

WOOD CARVING

Carve a gilded ribbon festoon with Steve Bisco



TECHNICAL ADVICE Relief carving basics • Sharpening V-tools • Chip carving boards • Bandsaw carving **PROJECTS TO CARVE** Little owl • Hare and tortoise money box • Pistol-grip walking stick • Wolf mirror frame • Hazelnuts



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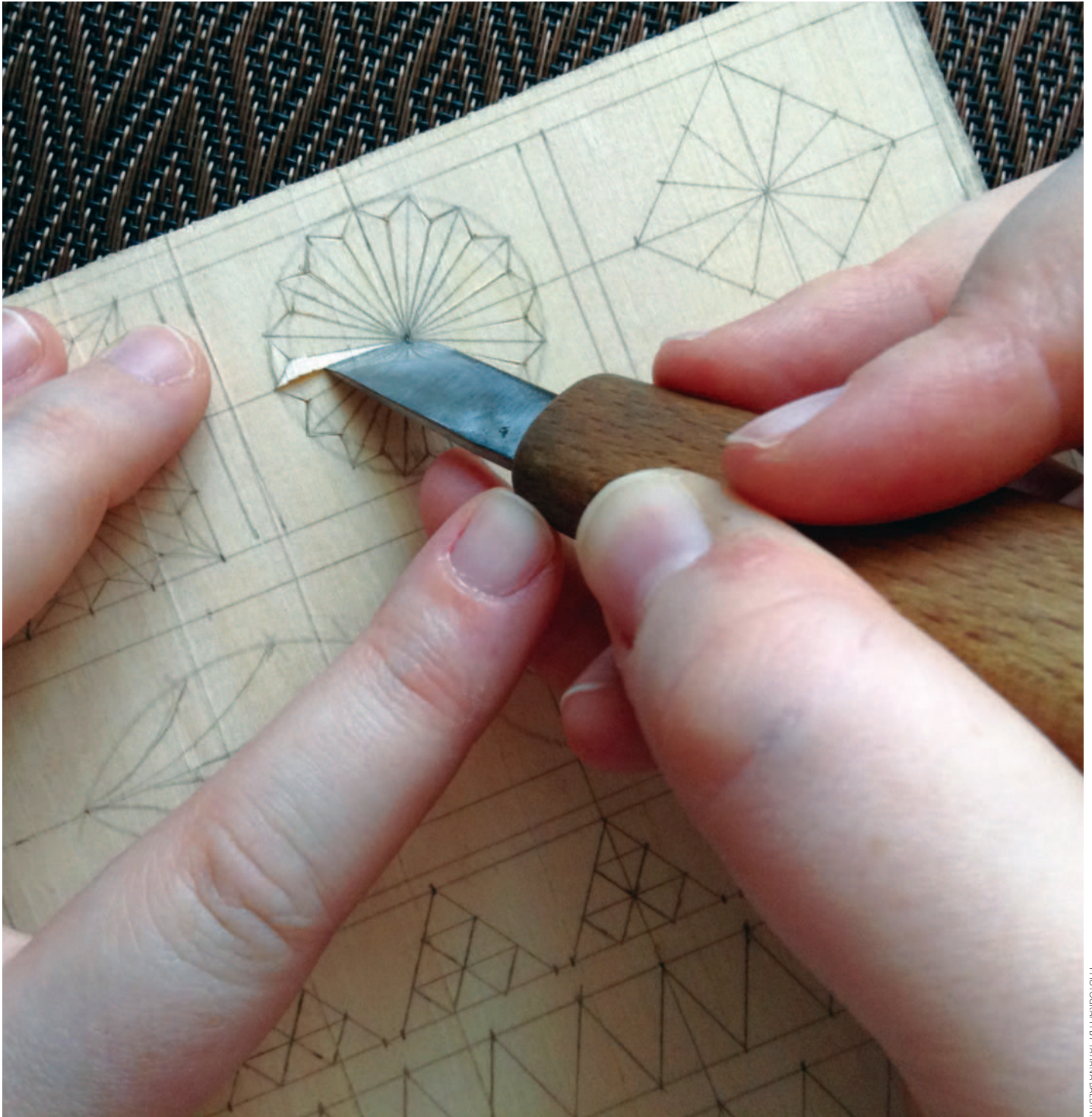
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Welcome



PHOTOGRAPH BY TATIANA BALDINI

While welcoming a new year, it can't be ignored that lockdowns continue across the world. 2021 holds hope for the future and carvers everywhere have been affected for nearly a year, either negatively with an impact to their income, or positively with more time to carve.

This issue, Cedric Boynes helps you save the pennies with a novel hare and tortoise money box. Continuing the theme of nature, Zoë Gertner carves hazelnuts on leaf, Peter Benson presents his charming owl and Alan Denham shares his wolves mirror. Tatiana Baldini helps you practise your chip carving skills (pictured above) and John Samworth continues to help you develop your relief carving techniques.

We've lots of tool tech too as Nic Westermann begins his new sharpening clinic series, inviting carvers to tell him all their grinding woes. Don't miss out on an opportunity for him to sharpen your problem tool and feature it in a future issue. Bob Adsett ensures you get the best performance from your bandsaw and Dave Western carves a useful but decorative traditional style D-adze.

And as we announce the winner of last issue's leather apron from BeaverCraft Tools, there's another prize draw opportunity to win one in From the Community.

As always, we love to see what you've been carving, so please email photos of your work to WCeditorial@thegmcgroup.com.

Happy carving!

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Win a high-quality leather apron in our easy to enter prize draw.

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Gilded ribbon festoon

Steve Bisco carves and gilds a Georgian-style floral ribbon festoon

Ribbons were a popular motif in decorative carvings of the 17th and 18th centuries, frequently seen 'tying' together bunches of naturalistic flowers, often in spirals and usually with a bow at the top. Sudbury Hall in Derbyshire (nationaltrust.org.uk/sudbury-hall) has some fine 17th-century examples of floral festoons bound in spiralling ribbons, and Thomas Chippendale famously used ribbon patterns for Georgian chair backs in his *Director of furniture designs* in 1754.

An essential feature of carved ribbons is the way they rise and fall and flow around the flowers or other features they are binding together. Some are very crinkly and others, like this example, have a smooth surface, which contrasts with the natural texture of the flowers. The bow needs to resemble as closely as possible a real fabric bow, with the 'wings' twisting and folding over, and all gathered together into a knot in the middle. The loose ends of the ribbon traditionally have a split V shape, curling away at the points.

I have designed this floral ribbon carving as a small project that doesn't require too much investment in wood or carving time, and just a small expenditure on gilding materials. The pattern fits on to an A4 sheet of paper, and it is carved on a piece of limewood 290 x 130 x 38mm. The flowers are carved and textured to look like natural flowers loosely embraced by a silk ribbon, and the whole carving is pierced and extensively undercut to make it look light and lively as a wall decoration.

You can choose to leave it in its pale limewood finish, or give it a matt white painted finish if you like, but to recreate the spirit of the Georgian period I have given it a gilded finish using imitation gold leaf. Gilding may sound difficult, but it is quite easy for a hobby carver to achieve a 'distressed antique' finish with imitation gold leaf. Some carvers like to leave all their carvings with a wooden finish, but a carver exploring decorative carving in period styles should learn to embrace rich decoration. Gilding, as the Georgians well knew, brings warmth and light into a room, and the convoluted surfaces of a gilded carving will sparkle like a diamond in the reflected glow of a nearby lamp.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVE BISCO

Things you will need**Materials:**

- Lime 290 x 130 x 38mm
- Sanding-sealer, gold lacquer, gilding size, imitation gold leaf, French polish

Tools:**Gouges:**

- No.3, 10mm
- No.3 fishtail, 18mm, 10mm
- No.4 fishtail, 6mm
- No.5, 7mm, 13mm curved
- No.7, 10mm
- No.8, 8mm, 8mm curved
- No.9, 3mm, 16mm curved
- Back-bent, 12mm
- V-tool, 6mm straight, 2mm straight

Chisels:

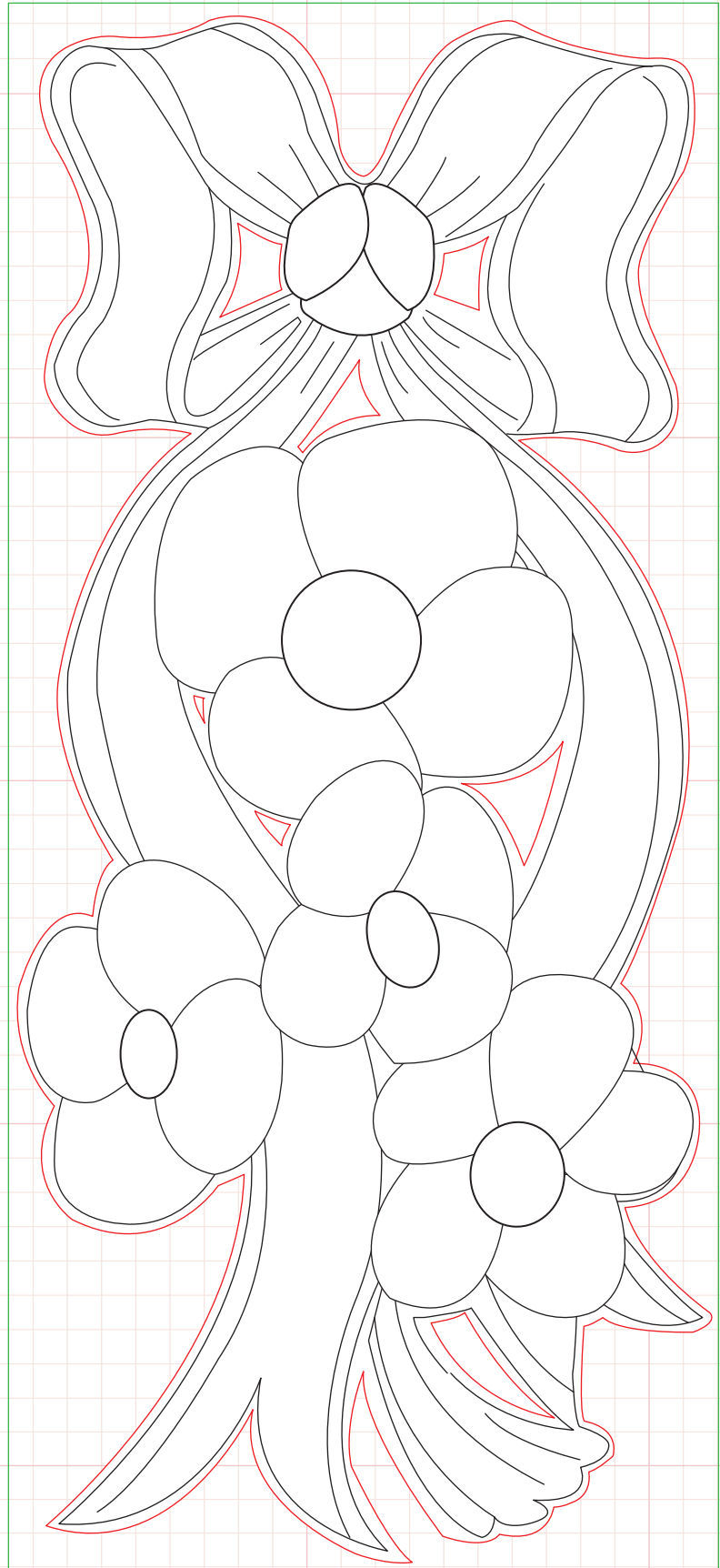
- Flat, 20mm, 6.5mm, 3mm
- Skew, 10mm
- Hooked skew, 16mm

Other:

- Jigsaw, bandsaw

LIMEWOOD

Limewood is the very best wood for carving foliage and anything that needs to look thin and natural. It holds together well in thin sections and can take fine detail without crumbling. It is, however, fairly plain to look at. Best quality limewood has an even, pale, creamy-white colour, but in less perfect pieces the colour can vary between light brown and rusty pink, or even streaky grey and dark-brown near bark, so most Georgian carvers decorated limewood with gilding or white paint. In decorated work you don't need to be fussy about colour variations in the wood, allowing more flexibility with timber selection. I often use limewood given to me as branches by a local tree surgeon, which I can cut up and dry into useable carving wood in six months if I compromise on colour.



PREPARATIONS

1 Get a piece of limewood 290 x 130 x 38mm. Make a full-size copy of the drawing (which will fit onto an A4 sheet) and get a sheet of carbon paper for tracing.

2 Tape the drawing, with the carbon paper under it, firmly on to the wood and carefully trace the pattern. Check the tracing and then mark the cutting lines in red.

3 Cut out the internal voids with a jigsaw, using a narrow blade (4-5mm) for the tight turns. The blade may flex in the turns so make allowance for this. Hold the work in a bench vice, or clamp it to overhang the edge of the bench.

4 Cut round the outer edges with a bandsaw or scrollsaw if you have one to avoid the flexing problem, but if not, continue with the jigsaw.

5 The best way to hold a piece of work like this is to glue it to a backing board with a piece of card between the carving and the board. Cereal packets have a suitable thickness of card which, when the surface carving is finished, can be prised apart with a knife to detach the work. Screw the backing board to your bench.

ROUGHING OUT

6 First we need to rough out the shape and levels of the elements, starting with the bow and knot. It can be quite difficult to envisage how the ribbon twists over on itself in the bow, so look carefully at the photos. The top corners of the ribbon use the full thickness of the board, and the outer edges reach down to the back of the board. The inner ends all slope towards the knot.

7 Rough out the rest of the ribbon as it flows down each side of the carving. The inner edge of each ribbon is about 8mm below the face of the flowers at this stage, and the outer edge comes down almost to the level of the backing board. The top ends merge into the knot of the bow, and the split bottom ends splay outwards with one point at the full thickness of the wood and the other point down near the backing board. Also rough out the level of the acanthus leaf at the bottom of the carving at this stage.

8 Finish roughing out by very roughly shaping the flowers. The ones at the sides slope down towards the outer edges, the one in the centre stays at the original level, and the large one at the top slopes towards the bow.

IMITATION GOLD LEAF

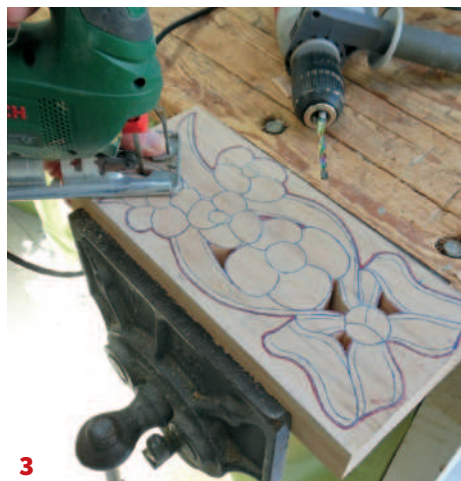
Imitation gold leaf is much cheaper and easier to handle than real gold leaf. You can buy it from most art stores and online in 'books' of 25 leaves, each measuring 140mm square. Expect to pay around £4-£12. It comes in transfer leaf, with the gold attached to its backing paper; or loose leaf, which is not attached. Transfer leaf is useful for flat surfaces and use outside (where loose leaf would blow away) but on the convoluted surfaces of a carving the backing paper restricts flexibility. I prefer loose leaf for carvings.



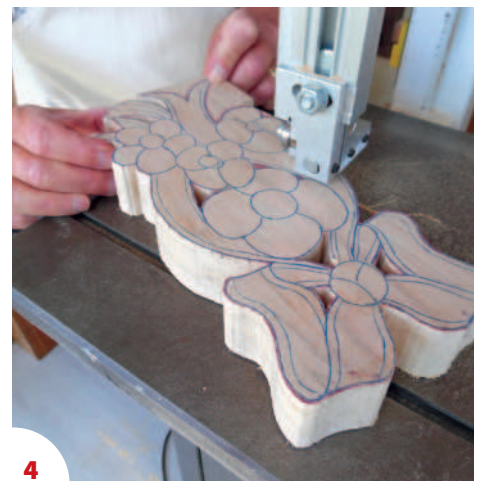
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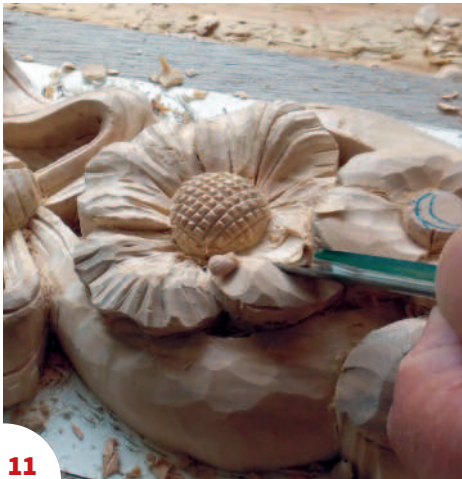
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TOP TIP

If you accidentally break a piece off while carving thin sections, don't despair. Just glue it back together with a good wood adhesive and carve over the join for an invisible mend.

