the same time.

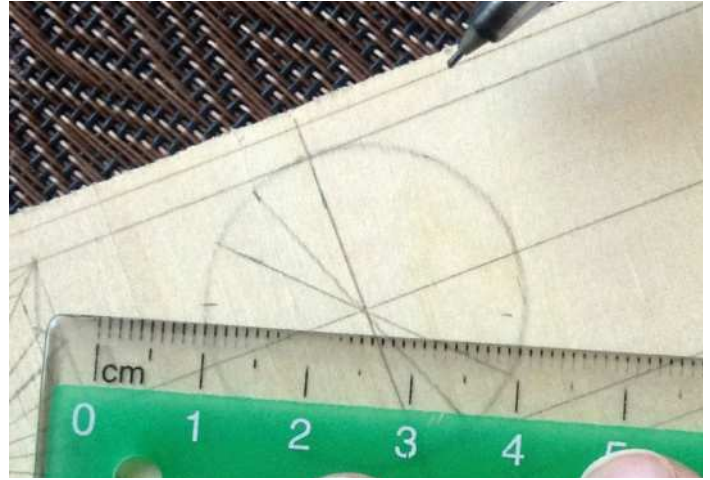
#### Circle pattern

I chose a circle with 16 three-corner chips for this section. The patterns of this design connect with each other, so you need to control your knife more. The width between the parallel lines for the circle is 30mm, so the radius of the circle is also 30mm. Then find the central lines of the circle, and start to divide these four sections into 16

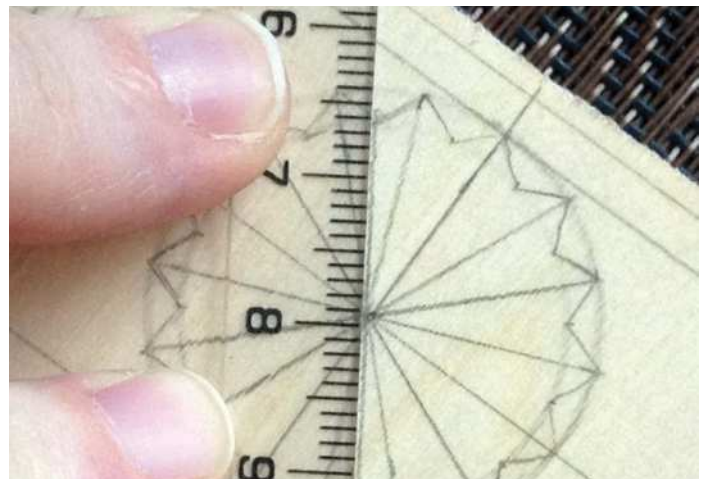
three-corner chips. Draw a circle inside of this one which is smaller by 2-2.5mm. Then find a centre on the base of each triangle of the smaller circle by eye and connect these dots with the bases. Finally, diagonally connect these dots to create the inner lines for stop cuts.



Dividing a circle into 16 three-corner chips



Drawing a smaller circle inside of the bigger one



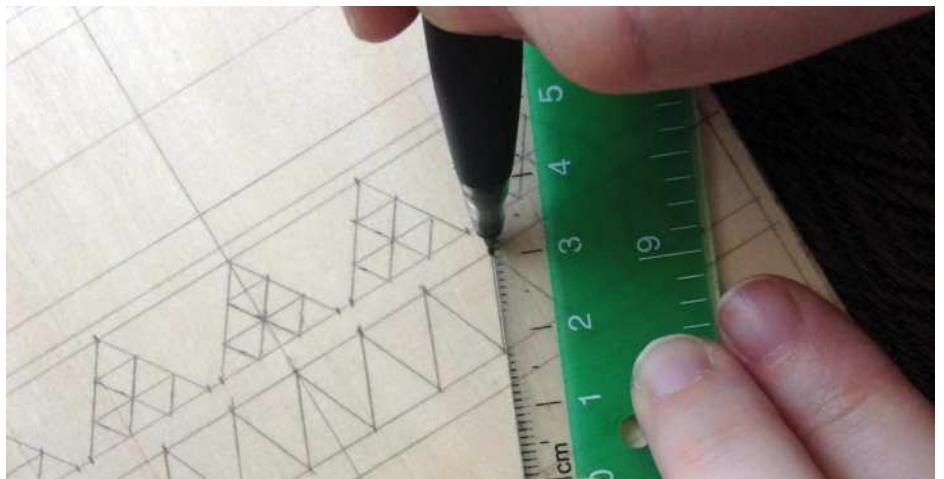
Drawing the lines for stop cuts inside of each triangle

### Fourth section of the patterns

The fourth section of a practice board is for multi-level carving. I decided to take one of the basic patterns which is used for creating multi-level carving.