DETAIL CARVING

9 Now we return to the bow for the detail carving. Carve the upper surfaces of the ribbon so it is smooth and has a natural flow from the knot and over the top, then twisting under and around again at the bottom corners. This requires deep excavation under the corners to create the twist, curls and folds, which is one of the trickier bits of the carving.



11



12

10 Use a small V-tool to carve the border lines and the little 'darts' that show the fabric gathering in towards the knot. Carve more gathering lines in the knot, crossing in three different directions to represent the tied ribbon.

11 Carve the big flower at the top, giving the petals lots of rise, fall, and curl. Four gouges are used to carve the curls and texture, working down through No.9, 16mm; No.7, 10mm; No.8, 8mm; and No.9, 3mm, creating small hollows within medium hollows within large hollows. A 2mm V-tool and finally a 16mm hooked skew chisel are used to create veins and slashes at the edges and around the centre. The central stamen is cross-hatched by scoring crossed diagonal lines with the hooked skew then with the V-tool.



13



14

12 The smaller flower nestled in the centre has a smoother texture created mainly with a No.5, 7mm gouge. The central stamen is hollow and textured with the hooked skew.

13 The medium flower on the left has the same texturing as the large flower but on a smaller scale. It slopes steeply to the left, using most of the 38mm thickness of the board.

14 Carve the flower on the lower right side with a slightly dimpled texture, taking little scooping cuts with a No.7, 10mm and No.8, 8mm gouge, and slope it halfway down the side of the ribbon. Use the 2mm V-tool to texture the central stamen like a tighter version of the flower adjoining it.



15



16

15 Undercut the edges of the flowers where they overlap other flowers and the ribbon. Deeply undercut the flowers that extend over the sides of the ribbon and use a 12mm back-bent gouge to carve the ribbon surface beneath them. Refine the inner edge of the voids where there are gaps between the side ribbons and the flowers, and slightly undercut the lower edge of the ribbon.

16 Use a No.3, 18mm fishtail gouge to refine and smooth the final surface of the side ribbons, and carve in the border lines with the 2mm V-tool.

17 At the lower end, carefully undercut the split pennant ends of the ribbon and the lowest flower to carve the acanthus leaf. Carve the vein lines and grooves of the acanthus detail, curving from the broader ends to the narrow stem that disappears under the flower.

18 Undercut the edges that can be tackled from the front, then carefully prise the carving off the card and backing board by sliding a flat knife under it.

19 Fix some strips of wood to the bench to hold the carving in place and lay it face down on soft padding. Hold it down with a thin batten screwed at the ends onto the bench. Carefully undercut from behind, and hollow out between the ribbon and the flowers to open out the gaps. Use the hooked skew to sharpen up all the edges of the flowers and ribbons to make them look naturally thin when viewed from the front.

20 Give it a coat of sander-sealer, front and back. Use fine abrasives to remove any loose fibres and smooth the surfaces that should be smooth, but don't dull the details that should be sharp. Photo 20 shows the finished carving before decorating.

GILDING

21 Prepare the carving for gilding by giving it a coat of a good-quality gold lacquer as an undercoat for the gold leaf. Put it on thinly so you don't clog the detail, and leave it to dry thoroughly.

22 Get a pack of imitation gold leaf and some gilding size (available quite cheaply from most art stores). Apply some gilding size thinly with a brush to a section of the carving. Leave it for five to 10 minutes until it is dry but slightly tacky to the touch. Take a sheet of gold leaf and cut it into pieces about 25 x 50mm. Fold a small piece of paper and use it to pick up a piece of leaf, then slowly and carefully place it, on the sized area. Press it down gently with a soft brush, then brush away any loose pieces of leaf. Go over any gaps with more leaf.

23 Imitation gold leaf needs a sealer to stop it tarnishing. I use French polish (shellac) to 'antique' it and seal it at the same time. Apply the French polish thinly by brush. Work quickly as it dries fast, and avoid going over the same bit twice or you will build up a 'muddy' patch.

24 Hang it where the gilding will reflect the soft light of a lamp. All that glitters may not really be gold, but it will certainly look like it. ▶



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Relief carving outlines

John Samworth's first exercise in relief carving

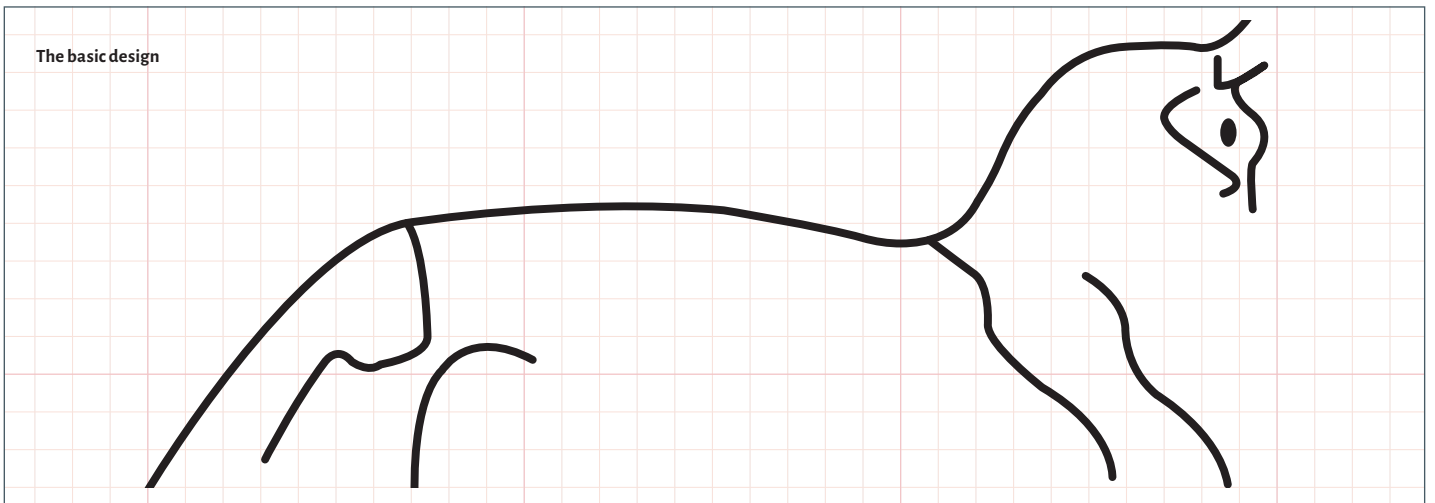


PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN SAMWORTH, EXCEPT WHERE INDICATED

Following on from my previous article on relief carving, I'm going to look at how to draw then carve a simple piece. At its simplest this form is more of an etching than a carving, but at times very

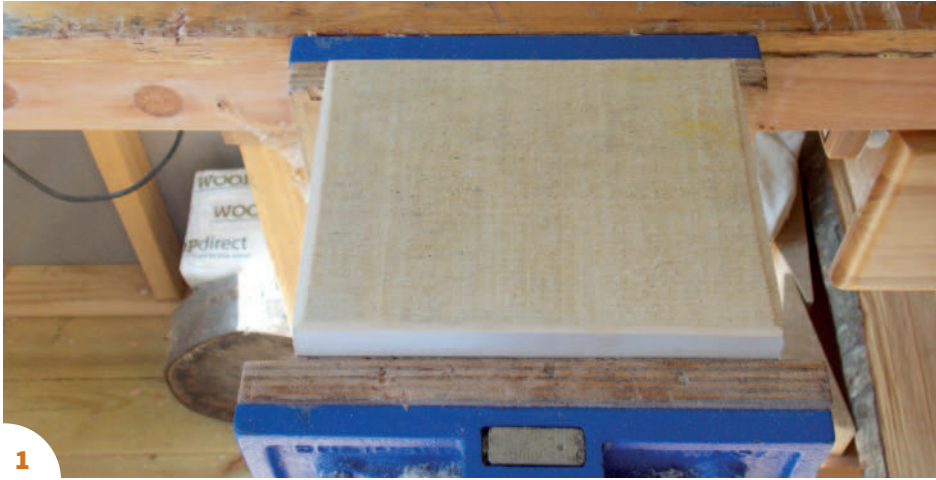
effective. Normally when I relief carve, I focus on an image, therefore I choose a simple wood, with little figure in the grain. Lime and tulip – aka poplar – are ideal.

The basic design



My first exercise is inspired by the brilliant Bronze Age people who carved in the earth the White Horse of Uffington. The original white

horse lies in harmony with the earth from which it was raised. I try to capture the simplicity of its form with sympatric presence within the wood.

**1**

1 The piece of wood I have chosen is 4½in x 6in (115 x 150mm) and 1in (25mm) thick, with the grain running along the 6in length. The sides of this carving will be seen and must be prepared before any work is done on the face. Use a plane or sand paper to smooth the sides. When working on any carving it is vital for safety and accuracy to clamp the work tight to prevent any movement while you are working on the carving. Here I have opted to clamp it within a vice, because the wood is reasonably thick and the carving very shallow.

**2**

2 Hardwoods are typically sold in their rough state, as they left the saw mill, unless extra is paid for planing. The wood often has many superficial marks, water stains and dirt. On this piece it is covered in bandsaw cuts running at right angles to the grain. You could use planes or sandpaper to get rid of these, but I have chosen to use a large 1in (25mm) flat gouge; either a No.3 or No.4. A few light, slicing cuts soon established that the grain was indeed running along the 6in length, but also dipping down very slightly on the left. Thus, cutting from right to left made for a cleaner finish than cutting from left to right.

**3****4**

3 After the first pass, the surface was smooth, not flat, but the bandsaw marks ran deep into the surface and must be removed. No straight lines are to be visible in the carving. In this picture the sunlight just caught the surface, highlighting the tooled finish. This is the effect I was intending, not a flat finish. The effect evokes the image of a gentle, undulating landscape.

4 A couple more passes over with the flat gouge and the surface is perfectly clean and smooth ready for the detail. Practise the cleanest of cuts – it is interesting watching the light reflect off the many facets of the surface while there are no blemishes to detract from the detail.

**5**

5 To apply the detail of the horse I shall use a parting gouge, in this case a 60°, 10mm Ashley Isles 39ZG. I have sharpened it to a keel at the base to cut a true V groove. The wooden block it is resting on is a protector, which prevents damage to the edge when not in use.

6 Hand grip is vital for proper control of the tool, for safety and accuracy of your cut. The picture shows a typical right-handed grip. Please note: my hands are behind the cutting edge at all times; the heel of my left hand rests on the surface at all times; my left hand is gripping the shaft of the tool*, with my thumb pointing up the handle; my right hand is gripping the handle with my thumb pointing down the tool. To make a cut I push with my right hand, break with my left hand to control the push and pivot off the heel of my left palm.

* On carving gouges, the tool's shaft is rounded, with no sharp corners for more comfortable holding in the hand.



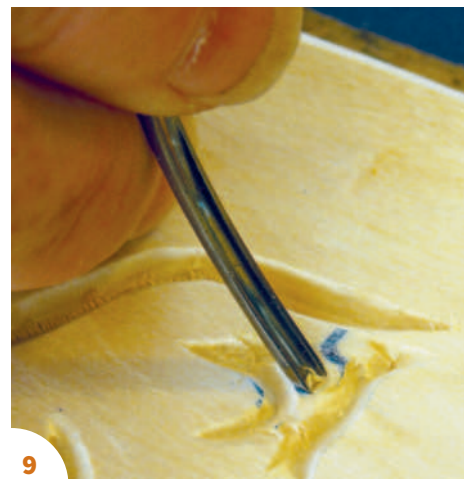
7 The parting gouge cuts a two-sided groove through the wood. This means that the left (near) side is cutting cleanly with the grain while the right (far) side is cutting against the grain, leaving a rough finish. It is always the case that one side will cut with and one side against the grain. Swap hands and cut back in the opposite direction. In this picture, when cutting left to right, apply pressure to the far side of the groove, cutting cleanly with the grain. The nearside should just miss the wood and not cut.



8 Continue to outline the entire drawing. Note the change of hands to cut in the second direction. Being able to swap hands is a time saver. The alternative is to turn the wood around. On more complex carvings, swapping hands will enable you to reach parts that are otherwise inaccessible with just one dominant hand.

Take the opportunity to experiment with various depths of cuts – deep and wide across the back, but shallow and fine around the head.

9 All the horse outline can be cut with one parting tool except for the eye. Here use the smallest U-shaped veiner available. I have used a 2mm micro gouge. Cut down at about 45° with the grain from both sides until the eye piece pops out.



10 To finish, go over the surface once more with your large flat gouge, removing any untidy edges and any stray tracing marks. The finish used is beeswax, but wood can take many different finishes, each with its own characteristics. I chose beeswax for the soft sheen and faithful reproduction of the wood's original colour. Oil finishes will tone the wood to match the oil's colour, but they penetrate deep into the cuts, emphasising the carving.



* Transfer the image on to the surface. Either draw freehand or trace using carbon paper. The act of drawing/tracing is good practice for the shape to be carved. This is the beginning of the hand-eye coordination necessary for a pleasing carving.



Tree of Life

A completely different effect was achieved by a friend of mine, Peter Clark, of Cornwall Woodcarvers, who, after carving a Tree of Life, filled the grooves with green resin and sanded back, removing any excess resin to reveal a stunning contrast of the tree against the red mahogany wood.

Green Man Triptych

The two halves form doors to open a triptych dedicated to the Green Man design of professional carver Chris Pye (www.woodcarvingworkshops.tv). From there you may find his design; a beautifully conceived and executed carving. While the basics of this carving technique are simple, the results can nonetheless be quite spectacular and embellish other techniques.

In the next article I shall discuss and demonstrate shallow relief carvings. ▶

LEFT: Tree of Life

BELOW: Green Man triptych



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CARVING TOOLS

The wolves

Alan Denham creates a lupine-themed mirror

This project was originally designed to suggest 'trees and howling wolves in front of a full moon' – a real Call of The Wild image.

Preparing the blank

The slab (see below) is a whisker short of 21cm wide, but the important factor is that it was just over four times as long as it was wide. So I cut it in half and glued the pieces together to give me a very rough square. It is worth working hard to minimise the prominence of the glue line (mine showed up rather a lot this time – I need more practice or different glue), and remember to reverse the grain to minimise distortion with changing humidity.

The next job is on the lathe. It can be done with a router, but if you have (or have access to) a lathe capable of handling the diameter, that is the best way. Find the centre of your square (easy – you have a glue line to help).

My original plans were to have a slightly smaller mirror, just offset towards the top of the frame, but after fiddling about for a bit with precise measurements for centring, and balancing for off-centre turning, I decided it just wasn't worth the effort.

Saw off the corners, following the curve of the rim, and cut your circular blank using lathe, router, or just very precise bandsawing, as appropriate to your own situation.

Also cut a mirror recess (lathe or router) – as deep as your glass (which is probably the standard 4mm thick) and just a fraction over the 35cm mirror diameter to allow for possible shrinkage in the dryness of a centrally-heated house. The important thing is to get the bottom of the recess absolutely flat – the wood needs to be in contact with the glass for more than two-thirds the radius, measuring in from the rim. Use a straightedge as any irregularities are likely to show.



The starting point was a hefty slab of lime

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALAN DENHAM

Things you will need

Materials:

- A suitable piece of wood. I started with a lime plank about 21cm wide by 90cm long by 3.5cm thick, but this project can easily be scaled so long as the starting blank does not go much thinner than 25mm.
- A circular mirror, 35cm diameter. I am assuming the usual 4mm standard thickness glass for this project.

Tools:

- Ideally, a bandsaw
- A scrollsaw – it can be done with a coping saw, but this is not recommended.
- A lathe capable of turning your blank (in my case, that meant a little over 21cm radius, 42cm diameter), or a friend with such equipment. Alternatively, this job can also be done with a router and a good circle-cutting guide. Note that it is also easy to scale this down to maybe two thirds, perhaps even half this size – beyond that would call for some special skills.



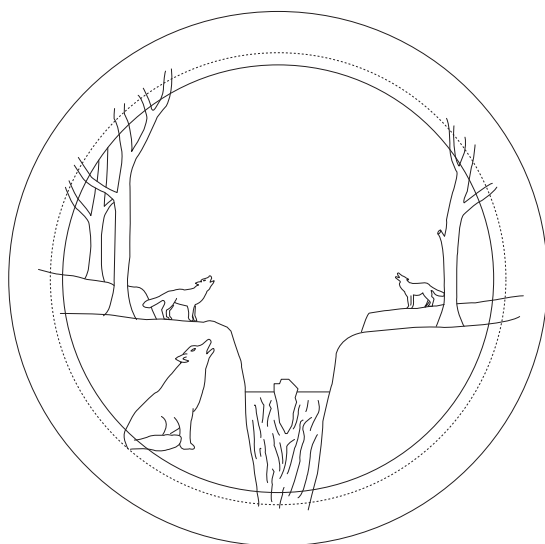
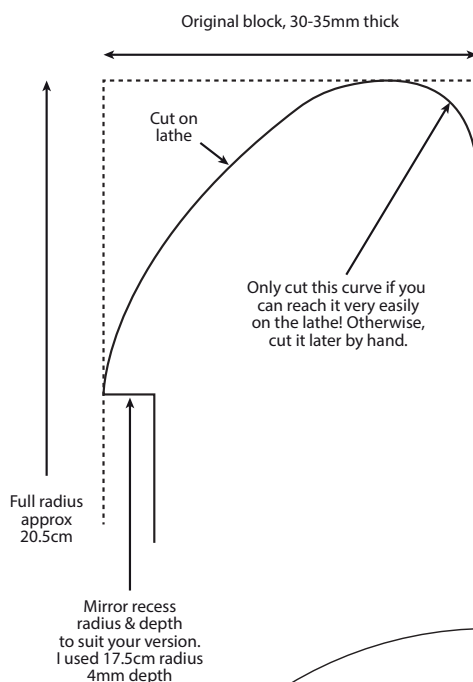
Now consider the rim, because you want this done before starting any of the delicate work inside. A simple rectangular edge works well enough, but if you have it on a lathe, cutting a curved rear profile is quite a tempting idea (see sketch 1 and photo right).

Sand down to medium/fine grit, but there is no point putting a proper finish on at this point.

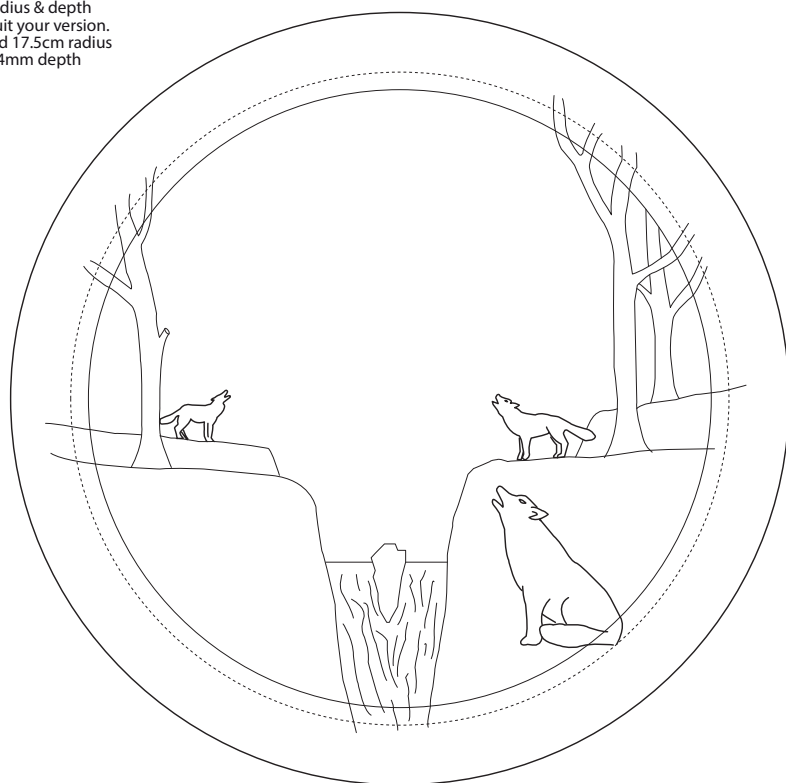
Prepare a paper template to fit inside the mirror recess, and either trace or glue it in. Note that you need this to be a reverse of the front view shown elsewhere.

Check orientation – grain vertical. This will still leave you with some very delicate short-grain work around the wolves' muzzles, but otherwise their legs would be on the short grain, and too delicate to carve on this scale. See main sketch and main sketch reversed.

Sketch 1



Main sketch RIGHT: Main sketch reversed



Another reason for using a reversed sketch – if you stick the template on the front, you must align it carefully with the mirror recess. If you reverse the drawing and stick it inside the mirror recess, it is bound to be in the right place.

Cut out the waste blocks with the scrollsaw. Note that I haven't removed every small block of waste – the underbelly and undertail of the small wolves should be left (for now) for strength, and the last two or three other blocks, around the branches, are so small they will be easier to cut through later. Turn it over and stick on a paper template, or trace the design on the front. See main sketch.

Now (at last) you can start to carve.

Begin by thinking about thickness of wood and depth of cuts. This design can be done on a relatively thin (2.5cm, maybe even a little less) piece of wood, but doing so will severely restrict the depth available for cutting the relief outline of the big wolf, and the depth effect available on the trees. I am starting this with well over 3cm, so I can cut the big wolf in reasonable depth – and that is the first job.



Starting to scrollsaw



Rear view scrollsawn

The big wolf

I made a small improvement as I worked, making him slightly slimmer and the front legs a little longer than shown on the original sketch – checking Google Images will give you a whole range of possibilities to work from. Use a V-tool or make a stop-cut with a sharp knife to mark in the ground the wolf is sitting on and mark round the outside of his profile. If you have the thickness of wood that I used, cut this to 3mm or maybe as much as 4mm deep. Even be prepared to go to 5mm to allow



The wolf outlined

you to create the rounding of the body – this wolf is in relief, but can still be nicely rounded.

Parts of him – particularly the space under the belly, the adjacent tail and front legs, and also the ears, muzzle and eye – are quite fine work. One small mistake and you have to cut a layer off and go deeper. A lot of this work can be done with a craft knife because lime is a soft, easy wood. If I had been using something harder, I would be recommending small (dental) burs.



Working on the wolf

POSITIONS

A quick word about working positions. Each to their own, but I find bending for any length of time a bit of a problem. I have rigged up an old 4in fence post with a ball and socket work holder on the top, so the whole thing can be held in a Workmate, which I sit on to keep it steady. The corner pieces you cut off earlier may be very useful at this point for making a cradle to hold the workpiece in.



The wolf being carved

As you can see, the area around the wolf is rough and does not look good at the moment, but you need to blend carefully with other parts of the background.

When you are happy with the depth of cut close to the wolf, consider how you are going to do your rim. If you are leaving it rectangular, then you now need to smooth the space around the wolf, right back to the rim. Or if you followed sketch 1 in detail then you need to smooth out to the edge of the curved part of the rim.

If you want a curved rim but haven't cut it yet, now is a good time, and do it all the way round. Mark the whole rim about 1cm in from the edge, and on the rim itself about 4mm down from the face. Cut down towards these lines to create a well-rounded rim area.

Take the flattest gouge you have that is not actually flat (No.2 or No.3) and create a gentle, smooth surface running from this rim down to the wolf.

Go over it quickly with coarse sandpaper to make sure that it all fits together and looks right.



Marking the rim



Cutting the rim



The large wolf

The water and the rocks

The next job is the ground, the rock outcrops, and the water. Think about what parts can be allowed to reflect. The waterfall is coming 'from nowhere', so the horizon at the top of the fall should be just a line. Make sure the wood thins down to a sharp edge, level and very thin – a double line is unavoidable because of the physics of how mirrors work, but beyond that it must not be reflected. That is shown in picture at point A, photographed from the mirror side.

The cliff faces should also not reflect as they would look wrong – like a narrow canyon. Those faces should therefore not be perpendicular (90°) to the mirror. Angling them away at about 70° should be sufficient. See point B on the picture. The ground that the smaller wolves are standing on can be level and can reflect, because the reflection of the small wolves will also need ground to stand on – this is shown at point C on the picture.



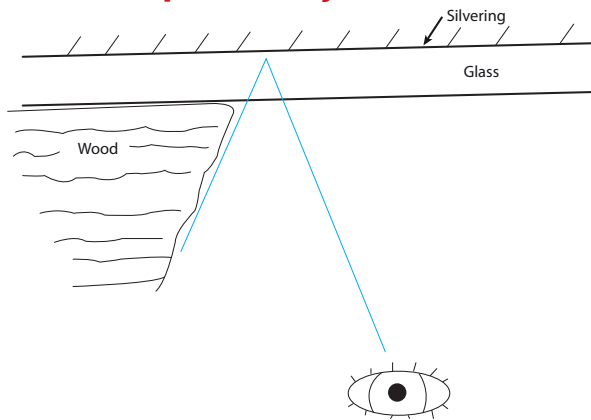
TO REFLECT OR NOT TO REFLECT?

The cliff faces should not reflect – they would create a narrow, oppressive effect. But what angle does that imply? See the sketch.

An eye placed centrally, level with the cliff and looking into the mirror, would have to be closer than 7cm to pick up reflections.

From further back, reflections only show if the eye is away from the mid-line. It's all a trade-off – 70° seems about right.

Sketch 2 – Optics theory



The final effect you are looking for should suggest sky or a full moon, with surrounding scenery and a waterfall. A simple set of wriggly lines cut in with a veiner or small V-tool would suggest water, but the effect can be helped by putting some rocks in the stream. Break up the substantial mass as shown with some near-horizontal and near-vertical steps, suggesting strata and joints in the rocks, and show the water flowing around the obstruction. See photo (right) of falling water..



Falling water

The small wolves and surroundings



1



2



3

Begin with a wolf—I started with the one on the left. The first step is to cut back the body of the wolf so that he is not standing right on the front edge above the large wolf. Cut back about 4mm and re-draw the details of his outline (photo 1).

Next, cut away the wood behind, leaving a blank the right size for the wolf's body. On my design his body is about 1cm from spine to underbelly, so side-to-side needs to be about 8mm max. He should be fairly slim—wolves in the wild might be fluffy in the cold, but never fat. See photos 2 and 3 (both viewed from mirror side—this is the wolf on the left).

Start carving at the neck and the muzzle. This needs to be thin, and therefore is delicate. The ears will be the widest point on the head area, and still narrower than the widest part of the body. Carve carefully, with very sharp tools or burrs and fine riffler files. Separate the ears, smooth over the top of the head, and round the front of the throat and chest.

Confession time: At around this point I found my 'wolf' was looking more like a pig—which is nothing compared to what I called him when I noticed this. I steepened the cut-off between nose and eyes, refined the ears,

narrowed the lower jaw—and he looked right again. The smaller wolf will later run into the same problem, but he did not come through so well—he looks rather cub-like.

Work your way along the wolf, rounding his back and narrowing his legs. Cut the front legs first, then cut away under the belly and begin work on the back legs and tail. The legs needed to be on the long grain, for strength, but even so, do as much as you can before cutting them too fine. The tail will be short-grained, so it will need support—it will rest

against the ground behind (see photo 4).

Decide how much detail you want—a groove defining the gap between the front legs is worth the effort, fully separating them might not be (see photo 5).

Drill through the space below the tail and in front of the rising ground, and open that space out. Again, the sloping ground should angle away from the middle of the mirror, as did the rocks around the waterfall—but make sure you don't take that too far as the tail needs its support.

As with the front legs, a groove to indicate separation of the back legs is worth the effort, and needs to be front and back—but trying to fully carve them might be too risky as they are very thin and difficult to reach.

Consider the raised ground supporting the tail. It need not (indeed, should not) be parallel with the front of your carving (see photo 6).

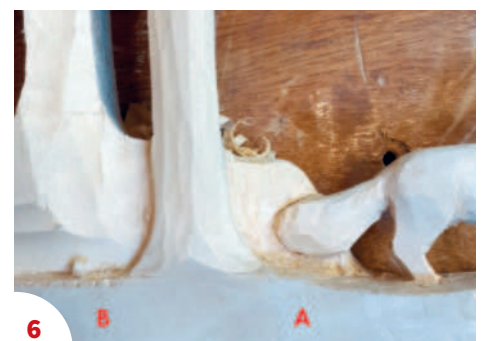
Mine was set back by 11mm above point A, but barely 5mm above point B. If you started with a thinner blank, you may not have that luxury, but angle it as much as you can—that will allow the tree on the left to be well forward, and therefore its reflection spaced well back.



4



5



6

Trees and frame

Once you have that ground defined, you can begin to shape the trees. If you are working with a thinner blank, remember these will only be seen from near face-on (or from almost directly behind, in the mirror), so you can save some thickness by carving the trunks as ellipses in section. If you have

a nice thick blank, you can make them fully round, for easier carving and for strength. Remember both sides can be seen, so adding some texture might be worth considering, though at this scale I prefer not to, a smooth tree trunk will look fine (see photos 7 and 8).



7



8

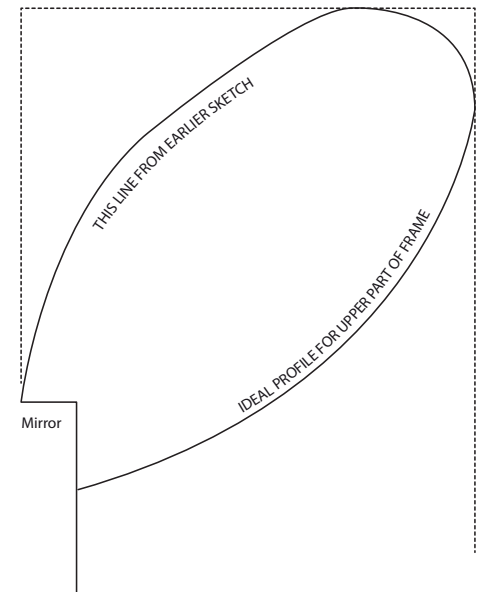
Branches and leaves on the trees are not easy, and needing to blend them on to the rest of the frame makes it harder. Context would call for pine trees, but those would be very difficult with the mirror. Ordinary leaves are much too small to show realistically so the three-way choice is between 'symbolically' showing oversized leaves (this has valid artistic precedent, e.g. Gerrard Robinson's carving closely based on Edwin Landseer's *Otter Hunt*, both in Laing Gallery, Newcastle), or carving a vague 'leaf mass' (which I have tried several times, but not been delighted with the results), or showing some branches and pretending either it is the depths of winter or the leaves are outside the frame. This last option is shown in the illustrations.

As you work your way up the trunks

there are some branches. These are not as easy as they look either.

Whether or not you have rounded the outside of your frame, leaving the inner edge perpendicular to the glass would be wrong – it would reflect, and give a 'tunnel' effect. So we need to open it out as shown in sketch 3. Start with a steeply curved gouge that will take wood away without much risk of splitting, then a shallower gouge and finally burrs and/or quite a lot of coarse sandpaper. Make up a cardboard template as a rough guide for this section, but the real problem comes where the branches intersect the frame. Branches near the mirror just hit the frame and stop, but those near the front need to run in at an angle and fade away towards the edge. I hope you are good at thinking in three dimensions. This can be a long and

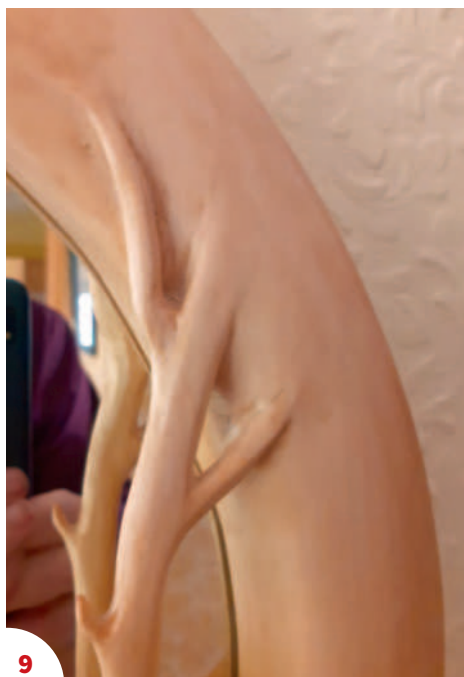
Sketch 3



demanding job, involving gouges at first, then small burrs, riffler files, sandpaper wrapped around a stick... I really wish I had simplified the branches in the original design. You may feel free to do so (see photos 9 and 10).