#### Multi-level carving

The width between the parallel lines for this pattern is 12mm and the width of the pattern is 10mm. To lay it out repeat all the steps for bigger straight-wall chip as described in the first part of this article.



A triangle for a multi-level chip



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# Teaching young people

Cornwall Woodcarvers seek to pass on the craft and John Samworth explains how



**W**e were approached by a local Scout troop, which asked if we could demonstrate whittling to the troop. As it turned out, the Scout leader was quite inspirational and had asked what activities they would like to do in their next term. Working with knives was top of their list. Word soon spread throughout the district and we now visit six troops – 150 Scouts. The Scouting organisation, being well-structured and disciplined, is an ideal medium through which to teach woodcarving.

What advice do we at CWCs have to pass on to others, what tricks have we learned? These young people are incredibly enthusiastic and eager to learn. Anybody wanting to learn whittling will pick up good practice quickly, but some guidance will speed up the process. The very first

question to ask is ‘why whittling?’ The answer is simply that knives and materials for whittling are readily available and relatively low cost to acquire. In very basic terms, for a whittling class you require a dozen knives, a dozen sticks and some imagination.

## Safety equipment

For young people, safety must come first. It is fair to say that working with sharp knives has its inherent risks. A few nicks and scratches are to be expected, but good practice and methods will keep even these to a minimum and avoid anything more serious. The basic equipment should be cut guards, gloves, bodger board, first aid kit and telephone. Having undertaken a risk assessment you may deem it necessary to include other items in your methods.

Cut guards can be made at home from thick material, preferably leather, or by cutting the fingers or thumbs off an old pair of gloves, or rubber finger cones, sold at many stationery stores. Their purpose is to protect the thumb from cuts in performing the pull cut.

Too big and they become cumbersome, likely to fall off and people will avoid using them.

There are many manufacturers of safety gloves for industry for adults at cheaper prices, from £5, but those in the picture are specific for children, and come in four sizes. These gloves offer level five protection against cuts, but not stabs, and come as a pair and are machine washable. The gloves are interchangeable and should at the very least be worn on the knife hand.

Bodger boards can be made at home from an offcut of many sheet material. This one is made from 18mm birch plywood and is particularly tough, offering a high degree of protection to the body. There is the option to run a cord through the board to make it a foot operated grip, freeing both hands. For comfort in use I have lined the back with carpet underlay.

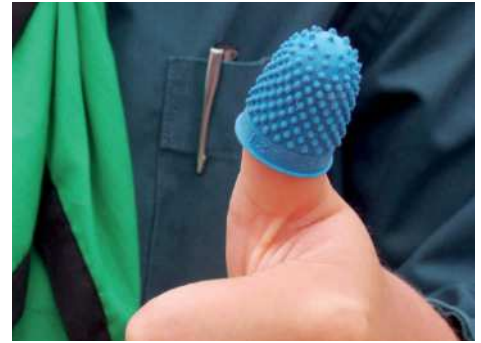
In conclusion, absolute minimum protection should be a thumb guard, but when teaching the young, especially when they have little or no experience of using a knife, issue safety gloves. Safety gloves offer excellent protection against cuts, but not stabs. Again, I emphasise the importance of good cutting techniques, away from the body, to remove the risk of stabs.