On the right-hand side of the frame, treat the final wolf and tree in much the same way – though in this case, the wolf's tail is supported by the tree rather than by another level of ground, and I have put it on the back of the tree and made the wolf smaller (i.e. apparently further away) to give some variety (photo 11).

Finally, work through the grades of sandpaper all over everywhere, and apply a finish of your choice. With all the awkward corners around the branches and the fine detail (and delicacy) of the wolves, I recommend sanding sealer just before the final grade of sandpaper, and then Danish oil. ▶



9



10



11

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News & events...

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

Carve In at the Bekkum

In 2017, the Bekkum Memorial Library in Westby, Wisconsin, held the first of what would become an annual Carve In at the Bekkum event. Carvers from the area, some from 100 miles away, came to demonstrate their skills and learn from others. They showed finished as well as in-progress pieces and were able to sell items if they chose to do so. The event was used as a means to pique interest and educate library patrons, as well as general members of the community, about woodcarving. Years ago, there were many carvers in the area and the library has quite a good selection of books to offer anyone who wants to learn or improve their skills. By bringing carvers to the library so they can share their process, the library could offer more programming and circulation of books in the collection would increase.

Little did the organiser of the event know just how popular his idea would be. Chairperson John Sutton, a board member at the Bekkum Memorial Library, diligently worked to recruit some of the best local carvers to demonstrate. He attended other carving events to distribute flyers and posters, and he advertised in the community newspapers and radio to market the event. Attendees not only came but they poured in – almost 100 people came to the first event to learn about carving. Books were checked out and the local carving club even gained a few members.

Carve In 2 and Carve In 3 were only bigger and better, with more carvers and attendees joining the event. The first 'featured carver', John Overby from Fifiield, Wisconsin, was added to Carve In at the Bekkum in 2019. Scheduled for April 2020, world-renowned flat-plane carver Harley Refsal was committed to appear as well as give classes. Word was

getting out and momentum for the event was exploding. Anticipating a huge turnout in 2020, it was very disappointing when Covid-19 hit. At first, the committee hoped to just postpone the event, but as the contagion spread, it was obvious the event would have to be cancelled.

Carve In 4/5 is now being planned for April of 2021. Firm decisions have not been committed but John is hopeful that if not April, another month will be possible. Many of the carvers who have attended are chomping at the bit to come again. The library patrons are anxious to learn more about carving and many people in the community are excited to see the beautiful carvings that will be on display.

Woodcarvers are very lucky people in that carving can be a very social activity. Through clubs, classes and shows, carvers share and learn from others their tips, techniques and shortcuts of carving and even how tools can be used to create interesting cuts. Yet, as we shelter in place during the pandemic, carving has served us well as a solitary activity that can be mastered by practising and trying – again and again and again. Hopefully the pandemic has given us that time so our carvers will have a lot of new things to show at the 2021 Carve In 4/5 at the Bekkum.

August 21, 2021 Carve In 4.

Please contact to confirm closer to the date.

Location; The Bekkum Memorial Library, 206

North Main Street, Westby, WI54667, U.S.

For info – John Sutton – 608-634-4396

lbarnfarms@gmail.com or bekkum@wrlsweb.org



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

BDWCA NEWS



Kingfisher with fish stick



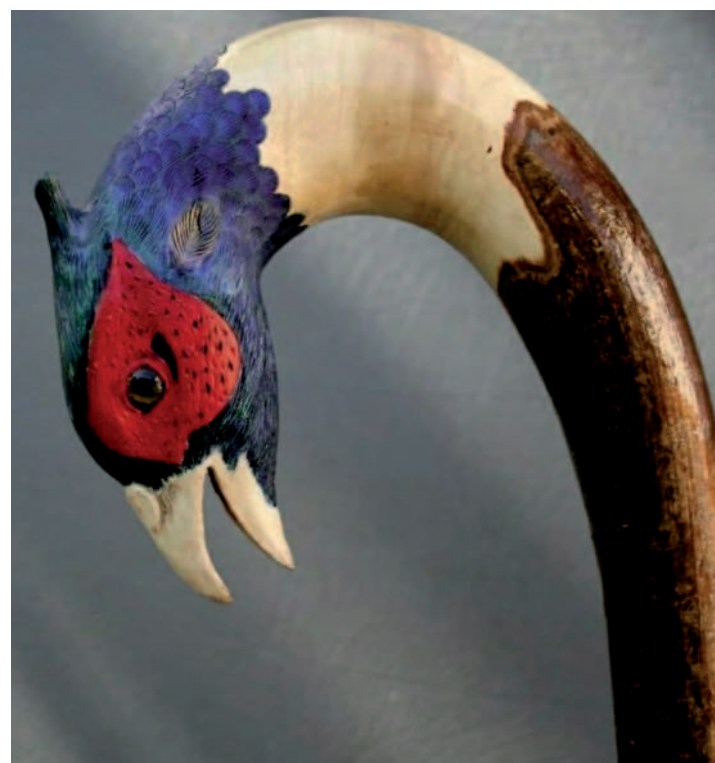
Pigeon stick

One of the competition categories we have at our annual show is Carved Bird's Head on a Stick. This is an open category – carvers of all ability levels compete together – and is also the only category that is open to people who are not members of the BDWCA.

The show – the Festival of Bird Art – is held on the second full weekend in September each year in Bakewell, Derbyshire. It is a two-day event, but as stick shows are traditionally just one day the stick entries can be delivered on the Sunday morning. This competition is then judged at around midday and the Best Stick trophy presented to the winning carver by the Mayor of Bakewell at the prize giving in the afternoon.

One of our members, Paul Daunt, is a prolific stick carver – he was in his workshop on Christmas Day – and has kindly shared some pictures of some of his recent bird's head sticks.

The current plan is for our show to be held on the weekend of 11 and 12 September 2021. Hopefully, by the time you read the next issue of this magazine we will be able to confirm that this will be happening and look forward to a good display of bird's head sticks.



Pheasant stick

Contacts

For further information on the BDWCA, as well as membership details, visit 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

Make a chip carving sample board – part 2

Tatiana Baldina explains how carving simple practice boards can take your skills to a higher level

In last month's article (WC 178) you took your first steps towards learning the art of chip carving. Although we just dealt with the drawing and layout rather than actual carving, it was a crucial step in the overall process. Although the two-dimensional patterns are decorative features in their own right they also carry information that enables us to translate them on to a three-dimensional surface. In this second article we are going to move on to the next stage – interpreting that information and carving patterns on to your sample boards.

You can use any type of rigid blade skew knife to carve these patterns as long as it is comfortable to hold and does not tire your hand in the process. A blade with identical bevels on both faces is preferable but by no means mandatory. For example, one of the knives I like to use is the Flexcut Skew Knife.

And one more note before we start to carve: the practice board is not something you should try to complete in just one day. My practice board contains four sections of patterns with an increasing number of lines for each one that gradually increase in difficulty as you work through the board. Yes, it's possible to complete in one session and that's fine if you're looking for a new fun activity to fill a few hours, but it's better to do it in small steps every day. And always remember the rule of taking one step back every day (see sidebar at the end of the article). This is one of the key things I've learned during the 10 years that I've been carving.



DRAWING TOOLS AND MATERIALS

- A basswood board with drawn patterns (25cm long, 15cm wide, 1.5cm thick)
- Skew knife
- Sandpaper or leather strips for sharpening

First pattern section

Straight-wall chips

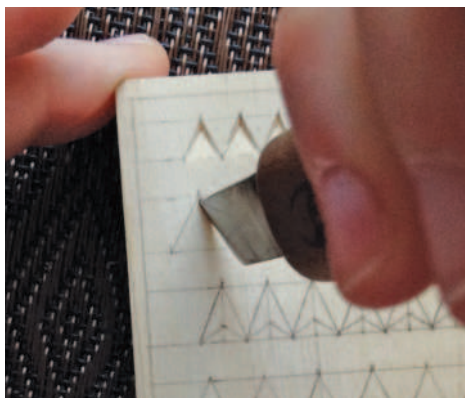
The first pattern to carve is the simplest chip carving pattern—a small straight-wall chip. Before you start to carve place your practice board on a flat, rigid surface with a non-slip mat beneath if you have one. To produce clean, consistent cuts you need to get into the habit of positioning your knife in exactly the same manner each time you repeat a similar cut in the pattern. For this exercise you will need to hold the knife directly above the first side of the chip at about 90° to the surface, then gently push the tip of the blade deep to the top of the triangle,

where the facets meet. Then, without removing the knife from the wood, lower the heel of the knife to the base of the chip, to the third side of it, without applying any pressure. Try to capture the feel of the blade as it pierces the wood and the movement of the technique. Now repeat those steps to the same degree on the other long side of the triangle.

Turn the board away from you (around 35–45°) so that you can lay the knife blade low to the surface of the wood along the bottom of the triangle and push the knife towards the

top of the triangle where the sides intersect. The first chip is done. Again, try to capture the technique so you can reproduce it on the following chip. Continue across the board making adjustments as necessary, working towards creating a consistent pattern.

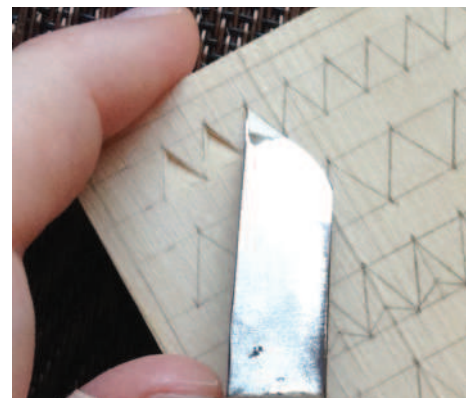
The second pattern is a bigger version of this straight-wall chip. The carving technique is exactly the same so just repeat all the steps and work towards creating a consistent pattern that will come from making a series of identical cuts in both depth and alignment.



Hold the knife firmly at about 90° to the surface of the board. Push the knife's tip deep into the wood...



...then lower the heel of the blade along the pencil line to the base of the triangle



Push the knife towards the intersecting corner of the straight-wall sides to remove the chip

Simple triangle

This is a more complex chip pattern than the previous ones and there are two ways of tackling it. To begin with you can make stop cuts as before along the lines that converge in the middle of the triangle. Hold the knife firmly at 90 degrees to the surface of the board. Then push the knife tip deep into the wood at the center of the chip. Then gradually removing the pressure, lower

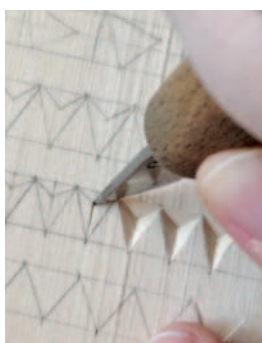
the heel of the knife to the top of the triangle. Repeat this technique for the remaining two stop cuts. Then, angling the knife at 45°, work around the edge of the triangle to remove the chips one at a time. For consistent results it's important to maintain the same angle for all the angled cuts so the pattern appears uniform on all sides. I recommend you do the stop cuts while

you are learning to chip carve.

When you are comfortable with this technique you can try removing the waste by just using the angled cuts. If you have been holding the knife correctly a single chip will pop out. However, there are times when this doesn't happen so you will have to repeat the cuts or make stop cuts to sever the wood fibres at the meeting points.



Put the heel of the blade at the centre of the triangle and lower it along the line to the top of the chip



Rotate the board and complete the two remaining stop cuts



Place the knife at the edge of the triangle at 45° to undercut the first chip



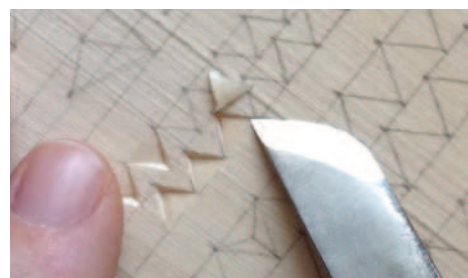
Rotate the board and undercut the second chip



Rotate the board a second time and undercut the third side. The chip will pop out

Snake

The next pattern to carve is the 'snake made of straight-wall chips', as it translates from Russian. For carving this pattern, repeat all the steps you made when carving a small straight-wall chip.

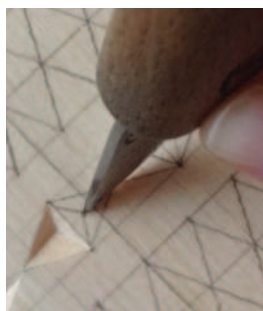


Second pattern section: chain of triangles

The pattern from this section is a chain of isosceles triangles that are connected to each other by their short sides or bases. As you can see, this pattern runs along the grain so requires a different carving technique. This is good preparation for the complex pattern we will be carving next.

Again, make the stop cuts inside of every triangle in the pattern. When carving a chip that goes along the grain, the first cut you make is the 'base' cut, or the third cut you were making when you carved the first triangle on the board that ran across the grain. After the first cut is done, turn the board and start

making the next cuts. Always lead the knife along the grain, as shown in the photos, otherwise you could break the chip and the angles, or you could crush the wood fibres inside the triangles leaving a rough surface to the inside faces of the pattern that will be hard to correct.



Complete the stop cuts inside the triangle starting with the long line



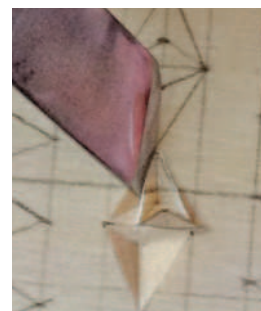
Now complete the two shorter stop cuts



Remove the chip at the base with an angled cut of 45°



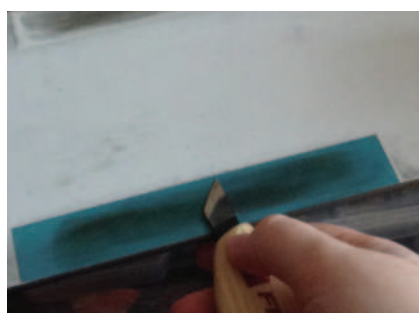
Remove the second chip with another angled cut



Remove the third chip with another angled cut to complete the shape

SHARPENING A KNIFE

Get into the habit of sharpening regularly and especially before you start work on a new section as this will help to maintain consistent results to your finish. The sandpaper films I use range from 600 or 2000 to 6000 grit. The very first sandpaper I use depends on the condition of my knife at the moment I am going to sharpen it. The highest grit I use instead of a leather strip; I use this for polishing. The lower the grit of a film, the fewer movements you make when sharpening; the higher its grit, the more movements you make. You make roughly three or four knife movements on each side of the knife when sharpening on 2000 grit; five or six movements on 3000 grit; and seven or eight movements on 6000 grit.



Abrasive strips stuck on to a piece of float glass

A strip of leather (strop) can be used as well, along with some honing paste to polish the surface of the bevel. For me, skew blades are best sharpened while oriented to run

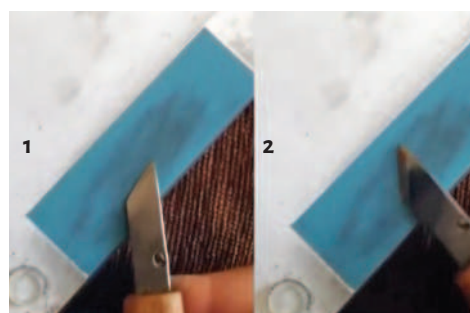


Fig 1 shows the best method of sharpening a straight edge skewed blade using abrasive films

in a straight line. In my opinion, this works best because it is easier to hold at a constant angle, and leads to a more highly polished cutting surface before using higher-grit sandpaper and polishing.

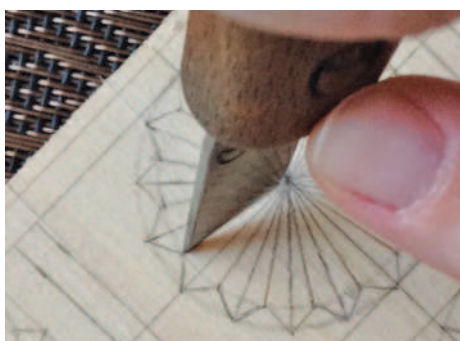
Third pattern section: circle

I chose a circle with 16 three-corner chips from this section. It's a complex pattern and may well be tricky for you to carve because there are chips that go along the grain, across the grain and at various angles diagonal to the run of grain. The chips of this pattern also connect with each other, so you need to have more control of your knife.

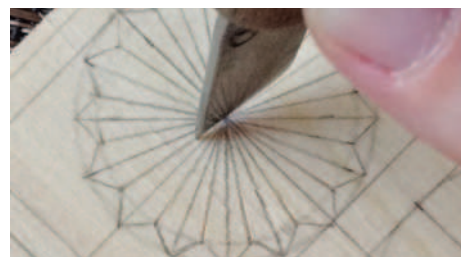
I prefer to start carving this pattern from the chips that go along the grain. It's easier, as it seems to me, to control carving the next chips when these ones are done. But first, start by doing the stop cuts inside every chip: raise the knife right above the centre where the stop cuts meet, then stick the very tip of the knife into it at an angle of 90° to the wood surface and then, if you are using a round heeled knife, roll the knife along the line. Or, if you have a straight edge skewed knife, gently drag the tip of the blade along the line, stopping short of the centre. Repeat this for all the stop cuts.

Start carving the pattern from one of the four chips that go along the grain. Make the 'base' cut first then, pushing the knife deep to the central point where all the stop cuts inside of the triangle meet, lead the knife to the centre

of the pattern using a tip or a heel of the knife. Turn the knife in your hand and repeat the actions to complete the chip. Continue to carve the chips to one and then to another side of the carved chip following the grain of the wood, and go right to the centre of the pattern. Then carve another side of the pattern starting from the chip that goes along the grain. Finish carving all the chips using the method used on the other side to complete the pattern.



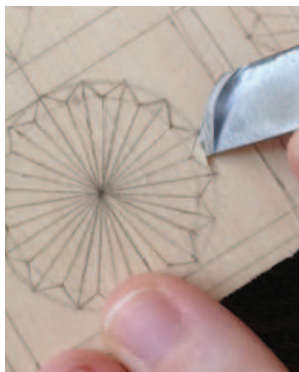
Creating the stop cuts first helps to identify the high and low spots in the design



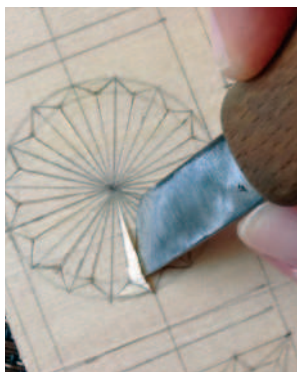
Avoid cutting the stop cuts right up to the centre of the pattern for now



A complete set of stop cuts clearly outlining the 16 three-corner chips around the edge



Use the tip of the knife to carve the first chip at the perimeter of the pattern



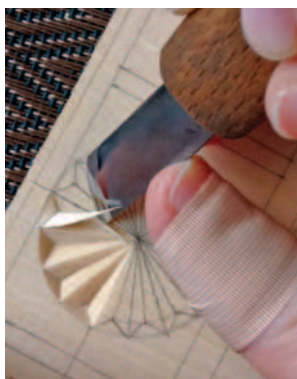
Push the knife deep into the centre of the chip...



... then gently lead it to the centre of the pattern



Rotate the board and make the third cut



Cutting along the grain away from the centre of the pattern



A finished circle with 16 three-corner chips completely carved

TRY THESE TOOLS

The KN11 Skew Knife is used for taking more vertical cuts. The handle is shaped to allow long periods of work without fatigue. The range uses the same edge-holding steel as the Flexcut gouges and chisels.

Price: £20.92

From: www.axminster.co.uk



The Flexcut Knife Strop is the perfect accompaniment to the KN11 knife and plenty of other edge tools as well.

Price: £17.05

From: www.axminster.co.uk



Fourth pattern section: multi-level carving

The fourth section of our practice board is for multi-level carving and I have chosen one of the basic patterns – don't worry, it's not as complex a pattern as it might seem at first glance.

The technique for carving this pattern is the same as you used for the small and bigger straight-wall chips. By now you should be able to accomplish them quite quickly with consistent results. So, as before, raise the knife right above the first side of the chip, then push the tip of the knife deep to the top of the triangle where the facets meet, at an angle of almost 90° and then, by not removing the knife from the wood, lower the heel of the knife to the base of the

chip reducing pressure as you go until you are applying no pressure at all at the end of the cut, then repeat on the other side.

Now turn the board away from you (35-45°) so that you can lay the knife blade low to the wood along the third side of the chip (the short side of your isosceles triangle), and push the knife towards the intersecting corner of the straight-wall sides (the apex of the triangle). To carve the smaller chip inside this chip, stab the knife at an angle of almost 90°, not to the surface of the board this time but to the surface on the 'big' chip instead. Then repeat all the steps you made on the straight-wall chips to remove a smaller chip.



Make stop cuts and remove a regular straight-wall chip



Place the tip of the knife in the centre of the big chip area



Make two stop cuts from the centre to the base of the triangle



Lower the knife and push it towards the centre point



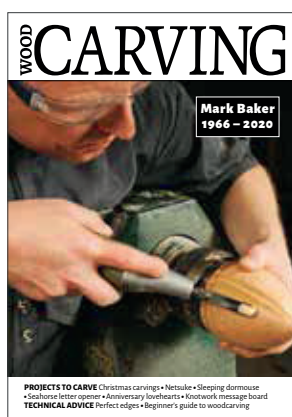
A smaller chip will break loose and complete the pattern

TAKE ONE STEP BACK EVERY DAY

The foundation of a strong technical base in wood carving/chip carving is to take one step back every day. Sounds strange at first, doesn't it? However, in my opinion, a step back is not a regressive action; it's not giving up on the plans you have, but rather repetition of the steps you've already accomplished and the consolidation of new knowledge, as in any kind of creative activity or like learning a new language. Without repetition and, accordingly, retreating back, there is no progression. In other words, if every day you start with something brand new, you will be building on fragile foundations. For example, when I receive an order for a practice board, especially for sets of them where one board needs to be completely carved, it is like returning to my roots and to the university where I learned to carve the simplest patterns for the very first time. Revisiting these moments frequently not only helps with my chip carving but with myself in general – it's carving the simplest patterns all over again, but with a new, deeper understanding. ▶



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Hare and tortoise money box

In part one of a series Cedric Boyns starts by carving the tortoise

The idea for this project came from a turned, toadstool-shaped money box with a 'secret' mechanism for closing it. I first came across these in Romania, but modified the design as I wanted to make an almost totally carved version. The main inspiration for my design came from the well-known Aesop's fable, and two of the fence post topper decorations of a hare and a tortoise that I have made for my garden fence were the trigger for the final design.

Things you will need

Materials:

- Wood blocks – lime
- Tortoise body block, 215mm long x 100mm wide x 100mm deep
- Tortoise shell block, 145mm long x 110mm wide x 90mm deep
- Hare block, 50mm long x 60mm wide x 90mm deep
- Hare tail block, 80mm long x 30mm x 30mm (if turning allow extra length for chucking).
- Length of 12mm/½in ash dowel (or any wood could be used) – at least 110mm long

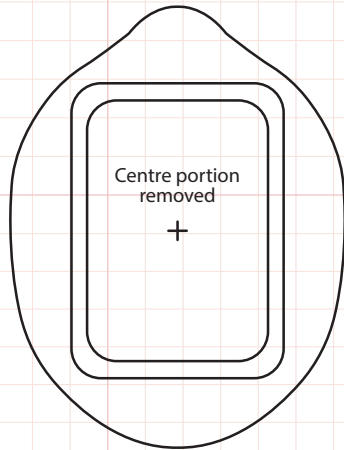
Tools:

- Copy of the templates
- Wood glue and hot-melt glue gun
- PPE dust mask and suitable dust extraction
- Bandsaw, fretsaw and handsaw
- Range of No.3 and No.5 gouges (3-12mm)
- Range of No.11 gouges (2-10mm)
- Straight No.1 chisels (1.5, 5 & 10mm)
- Spokeshave
- Detail carving knife
- Riffles
- Pillar drill and hand-held drill
- Pencil and ruler
- Forstner bits and twist drills
- Carving chops with cork and leather-lined jaws
- Rotary tool with 1in sanding pad and sanding cylinder
- Abrasives, 100 down to 400 grit

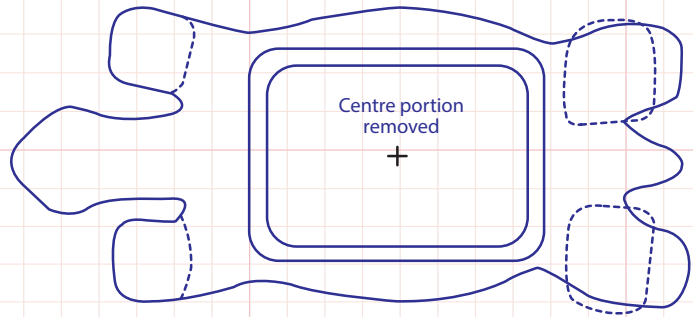


PHOTOGRAPHY BY CEDRIC BOYNS

Tortoise shell template – from below

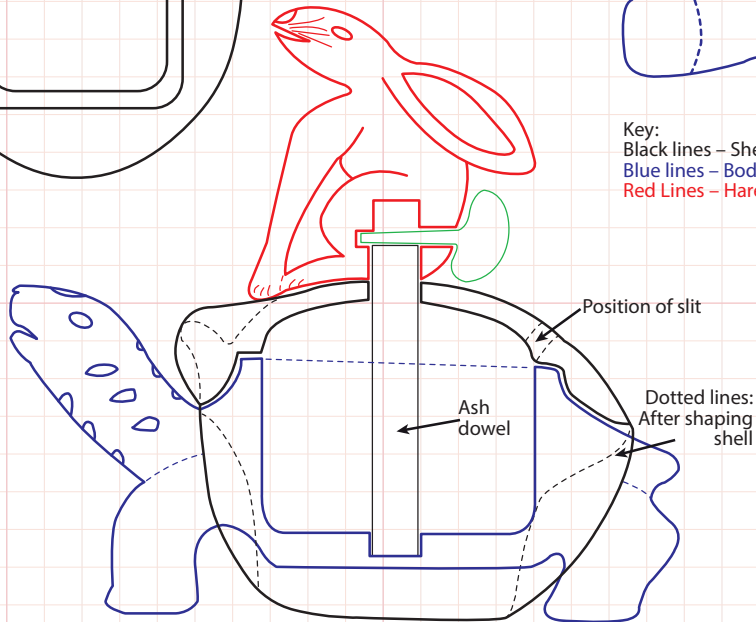
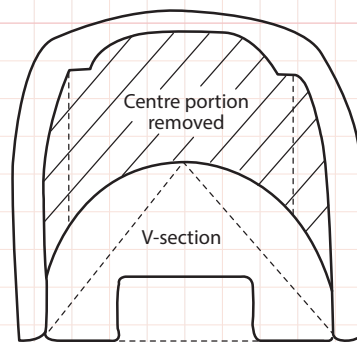


Tortoise body template – from above



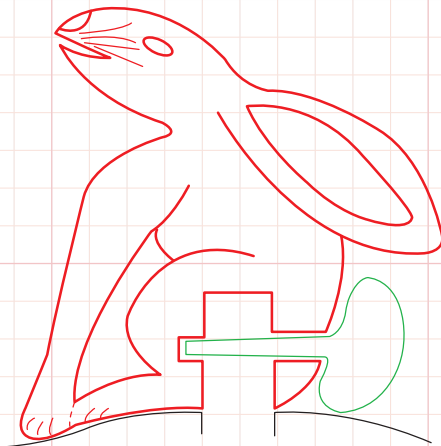
Key:
Black lines – Shell
Blue lines – Body
Red Lines – Hare

Tortoise shell template – end view

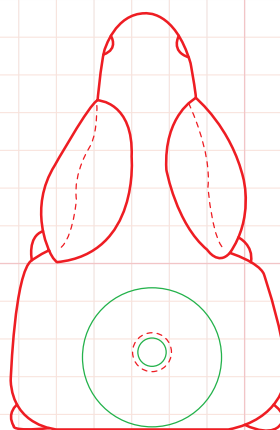


Side view templates

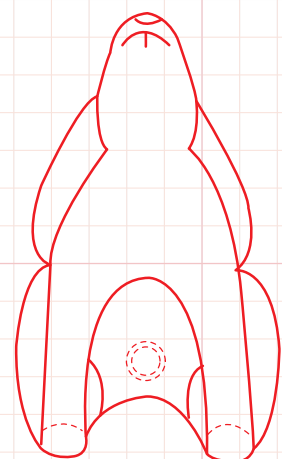
Hare: Side view



Back view

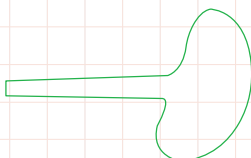


Front view

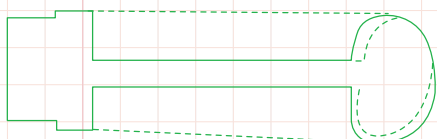


Tail:

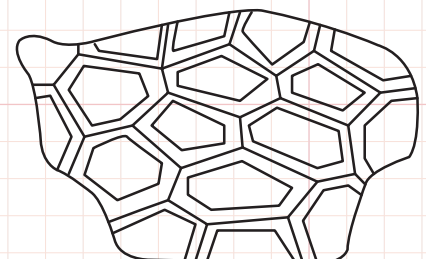
6mm



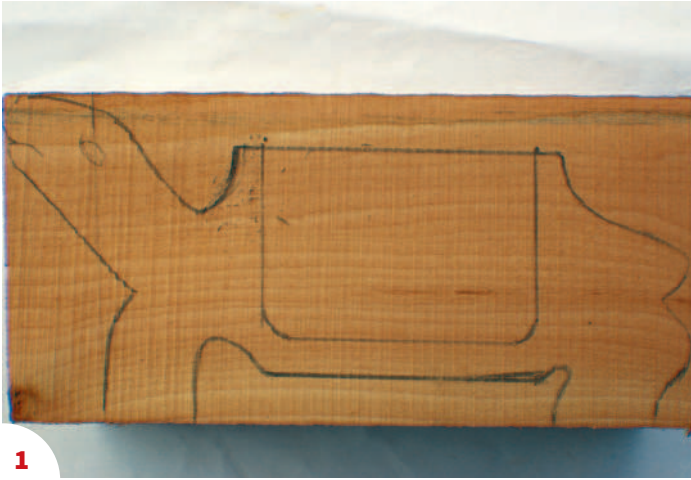
Template if carved



Plan if turned before final shaping



Rough plan of patterning on shell



1



2

Making the tortoise

The body

1 & 2 Using the body templates draw on both side and top views. Cut out the side profile using a bandsaw. A narrow blade will make this easier.

3 & 4 Glue the waste back using spots of hot-melt glue (or secure with masking tape if you prefer). This will allow the top profile to be cut out.

5 & 6 Remove what remains of the waste blocks.

7, 8 & 9 This will still leave some waste which cannot be removed with the bandsaw. Cut as much of this away with a handsaw and/or fretsaw.



3



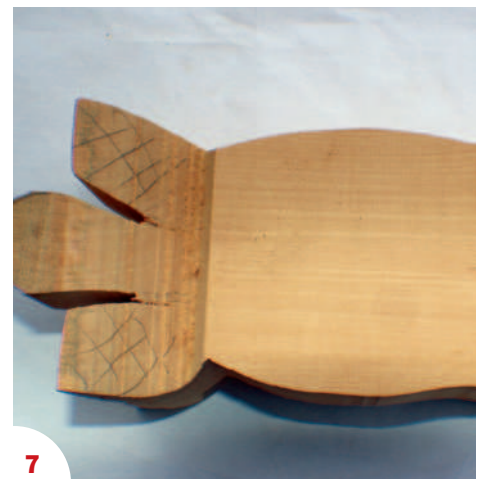
4



5



6



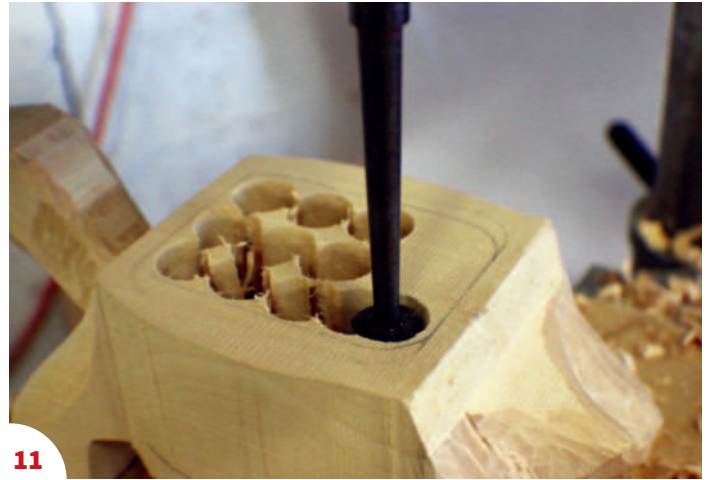
7



8



9

**10****11****12****13**

10 It is now ready for shaping. Shape the head, tail and legs to the rough profile using a No.3, 10mm gouge or similar.

11 Use the relevant template to mark out the wood to be removed to create the inside of the box. The bulk of this can be drilled out using an appropriate Forstner bit (19mm). I made use of the stop on my pillar drill to get a consistent depth. You can use a piece of tape around the drill to gauge the depth if drilling by hand.