### Choice of knife

A wide range of knives are available and they all have their benefits. Many manufacturers produce 'child' knives, but I've found these unsuitable for teaching whittling. The wrong knife for the job is dangerous, because the user adopts an awkward hand hold, too close to the vital areas of the body, and applies uncontrollable and excessive force. When the blade slips, as it surly will, injuries will result. Knives with folding blades have an enormous advantage in that they are safe to carry in one's pocket,



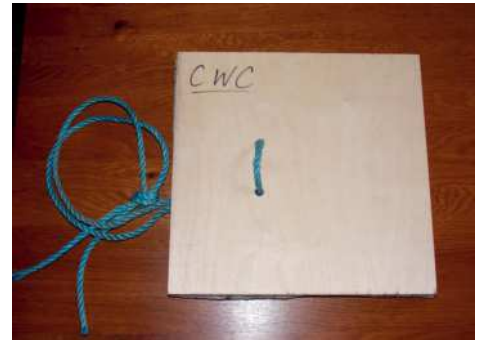
Thumb guards



Rubber finger cones



Cut-resistant gloves



Bodger board

but for teaching I find the risk of the blade unexpectedly closing and trapping fingers too high and always recommend fixed-blade knives. A varied cross section

is listed below. My comments are made with first time use by young people in mind, not the experienced whittler. Safety of the young user is my primary concern.



### Flexcut KN12

Flexcut sells an extensive range of whittling knives, each for a specific use. Its knives tend to be in the range of short blades, the KN12 has a blade length of 32mm, which makes it ideal for detail work. The handles are made from wood, ergonomic and comfortable in the hand. Blades come sharp, pre-ground with a single bevel and ready to use straight away. The steel is good and keeps an edge well. The KN12, with its rounded nose, is less likely to cause a stab injury. Carrying case or sheath not supplied.



### Mora 106 or 120

Mora sells an extensive range of knives for a wider range of outdoor uses. Many are too big for whittling. The Mora 120 is the smaller of the two, but still with a blade length of 62mm, which is particularly suited to green wood carving using long slicing cuts. The handles are made from wood, a basic round design, but quite functional and comfortable to use. Blades come sharp, pre-ground with a single bevel and ready to use straight away. The steel is good and keeps an edge well. Both the Mora 106 and the 120 blades taper to a sharp point with the potential for serious stab wounds. A plastic sheath is provided, but it often works loose and the knife can fall out.



### Hultafors Electrical Fitter's knife

For detail work, the finger guard can obstruct access, but the obvious safety benefits outweigh any aesthetic concerns. A durable plastic sheath is included in the price, which holds the knife safely and has a smooth withdrawal action. I use this knife extensively as a first knife in lessons because it offers such a high degree of safety, works well for rough work and offers excellent value for money.

In conclusion, for a basic, economical and 'safe' introduction knife especially for youngsters, start with the Hultafors Electrical Fitter's knife. If you are considering your first upgrade, try the Mora 120 whittling knife and if you become addicted to the craft explore all the specialist knives that Flexcut has to offer.



## Sharpening

Perhaps at CWCs we are too kind, but we keep the knives sharp for each lesson. Sharpening a knife could discourage some pupils from learning and our aim is to encourage participation. If someone asks a direct question about sharpening then we take this opportunity to discuss and demonstrate sharpening techniques. Stropping, however, is essential and we cover this. We teach stropping techniques and explain the reasons for doing it. Regular stropping is part of the lessons.

## Knife holds and cuts

When discussing cuts with people we prefer to start by explaining where the power is coming from and the safety and risks involved. This prevents people from trying the cut too soon with inappropriate force. To avoid confusion between left and right-handed people, we use the terms 'knife hand' for the hand holding the knife and 'wood hand' for the other one holding the wood. Our approach to cut technique is to limit the blade movement, but focusing on the method of powering a cut. If you push down with all your strength and the knife slips then the blade will travel several feet, cutting anything in its path. If the power comes from a restricted body movement, such as clenching a fist, the knife can only ever travel a short distance. Much safer.

A good guide to how safely the students are working and how closely they are following the instructions is to observe the amount of jerking in their movements. Good, safe practice is a smooth operation with no waving of the hands. The chippings on the floor tell the whole story. Small, clean-cut chips forming a cluster about the feet indicate perfect technique. Flying chips mean that too much force or flicks are being used. Large chips mean that a lot of force is being applied from the knife hand, not the restricted body movements. Rough chips indicate working against the grain. With practice you will notice many more clues of bad practice.

## Push cut

The power for the push cut comes from extending the wood thumb forward and pushing on the back of the blade. The maximum travel of the blade is now limited to 20mm for a typical thumb. The knife hand only holds the knife. Grip the knife firmly with your thumb on the bottom, but not so tight as to get white knuckles and quickly tire the hand. Place the blade to the wood about 5-10mm from the end, pointing away from you, and push the knife by extending the wood thumb away from you. Too much travel with the knife means that force is being applied with the knife hand, risking injury.



Push cut

## Reinforced push cut(s)

In the reinforced push cut(s) the power comes from the knife hand by pivoting on the wood hand thumb and either twisting the wrist down and outwards or by rotating the wrist flat and outwards. In these cuts the knife hand stays in contact with the wood, the tip of the blade moving 30-40mm. Many people find that a bodger board offers particular safety on the push cuts. Check for jerks where the force is coming from the arm, not twisting or rotating the wrist.



Reinforced push cut(s)

## Straight arm push cut

In the straight arm push cut, the power comes from the shoulder, conveyed through a straight arm and wrist. This power is large and the knife movement may be up to 150-200mm. Hold the wood hand across your lap, until the outside of the wood hand wrist is resting over the knife side leg, pointing away from the leg. Hold the knife firmly between the thumb and first two fingers. Wrap the last two finger around the handle lightly. A little movement of the handle between the bottom two fingers helps the knife slice through the wood, and increases the slice though any resistant spots in the wood. Point the wood away from you. With a straight knife arm place the knife to the wood. Push the shoulder-arm-hand-knife out and away from you. For extra power, time the cuts to your breathing. Place the knife on the inhale and push on the exhale with a puff. The resulting cut will produce shavings similar to those from a plane. Keep a watchful eye to ensure the pupils keep the wood cuts out beyond their leg and not rest the wood directly on the leg or between the legs. Watch out for wagging of the arms and if the knife becomes stuck. When stuck too deep a cut was attempted. The wagging will lead to frustration and errors.



Important: allow extra space between pupils and keep left handers to the left of right handers, to avoid knives clashing

## Chest expansion cut

In the chest expansion cut, the power comes from squeezing the shoulders back and shoulder blades together. This is an extremely powerful cut, but if done correctly the blade travel is limited to 80-100mm, the cut comes from a rotation movement with both hands firmly placed on the chest and not moving off it. Most pupils find this cut counter-intuitive at first. Hold the knife as normal except the blade edge is facing into the V between the thumb and forefinger. Bring the knife to the wood across the middle of the



Chest expansion cut

chest over the breastbone. Keep the knife on top of the wood and both wrists in contact with your chest. The blade is now pointing out and away from the body. Squeeze the shoulder blades together as you exhale with a puff. No power should be exerted by the arms or hands, hence the wrists stay in contact with the chest. The action of expanding the chest creates an opening scissor-like slice cut action. Watch out for jerking hands or the knife travelling up towards the face. This is caused by power coming from the arms.

## Projects



For the cooking utensils, avoid the poisonous woods of laburnum and yew and, for general safety avoid blackthorn. Most green timbers work well, such as sycamore, lime, beech, ash or maple. ▶

### ASSOCIATED ACTIVITIES

Whittling need not be seen as an isolated activity, especially with Scouts, but rather as part of a larger set of life skills, such as giving some thought to sourcing your own timber, managing trees, planting trees, axe and saw use, bodging, design and tool maintenance, to name but a few. But best of all, whittling makes for a wonderful social activity, where a group of people can sit around together, chat and carve a piece of wood. They may start as strangers, but they will finish as friends.

### LAW ON KNIVES IN ENGLAND AND WALES

Before embarking on any project of this nature, do check the local laws where you are. This summary applies to England and Wales only. In April 2018, the UK government announced a review of offensive weapons which may change the knife laws. But at the time of writing the following briefly describes the basic laws on knives – ref: [www.gov.uk/buying-carrying-knives](http://www.gov.uk/buying-carrying-knives)

#### It's illegal to:

- Sell a knife to anyone under 18, unless it has a folding blade 3in long (7.62cm) or less;
- Carry a knife in public without good reason, unless it has a folding blade with a cutting edge 3in long or less;
- Carry, buy or sell any type of banned knife;
- Use any knife in a threatening way (even a legal knife).