12 The inside is then cleaned up using a suitable gouge and sanded.

The shell

13 The side, top and end profiles of the shell are marked out on the block. A V-shaped section is first cut out of the base using the end profile as the guide as shown in the photo and then replaced temporarily with blobs of hot-melt glue. The side profile is then cut out as for the body block and the waste temporarily glued back as before. The top/bottom profile is then cut out, which basically involves just taking off the corners. The glued back waste can then be removed.

14 & 15 Use the bottom view template to mark out the central section, which is removed to make the top portion of the box. (note the V-shaped section is still in place at this time). Again, remove the bulk of the wood by drilling it out using an appropriate Forstner bit to a depth of about 75mm.

**14****15****16****17**

16 What remains of the V-shaped sections can now be removed and the sides and ends hollowed.

17 & 18 The body will also need to be shaped to accommodate the shell.

**18**

19 & 20 Modify the areas of the shell to fit around the head, legs and tail so that the shell comes down over the body.

21 & 22 Further hollowing of the inside of the shell will be necessary, again with the help of a Forstner bit (9mm) and drill stop to create the inside of the box. Reduce the thickness of the top of the shell to about 15mm at this stage but be careful as the shaping of the outside of the shell has yet to be done. **Note:** The process of hollowing the shell and fitting it to the tortoise body needs to be done slowly and carefully if the necessary good fit is to be achieved.

23 & 24 A good fit should look something like this.

25 Measure and drill a 12mm/½in central hole through the top of the shell.

26 Reattach the shell to the body and use a 12mm/½in drill to mark the location of the hole to accommodate the dowel in the body base. Remove the shell and drill a 12mm/½in flat-bottomed hole 8mm deep in the body base with a Forstner bit.

27 & 28 Complete the shaping of the shell. I used both suitable shallow gouges and a spokeshave to round the shell and form the saddle just behind the head. **Note:** I did this with the shell attached to the body so that there was enough support for the thin-sided shell when held in the carving chops.



19



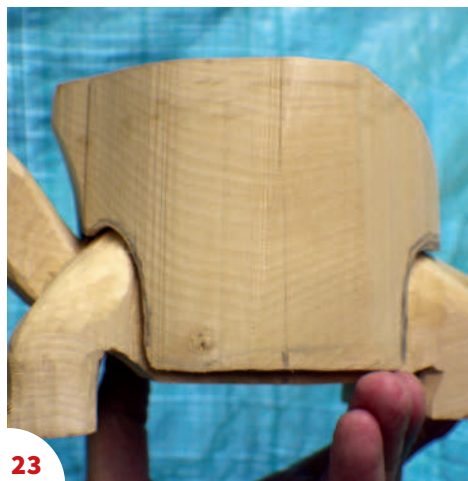
20



21



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30

Putting the finishing touches to the tortoise

29, 30 & 31 Some final shaping and finishing of the base section prior to sanding.

32 Following thorough sanding of both body and shell of the tortoise, I did make use of a small rotary tool to help access the more difficult areas – some additional detail can now be added to include:

33 & 34 Shell plate markings, which can be drawn on and cut in using a No.11, 2mm gouge or small parting tool.



31



32

35 & 36 Facial and body features/decoration.

37 A slot for the money must be cut in at some stage by first drilling a line of holes with a 5mm drill, and then cutting it out with a suitable shallow gouge or straight chisel. The slot must be big enough to allow the largest coin (now a £2 coin) to pass through and it should slope slightly forwards to ensure that the coins are delivered to the box part around the base of the dowel below.

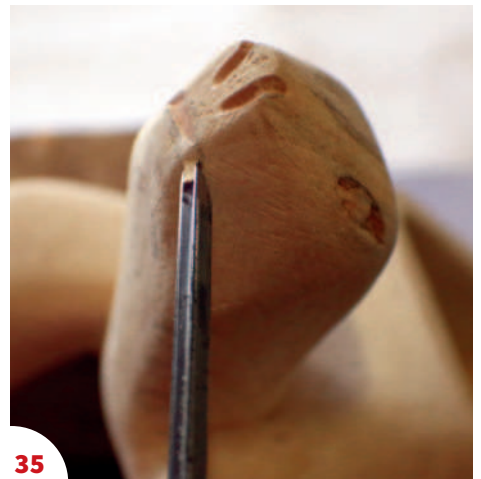
Next issue, I'll make the hare to finish the set and join them to make the money box. ▶



33



34



35



36



37

Beaver D-Adze

Dave Western carves a D-adze inspired by NW Coast First Nations style



The D-adze is a workhorse tool for many Northwest Coast-style woodcarvers. Capable of reaching tighter areas than a traditional long-handled adze, this heavy-duty tool is efficient at rough hogging material or applying fine-textured finished surfaces. Whether it is being used to shape spoon bowls and handles or to rough out the faces of massive totem poles, the D-adze is easily controlled and efficient to use.

Concept

I have long coveted the beautiful D-adzes used by many of the carvers I admire here on the West Coast of Canada, so when a fellow carver gave me a couple of handmade adze blades that he had fashioned from some old automobile leaf springs, I decided I would finally have a D-adze of my own!

Since D-adzes are often decorated by their owners with exquisite carvings, I thought I would have a bash at ornamenting mine too. Although I am both untrained and unskilled at working in the rich and complex NW Coast First Nations style of art, the opportunity to learn something new and to perform a small homage was too good to resist.

I rather obviously chose to carve a beaver head on to the front of the adze with the handle's shape mimicking its stout and sturdy body. Although my design is neither as elegant nor tightly ordered as the many First Nations examples I drew on for inspiration, it is a decent effort for a novice in the style. Now that I've done it, there might be one or two little details I would tweak, were I to do it again, but for the most part it is a recognisable representation that is readily carved with only a few fairly basic tools.

I've seen D-adze blades made from everything from leaf springs to

old plane blades. A few tool specialists even manufacture ready-to-use blades that can be fitted to homemade handles at modest expense. This particular blade was fashioned from a $7\frac{3}{4}$ in long by $1\frac{1}{4}$ in wide piece of approximately $\frac{1}{8}$ in-thick leaf spring ($\frac{1}{16}$ in tool steel would work fine), with the blade flaring slightly at the sharp end to approximately $1\frac{3}{4}$ in width. The blade is drilled and countersunk for two screw holes. Usually, the aim is to place one hole directly under the front (thickest) part of the tool body so that a long screw can be driven at this point. The back screw is usually beneath the handle opening and is much shorter. This particular blade had both screw holes drilled under the handle opening, so the two screws are fairly short and thus a bit less structurally secure.

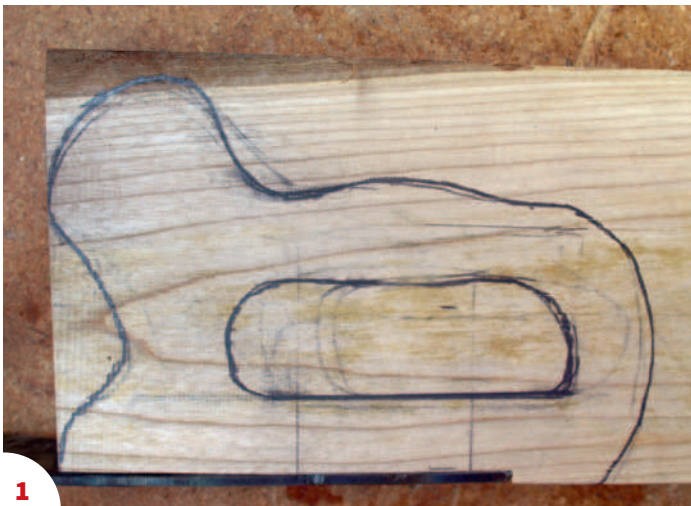
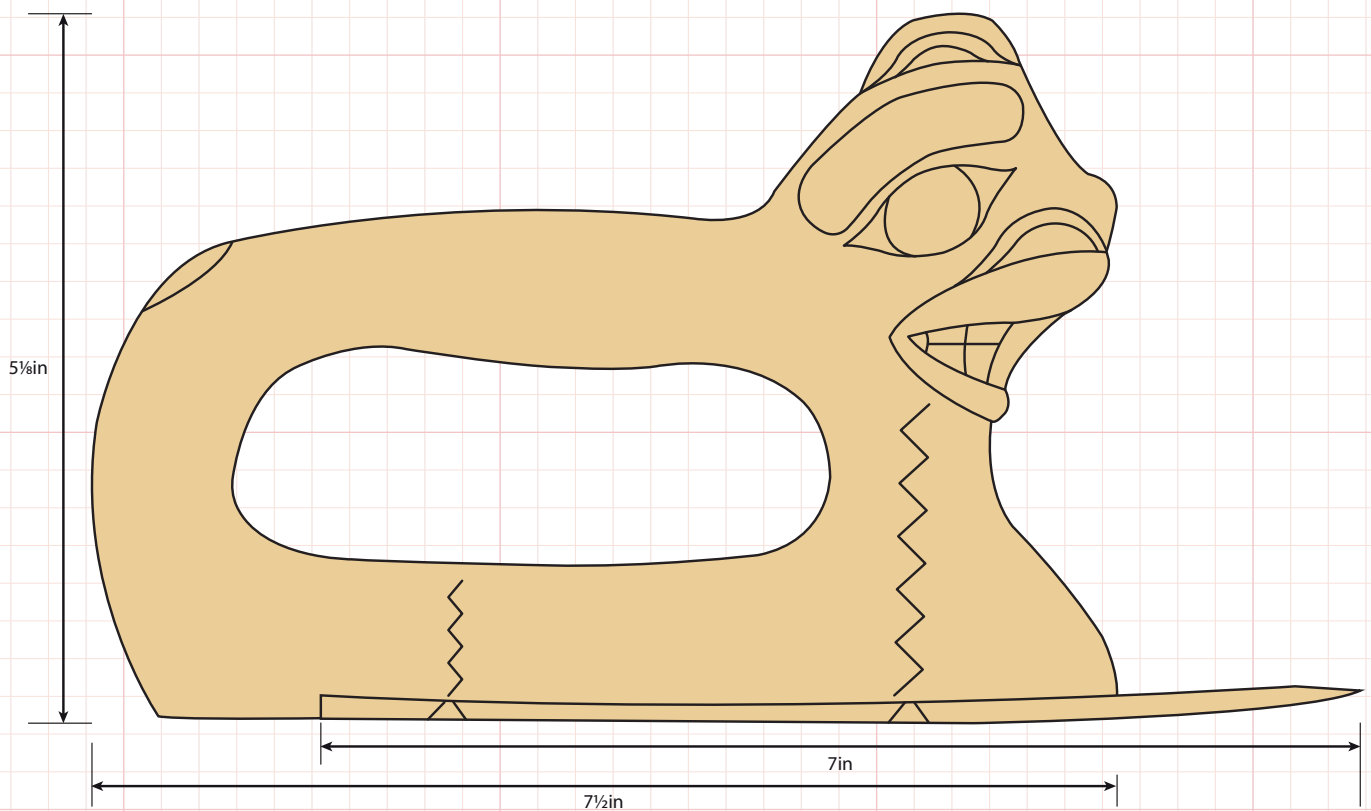


PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVE WESTERN

Things you will need

Tools:

- Bandsaw/scrollsaw (or make use of drill and jeweller's saw if you don't have power tools)
- Drill (for drilling screw holes to attach blade)
- 1in, No.8 flat head screws x2
- Metal blade (can be fashioned from tool steel/leaf spring or from a second-hand plane or axe blade)
- ½in and ¾in flat gouge or chisel
- ¾in and 1½in straight knives
- Fine thin saw (I used a Japanese-style dovetail saw)
- Bent knife or No.7, ¾in gouge
- Rasp and assorted files
- Cloth-backed fine abrasive
- Selection of abrasive papers 150-320 grit
- Glue stick for pattern/lettering
- Danish oil finish



1



2

Construction

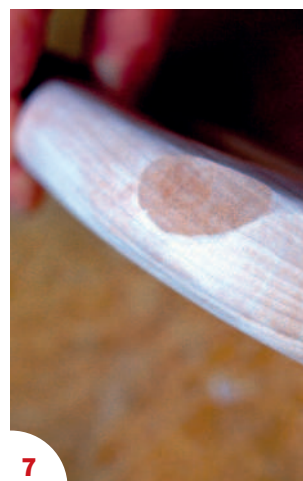
1 & 2 When laying out the handle I shaped the hand opening to comfortably fit my own hand and to create a handle that was neither too thick nor thin. The blade had a slight curve running its length, so I made sure to scribe that curve on to the bottom edge of the tool and then used a scrollsaw to accurately cut to the line. The resulting slot fits the blade perfectly and keeps the metal tight to the wood. I also shaped a slight curve where the blade meets the heel, so that the rounded end of the blade fits snugly and securely.



3 & 4 I used a drill press and scrollsaw to remove the stock where my hand would grasp the handle. The upper section is slightly curved for comfort in the hand and the bottom is dead straight following the run of the blade. With the handle rough shaped and the overall body form cut out, I drew symmetric lines either side of the tool to narrow the grip and make it more comfortable for my hand. If your hand is small, a fair bit of material might need to be removed here, but if your hand is large, you might want to go very slow with stock removal to ensure the handle doesn't become too small and uncomfortable.



5 With a straight knife, a rasp and some files, I shaped and rounded the hand grip, frequently testing to see how it felt and adjusting where necessary to the vagaries of my hand shape. Although it's not the most exciting bit of carving, it will have a profound effect on how the tool feels to use, so take as much time as necessary to achieve a really comfortable feel.



6 When you are satisfied the handle is good and comfy, use cloth-backed abrasive to thoroughly round over the handle and develop a silky smooth and uniform feel. You can use regular papers but endeavour to work evenly around the entire handle.

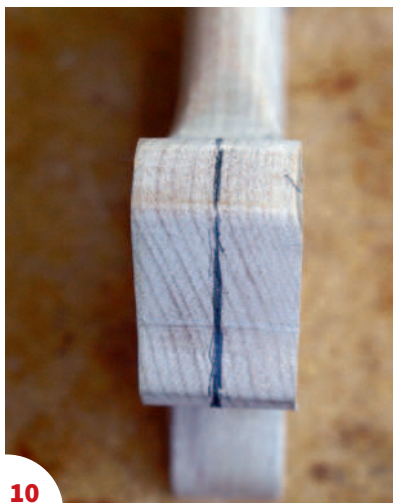
7 I included a little thumb grip on my handle, which allows me to keep my thumb located and avoid it sliding around, especially if my hand gets a bit sweaty. I didn't excavate too deeply and left it a bit textured to add more grip. Its location will depend on your hand size, so hold the tool as if you were using it and move it in a chopping motion, noting where your thumb feels most comfortable.

Carving details

8 & 9 Because I was in for a penny, I thought I might as well go in for the pound so I lettered the tool with my name on one face and my city of residence on the other. I opted for Celtic font as a nod to my heritage and because I think it happens to look really nice rendered in wood. I used a simple FlexCut pelican straight knife to do the lettering, but chisels and gouges would work equally well. I also cheated a bit by gluing on some photocopied lettering rather than drawing it out by hand.



10 Before beginning the carving of the beaver's face, I struck a centreline through the head block that I used to ensure symmetry when I was rounding and shaping the facial features. Having a centreline is extremely helpful and enables you to quickly reference various widths and shapes without continually measuring to find the mid-point.



11 I placed the beaver face drawing on the workpiece with some carbon paper beneath it. Because I am going to be constantly cutting the lines away, I am not too fussy about super detail, just aiming for rendering the main lines. Having a reverse image is handy for laying out the opposite side of the carving, but you can also measure with callipers once the first face is carved out.





12



13

12 I began by shaping the mouth section. Using a straight knife, I undercut the bottom lip, shaped the lips and formed the teeth, working as far as the centreline. I relief carved the outer edges of the lips until they were raised approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ in from the neck and cheek areas. The lips will be slightly domed, so when shaping the teeth aim to lower that area by approximately $\frac{1}{8}$ in to ensure the lips are raised all round.



14



15

13 & 14 With the face well under way, I shaped out the ears by sawing two parallel cuts spaced at approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ in from the outer faces and to a depth of about $\frac{1}{8}$ in. I then used a straight knife and a No.1, $\frac{1}{2}$ in gouge to shape a slight dome between the ears, gradually fairing the curve to flow evenly into the front and back of the head.

15 Once the inner surfaces of the ears and the top of the head have been shaped, I began shaping some of the facial features. I used the straight knife to begin shaping the nose and nostril and then scribed around the eyebrow and 'raised' it by relief carving to a depth of about $\frac{1}{8}$ in all around it. Most of this work I undertook with the pelican straight knife and with the No.1, $\frac{1}{2}$ in gouge.



16



17

16 To create a concave surface within the ear, I made use of a bent knife. A low gouge or even a hook knife could also be used to achieve the same result. What is important is the curve is smooth and fair and that it is of even depth where it meets the eyebrow. Be gentle with the cutting to avoid chipping out the delicate edge of the ear.

17 With the ear shaped, the mouth clearly outlined and the eyebrow exposed, it's time to shape the curved transition area between the eyebrow and the eye and between the eye and the mouth. A steep No.9 gouge is ideal for this job, but proceed cautiously to avoid chipping the mouth or eyebrow. These curved sections do not have to be excessive and are probably only about $\frac{3}{16}$ in at their deepest point. The vital thing is that they flow smoothly and fairly and without tearing into any of the neighbouring areas.



18



19

18 Use the No.1, $\frac{1}{2}$ in gouge or flat chisel to shape a soft dome into the lips. Aim to leave the lips slightly proud of the teeth, but faired into the body and cheek. The grain changes direction frequently, so light cutting is essential to avoid taking out too much material and misshaping the lips. Be careful not to snag the edge of the chisel on the cheek area.

19 Having shaped the mouth and cheek area, clean up the eyes with some crisp chip-style cuts before and aft of the eyeball. Put a very slight chamfer of approximately $\frac{1}{8}$ in around the edge of the eyeball to define it, then tidy up the chip cuts, ensuring they are of even width and depth.



20 With the face completed, re-draw the ear details and use a straight knife to scribe and cut them. Aim for smooth cuts that follow the flow of the curve across the inner ear. Try to cut cleanly and crisply and without any bumps or low spots. Any faceting or rough cutting will be very noticeable in this area.

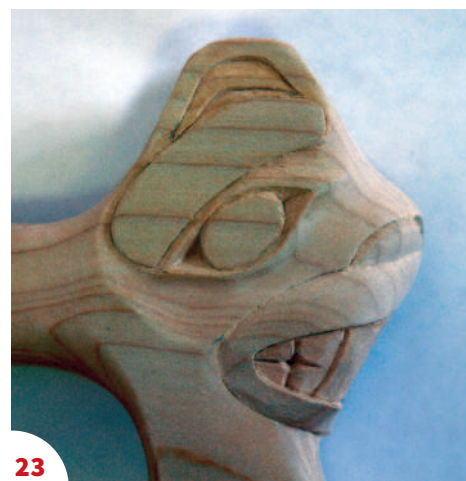
Sanding and finishing

22 & 23 Before applying any finish, ensure that the entire carving has been vigorously and carefully sanded. Use a variety of grades from 150-320 to ensure a nice smooth surface free of scratches, chips or uneven areas. Using cloth-backed abrasive either drawn over convex curves or pulled under the thumb on concave surfaces is the quickest and most reliable way to get an even and nicely faired surface for finishing.

23 Repeat this entire process for the other side of the face and, when complete, the beaver should look something like this.

24 Finally, give the piece a couple of coats of Danish oil or varnish, wet sanding between coats with 1000 grit wet and dry abrasive. After about four coats, apply a finish of beeswax polish for a silky feel and soft sheen.

25 To use the D-adze, mimic the chopping action of a long-handled adze, but be careful not to strike too hard. Finding the angle that is most comfortable will be a personal thing, but the angle is invariably much lower than you think it might be. Go slowly and cautiously until you develop a rhythm and a feel for the tool. ▶



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Face off

Portrait carver Alec LaCasse is spreading the word about woodwork in online carving courses



© BEN LEW

Woodcarver Alec LaCasse hasn't let the Coronavirus crisis halt him in his stride. In spite of worldwide lockdowns he continues to pursue his art – and to spread the word about woodcarving in his online courses.

'Covid has dealt a serious blow to many folks around the world, but that said, woodcarvers have been quarantining since the dawn of time, so as far as my actual carving work goes, not much has really changed,' says Alec. 'My Fundamentals of Woodcarving School was already slated to release in April, so I was able to pick up some of the slack from the many cancelled in-person workshops.'

He goes on: 'Teaching woodcarving online is a fairly natural idea to me, since I learnt carving from watching videos online and on DVD. The beauty of Fundamentals of Woodcarving is that you don't need to watch the lesson all at once, you can watch it at your own pace. A lot of students have enjoyed that aspect of it.'

The school is set to be absorbed into a new venture, Bridges School of Sculpture. Alec explains: 'This aims to provide education in sculpture with more interactive touchpoints and some of the best online instruction surrounding the topics of woodcarving, clay and other forms of sculpture. The project was born out of Fundamentals of Woodcarving and the need for more interactive online programmes with top sculptors.'

A part of life

Alec learnt to carve from an instructional booklet his history teacher gave him when he was 12. 'My first project was a small cowboy boot,' he recalls. 'I sat on my front porch for hours without looking up. Time evaporated. I knew it would be a part of my life then.'

He specialises in carving faces, and says they never cease to interest him. 'I wonder if it is because each person's face is entirely individual,' he muses. 'The process of carving faces is equal parts a challenge and joy. Most importantly, humans are a beautiful subject matter, our ability to overcome adversity and find meaning in suffering is beautiful and to capture that strength is a worthwhile endeavour.'

He gets more inspiration from art – painting in particular – than from other carvers. 'I often carve from pictures, but I would rather have a live model,' he says. 'My dad has posed for me more than anyone else. For a long time he shared his barn with me and was kind enough to sit in one spot in between lawn mowing sessions as I draped strange pieces of fabric over his head in the hot sun, creating what I thought of as dramatic effect.'

Hand tools and sandpaper

Alec built his own studio last year near Oakland Charter Township in Michigan, US. He says: 'It is my dream studio, on a large hill overlooking a small Michigan lake with a large skylight and a pleasing simple white modern interior.' He uses gouges and knives to carve wildlife, plants and the human face. 'Many of my tools are early Sheffield steel and date back to the mid 1800s. I love using hand tools as opposed to loud and dusty power tools. I also am a firm believer in sandpaper. A lot of woodcarvers get legalistic and condemn the use of sandpaper, but I believe it to be an important tool for carvers. I do not avoid power tools for artistic reasons, but I generally try use them as little as possible to avoid the noise and mess.'



'The process of carving faces is equal parts a challenge and joy. Most importantly, humans are a beautiful subject matter, our ability to overcome adversity and find meaning in suffering is beautiful and to capture that strength is a worthwhile endeavour'





‘A big part of the joy of found woodcarving is in the hunt for materials. Each year I travel to remote parts of the wilderness in Montana and Wyoming to collect materials – and as an excuse to camp and hike the beautiful mountain wilderness’

His favourite woods to work are found woods. Alec explains: “Found” wood is wood that has been left in its natural state, such as driftwood, bark and log sections. With found wood you are concerned with many things that the milled wood carvers are not, such as where to find the wood, or if the quality of the wood is stable enough to render a nice carving. The loveliest part of using found wood is that each piece of wood has its own shape, so in a way I am collaborating with it. Each piece has a unique shape, grain, and sort of will of its own.

‘A big part of the joy of found woodcarving is in the hunt for materials,’ he adds. ‘Each year I travel to remote parts of the wilderness in Montana and Wyoming to collect materials – and as an excuse to camp and hike the beautiful mountain wilderness. This year, a photographer friend of mine named Ben Lew came along and shot a short documentary about the process.’

Satin brush-on lacquer is Alec’s finish of choice. ‘I also often like to apply a bit of wax or mineral oil once the lacquer has dried. I think lacquer has a very pleasing look to it once it is dry,’ he says.

Twists and turns

One of the most challenging projects Alec has ever worked on was a 12ft tall wildlife relief in red oak, which he finished last year. He says: ‘The carving included life-sized carvings of a baby fawn laying in foliage, a standing doe, a golden retriever, more than 70 oak, cottonwood and birch leaves, tree branches, acorns, two red squirrels, a cardinal and trillium flowers. The carving was a

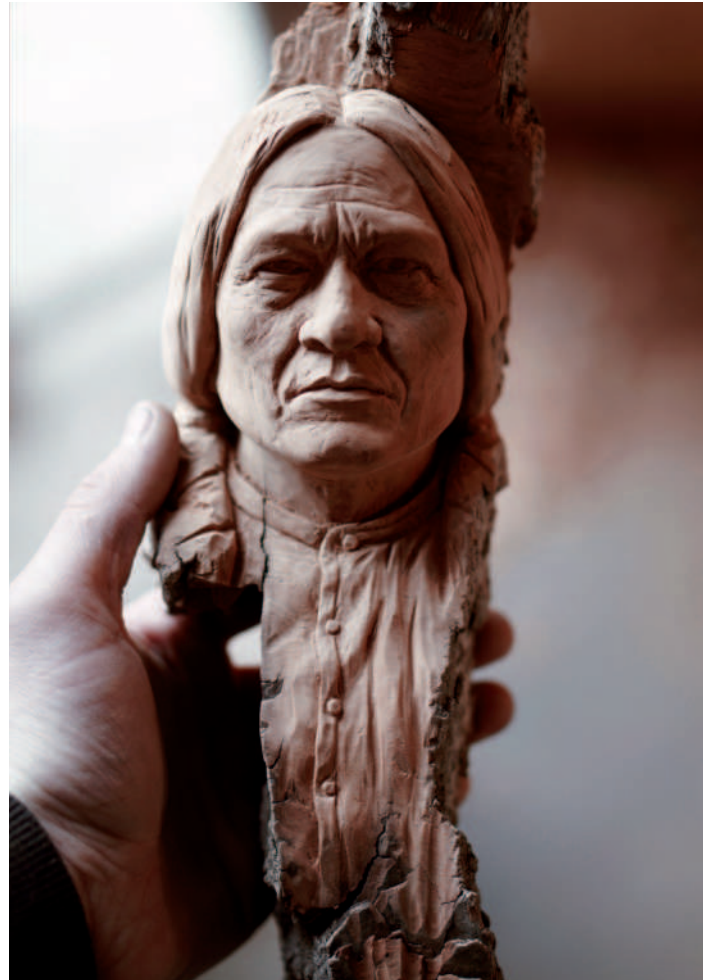
massive undertaking and took over a year and a half to finish. The project was definitely a learning experience and full of twists and turns.’

He is currently working on a couple of half-scale portraits, one of his cousin and one of a friend, and is also setting out on some stone carving commissions of flowers. ‘Looking to the future I hope to carve more life-sized portraits of friends and family. I think capturing a likeness is deeply challenging and equally rewarding,’ Alec says.

So what does he like best, carving or teaching? ‘I would hate to have to choose one or the other. Both are great for different reasons. As a young kid, my desire to teach sometimes exceeded my knowledge of the things I taught. My first instructional woodworking videos were taped by the friends I managed to convince to hold my camera. I now film myself for the most part – if that tells you anything about how fed up my friends must be of me.’

When he’s not carving, Alec loves playing guitar and writing songs. ‘Music is a necessary part of carving for me. If it weren’t for music, I probably wouldn’t be carving – they seem to feed off of one another. I love songwriting and am endlessly fascinated with the processes that folks go through to write beautiful songs. I spend far too much time listening to interviews with musicians, educators, and authors on the subject.’

aleclacasse.com



The background of the entire advertisement is a light-colored wood grain. On the right side, there is a vertical, curved piece of wood featuring intricate carvings of flowers and swirling vines. The carvings are detailed, with visible petals and leaves.

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A little owl for you to try

Peter Benson carves a small bird of prey and snail

Having finished the carving of little owls that featured in the last issue, and being fairly happy with the result, I decided to try a larger version of a single owl on which I could include a bit more detail. As the last carving was based on someone else's work I couldn't show it as a project, but this one is my own drawing using as much reference material as possible as well as photos of my own.

What appeals to me about this bird is its apparent grumpiness and definite attitude, which I wanted to include in the carving. In the last piece this was a bit difficult owing to its size – hence doing a larger version. I have used lime as it is a beautiful wood to carve and should let me include all the detail I need. I am not really a bird carver so don't intend to concentrate on the degree of accuracy that expert bird carvers will include in their carvings. I really want to try to capture the essence of this particular owl. I sometimes feel that carvers and artists try to achieve more accuracy than their knowledge can manage and sacrifice the spirit and life of the subject. Various elements can be exaggerated to emphasise movement or expression even if it may not be absolutely right. There is no substitute for observation – study the subject, look at pictures from as many angles as possible.

Wood

I have used a piece of lime 10in high, three inches thick and five inches wide. The bird itself is five inches high but these measurements can be varied as much as you like. The tree can be whatever shape you wish and offer a chance to add your particular stamp to the carving.

Suggested tools and materials

- Bandsaw or coping saw
- Roughing out gouges
- Small No.9 gouge
- Small No.3 gouge
- Small No.39 V-tool for the feathers
- No.9, 1.5mm or similar for texturing the tree

Most of you will have your own selection of tools that will do the job satisfactorily.

You will also need a pair of 8mm or 9mm yellow glass eyes (readily available on the internet), some Blu Tack, modelling putty, or epoxy glue, and finishing oil. Should you wish to paint the finished bird you will need acrylic watercolour paints.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY PETER BENSON



Roughing out

Draw the pattern on to your wood ready to cut out. If you intend using a mallet to rough out the piece, I suggest that you join at X-X and leave extra wood at Y to avoid fracturing of the short grain at Y.

Cut out the pattern you have drawn, if possible, from the side and front. This is not essential but will reduce the carving time and make locating the various parts much simpler.

I suggest that you now remove any obvious waste wood from the tree, not only to get the basic shape but to gain access to the body of the bird. You might also like to give some thought to what you intend to put on top of the tree stump.



Marking centrelines and shaping

As the head is turned you need to draw the centreline of the body and angle of the head before you start shaping.

Once done, round off the body and establish the head angle. Check the location of both wings to ensure that they are symmetrical. You

will find that you will need to draw frequently on the carving to get a symmetrical shape.

Check pictures of perching birds to make sure that your owl is not falling forward or backwards – so often this is wrong.



When I carve any animal, I like to get the head right as soon as possible as this is important to get the character right. In this case, the owl is looking at whatever is on the top of the tree so both need to be in the right place. I have carved a snail but you can change this if you wish.



TIP

If you decide on a snail as well, I advise that you model one in plasticine or clay before carving as they are not as easy to do as you would think. You only need to get the basic shape at this stage, especially the shell, which is the most difficult. Any detail can be added to this if necessary to help with the carving. If you feel that this might be a bit difficult or not to your liking, you can put anything you want on the top of the tree. You could always do something like a simple ladybird and even



paint it to add a little colour. Feel free to play with ideas.

Fitting the eyes

Concentrate now on getting the shape of the bird's head and location of the eyes right as well as the position of the snail. You may have to play around with your small gouge and pencil to ensure that the eyes are in the right place and are of equal size before you cut out the sockets. Don't experiment with your carving tools, use your pencil until you are sure what needs to be removed and from where.

Once I am happy with the basic shape of the owl and snail, I can fit the glass eyes. These are offered up to the head to check size and location before cutting the socket into which

they will be fitted. All preliminary fitting can be done with the eyes still attached to the wire. Use a small gouge to cut the socket, checking frequently to avoid making it too large.

Repeat the process for the second eye, again checking carefully to make sure they are the same size and symmetrical.

Once you are happy with the fit, cut them off the wire, leaving around 10mm on the back of each one. Bend this in a circle at the back of each eye, fill the socket with a small amount of Blu Tack or plasticine, and push

the eye into place – this will remain there, if required, until you have finished the carving. You can use a small length of plasticine stuck to the face of the eye to guide it into place.

You will be able to make any adjustments before fixing them permanently. It is important that both eyes are looking at the snail, or whatever you use. A point to note here is that owls cannot move their eyes so it is important when fitting them that they both look straight ahead. They also set the character of the owl and, in this case, they need to tuck slightly under the brow.