It should be noted that 'lock' knives, which are popular with whittlers, in law are not classed as folding knives. Even though the knife folds for safe carrying, the locking mechanism means that the law considers these knives to be the same as fixed-blade knives and will treat them as such.

#### Good reasons for carrying a knife

Examples of good reasons to carry a knife in public include:

- Taking knives you use at work to and from work
- Taking it to a gallery or museum to be exhibited
- If it'll be used for theatre, film, television, historical reenactment or religious purposes, for example the kirpan some Sikhs carry
- If it'll be used in a demonstration or to teach someone how to use it

A court will decide if you've got a good reason to carry a knife or a weapon if you're charged with carrying it illegally. From above it is evident that both teacher and pupil may carry a knife in public to and from a whittling lesson. Still we recommend discretion and that knives are kept out of harm's way in a tool box or pocket (when safe) and not carried in open view, attached to a belt.

Very similar laws relate to other sharp or pointed objects, such as a piece of whittling. While a whittling knife needs to be sharp and pointed, the choice of whittling project does not need to be either sharp or pointed. Whittling a butter knife or a letter opener are both sensible projects for learning whittling but the butter knife avoids all the legal concerns on carrying sharp or pointed objects, whereas the letter opener in certain circumstances may fall foul of the law.

The police do have powers to stop, search and question people if they have reasonable grounds for suspecting that any person is carrying a weapon. If you are stopped by the police, keep calm and be truthful. Explain that you are carrying the knife to a pre-arranged whittling class and the knife is for whittling. If in any doubt first seek qualified advice from a trusted advice agency, solicitor or local police. Health and safety laws will also need to be considered and to help the reader I have prepared a risk assessment and method statement.

### RISK ASSESSMENT AND METHOD STATEMENTS

The Health & Safety Executive of the United Kingdom states that a risk assessment is a document to:

- Identify the hazards
- Decide who might be harmed and how
- Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions
- Record your significant findings
- Review your assessment and update if necessary

A safety method statement is a document that describes in a logical sequence exactly how a job is to be carried out in a safe manner and without risks to health. It includes all the risks identified in the risk assessment and the measures needed to control those risks.

Although in law the method statement is not required, it allows the teaching to be properly planned and resourced. We find the method statement is most effective if combined with the risk assessment and incorporates a teaching plan.

Please take time to study these documents carefully. They are not prepared to tick a bureaucrats box, they are prepared to reduce the risk of injury and to reduce the severity of any injury which might result. We have observed there is an improbable risk of minor injury and a highly improbable risk of injury requiring medical treatment, such as stitches to a cut.

**Download a copy of the risk assessment at**  
[www.cornwallwoodcarvers.uk/tutorials](http://www.cornwallwoodcarvers.uk/tutorials)



# Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

We take a tour of one of Europe's grandest art museums

**T**he Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna is the largest art museum in Austria. It houses one of the finest art collections in the world, including works by Raphael, Titian, Dürer, Rembrandt and Vermeer, but the building itself is also a major attraction.

The Museum was built in the late 19th century as part of the development of the Ringstrasse, the grand circular boulevard that runs around the historic city centre. The main architect of the building was Gottfried Semper, expanding on plans by Carl von Hasenauer. Semper was influenced by the architectural style

of ancient Rome. After 20 years of planning and construction, the Museum was opened in 1891 by Emperor Franz Joseph I. The imposing entrance hall, staircase and cupola hall are decorated in a splendid neo-Baroque style, featuring designs in marble, stucco and gold leaf. The focal point of the main staircase is Antonio Canova's marble statue Theseus Slaying the Centaur, which is flanked by two imperial lions. The building's exterior is decorated with a series of statues of figures representing the arts and art history, as well as sculptures of famous artists and their sponsors. You can explore the Museum building and its collections at: [www.khm.at/en](http://www.khm.at/en).



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