Getting the feet right

It doesn't really matter which order you follow now to complete your carving, or indeed how much detail you include. What will affect this is the amount of detailed research you are prepared to undertake.

I have decided to complete the feet and branch before adding any detail to the body as it is important for the bird to sit correctly and final adjustments can be made when these are finished.

Remember that owls tend to perch with two toes forward and two back. There is little fine detail in the feet as they have a good covering of feathers, but the claws are quite large. I find it helps to mark the joints to get an accurate curve to each toe as well as drawing on the bones of the leg to get the correct positions.



You will find that you will need to carve most of the tail, especially the underside, in order to finish the back toes and claws. Make sure that these line up with the front ones even though much of the foot is covered by feathers. Constant checking is needed here. You can always leave the body very low at the back meaning that you won't need to carve the back toes. Leave the bottom of the body fairly 'loose' as you don't want a hard line.

Texturing of the branch can be done with a small No.9,10 or 11 gouge making short curving cuts, trying to keep these as random as possible. I suggest that you leave the rest of the tree until later as it will need to be slimmed down considerably.



NOTE

No matter how careful you are when carving you can never be completely safe. Wood is a living thing and has flaws. The branch on which the owl is sitting has split by the foot and has had to be glued. This could be for a number of reasons – hopefully nothing to do with anything I have done – but it is nothing unusual and you shouldn't worry overmuch about it. I can stain or paint the tree to hide this or, with careful cutting and refitting the branch under the foot or adding an extra piece of branch, can make it totally unnoticeable. I will leave this until the end as there is a possibility that it will happen again.

Marking feathers

Once you are happy with the feet and branch you can start to detail the body of the bird. How much you do is up to you. I have marked in the rough outline of the feathers and gone round my markings with a small No.9 gouge, leaving a textured finish which I will leave or paint. If you wish to add fine feather detail you will need more accurate research and very fine texturing. This is your choice.

It is possible to end up with a hard appearance to the bird if there are gouge cuts evident so I have sanded the whole bird, leaving the head and neck smooth and just taking off the hard edges from the feather texturing that I have carved. This should give the effect of the bird slightly puffing up its feathers.

I have drawn in the flight and tail feathers as these are quite prominent and will carve these in with a small V-tool.



First coat of oil

At this stage of a carving, I generally give the whole piece a coat of Danish oil as this picks out any irregularities and seals the surface so that it doesn't get dirty during the final finishing. Lime is notorious for picking up dirt and grease from the hands, which can be difficult to remove. Oiling makes it easy to remove any dirt by gentle washing without any adverse effects. Any further sanding or detailing can still be done and more oil added.

All that is left now with the bird is to cut the waste wood from the lower trunk of the tree and finish the texturing of the bark before gluing in the eyes, making sure that they are facing where you want them, and finishing the face detail.



Adding the snail

The final touch is to finish off the snail. I found an empty snail shell (there are plenty in my garden) so that I could get the shell right and spent quite a bit of time watching live snails (of which there are also a great number in my garden) so that the body looked reasonably lifelike.

Once I was happy with the overall shaping, I trimmed the bottom of the tree, drilled a 6mm hole in the bottom to take a length of 6mm threaded rod which was glued into the tree and fitted into a piece of mahogany as a base.

The whole carving was given another coat of Danish oil and, when thoroughly dry, polished with a neutral wax polish.



The finished carving mounted on the base

SAVED FROM THE BIN

This is another little owl that I carved but found a hole in it during the process. I filled it and then painted it to avoid throwing it away. ▶





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Hazelnuts in boxwood

Zoë Gertner carves a trio of little beauties

The hazel is a common native hedgerow and woodland tree on which, in early spring, its dangling yellow male catkins and the tips of its small red female inflorescences can be seen. Later on in the year, following pollination, the tree produces its fruit, hazelnuts, in small clusters on the tree. Then in the autumn, when the nuts are ripe and fall to the ground, all kinds of wildlife is attracted to this good source of nutritious food.

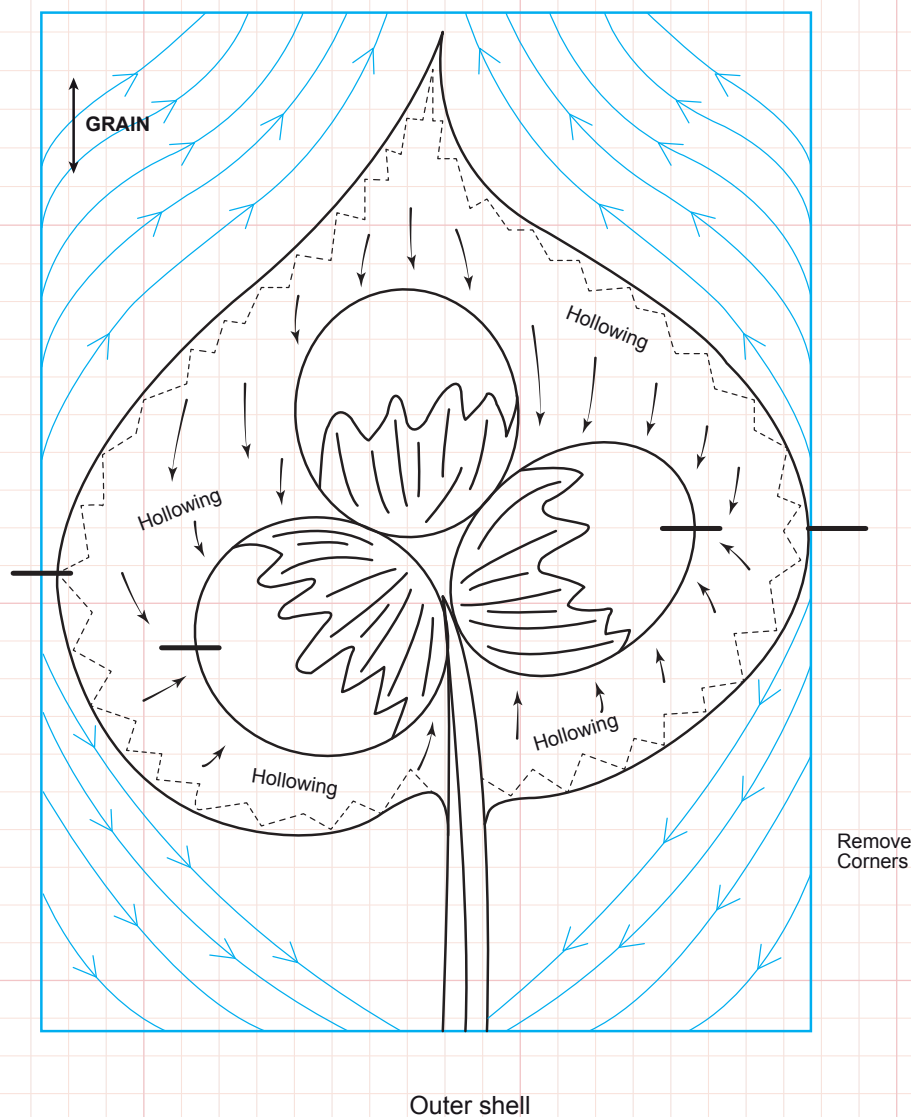


Look carefully at the discarded shells on the ground and you can tell who has been having a feast. The squirrels break the nut shells in half, dormice will cut a round hole in the side of the nut and leave their teeth marks around the inside of the hole, and a wood mouse will cut fine teeth marks on the surface of the nut and over the jagged edge around the hole it makes to get to the kernel. You may even find some hazelnuts have been pushed into cracks and crevices in tree trunks and branches by nuthatches and woodpeckers, holding them securely so they can break the shells open with their beaks and enjoy the kernel within.

Being a small detailed carving, your cluster of hazelnuts lying on a leaf requires a fine-grained wood, sharp gouges and probably good close-up eyesight.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ZOË GERTNER



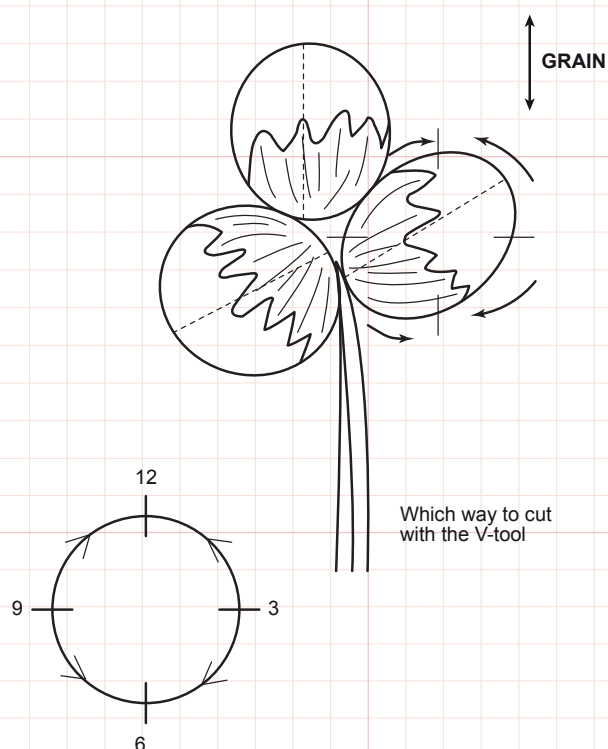
Things you will need

Materials:

- A short length of boxwood

Tools:

- Small saw
- Plane/surform
- Mallet
- No.39, $\frac{1}{4}$ in V-tool
- No.39, $\frac{1}{16}$ in V-tool
- No.3 gouges ranging from $\frac{1}{16}$ in- $\frac{1}{2}$ in
- No.5, $\frac{1}{4}$ in gouge
- No.9, $\frac{1}{4}$ in gouge
- No.2, $\frac{1}{4}$ in skew chisel
- Woodcarver's chops or alternative for holding your carving securely



Preparation

1 I used a small section of a log of boxwood, diameter approximately 2in (5cm) and 2.5in (6cm) long, splitting the log lengthwise and flattening the bottom using a plane or surfboard. Because the carving is to be small and finely detailed you need to use a close-grained dense timber, preferably light-coloured and hard. Suitable alternatives to boxwood could be hawthorn, yew, holly, hornbeam, sycamore or possibly hazel itself. If you are not sure your wood is hard enough, test by pressing your fingernail into its surface – a suitably hard wood will not be indented easily, and it will probably be quite heavy in relation to its size.

Starting the nuts

2 The outline of the leaf and the group of three nuts was drawn on the upper surface, ensuring that the stalks of both leaf and nuts lie along the grain for strength. If they were to lie across the grain they could be weakened or break when the carving is completed.

3 Using the No.39, ¼in V-tool mark the outlines of the nuts, cutting in the correct direction around each in relation to its placement and the grain direction of the wood. Diagram 1. (Using the analogy of a clock face, start your V cuts from 3 o'clock to 12 o'clock, then from 9 o'clock towards 12 o'clock to meet up; then from 3 o'clock towards 6 o'clock, followed by a cut starting from 9 o'clock meeting up at 6 o'clock.)

4 & 4A The nuts are now relieved by using opposing cuts. The initial set of cuts is made by inverting the No.3, ¼in gouge so it matches the curving shape of the V channel around each nut. Rest the tool within the V channel and cut around each nut, by tilting the gouge, continue the cuts downwards and at the same angle as the side of the V channel, always cutting outwards and away from the nut.

5 For the second set of cuts, the opposing cuts, use the gouge with its bevel down and start a little distance away. Cut downwards towards the first ones at an angle to make them meet cleanly, which should then deepen and widen your original V-tooled channel outlining each nut. As you work around the curves, swing the tool edge slightly to the side so that the full width of the cutting edge of the gouge meets cleanly and accurately with the first set of cuts curving around the nuts.

6 Where the curve lies along the grain make alternate cuts from each side and you will obtain a clean chip along the grain and avoid splitting the wood.

7 At the centre of the group, invert the gouge and round over the edges of each nut, tilting the corner of the gouge sideways towards the deepest point where they converge at its centre to start removing the triangular areas between.

8 Repeat the sets of opposing cuts around the nuts several times, then with the No.5, ¼in gouge remove the outer edges of the block by cutting outwards towards each end, leaving the nuts standing proud on the surface of the leaf. Then draw the centrelines along each nut.



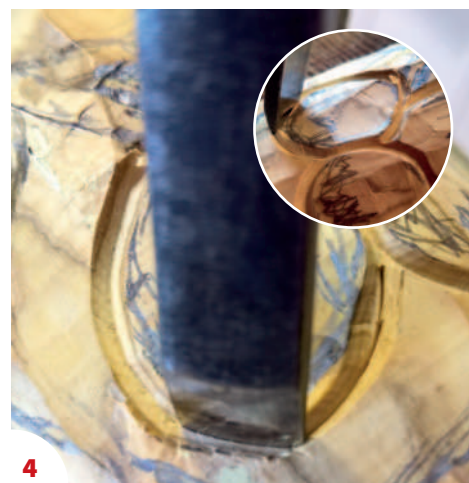
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9 Taking care to cut in the correct direction, round each nut to a spherical or oval shape by inverting and tilting the face of the No.3, 1/2in gouge and paring the outer edges of each nut to remove any sharp edges.

10 Repeating the above steps, continue rounding them until the centreline of each nut lies highest and the nuts are approximately half their finished depths. Their final shaping and undercutting will be carried out later.

Starting the leaf

11 On the underneath, draw the outline of the back of the leaf. You can use a suitable hazel leaf as a template or you could draw it freehand by referring to the photo.



11



12

12 Using the No.9, 1/4in gouge and cutting towards each end, round off the corners and shape the edge. Diagram 2. You may find it helpful to retain a small section of each of the two parallel ends of the carving so it can be held securely in your vice.

13 Returning to the upper surface, shape the outer edges, the margin, of the leaf so it corresponds with the back of the leaf and begin to hollow the surface of the leaf around the nuts. Rest the No.3, 1/4in gouge against the rounded surface of the nut and tilting it inwards and downwards, cut round its circumference. Then scoop away the adjacent leaf surface so that the nut begins to emerge from within the hollowed area around it. Diagram 2. Repeat several times, tilting the gouge underneath a little more each time until each nut is slightly rounded beneath itself, yet attached to the leaf. The final undercutting and shaping will be done later on.



13



14

Starting the stalks

14 Reduce and flatten the area in front of the nuts so that the nut stalk can be attached to them, together with the leaf stalk underlying it. Using the No.39, 1/8in V-tool and cutting from the nuts towards their ends, mark the outer sides of the stems and adjust the lower margin of the leaf on each side until there is a projection outward from the lower edge of the leaf to accommodate the pair of stalks. Then reduce the combined circumference of the two stalks and draw the ends of each, nut stalk above leaf stalk, i.e. one above the other, on the outer flat end of the projection.



15



16

15 Continue undercutting each nut to shape it beneath and resting on the surface of the leaf. As before, start by tilting the No.3, 1/4in or 3/8in gouge inwards from the greatest convexity of the nut and cut downwards, angling the cuts under and down into the surface of the leaf. Work in this way around the circumference of the cluster of nuts.

16 As described previously, remove the adjacent surface of the leaf from all round the group of nuts, merging the hollow made into the surface of the leaf. Repeat these steps until a tiny area at the base of the nut remains attached to the leaf, the nuts rest on the leaf and each appears fully rounded.

17 As you undercut the nuts, you will need to deepen the triangular area between them, which can be accessed by using the point of the No.2, ¼in skew chisel in the angle between them as you shape them.

18 Now with the No.39, ⅛in V-tool mark the uppermost stalk, that of the nuts, aligning it so it is attached from the convergence of the group of nuts outwards along the projection to its end previously drawn on the flat face of the projection. Relieve the stalk as described before with the No.3, ⅜in gouge and round over its edges until it lies on top of the stalk of the leaf beneath.

Finishing the nuts – putting the nuts inside their husks

19 Now reshape and smooth the convex surface of each nut so that they join each other at the base of their husks in the central triangular area between them. This is done by paring with the No.3, ⅜in gouge inverted and sliding its cutting edge diagonally downwards over the nuts towards the middle of the area between them. The final shapes of the nuts can range from spherical to slightly flattened or ovoid, as you wish.

20 With the No.39, ⅛in or ⅜in V-tool (or using opposing cuts with the No.3, ⅜in gouge), cut the frilly edges of the husks that wrap around each nut shell, then reduce the adjacent surface of the nut shell so that it lies below the edges of the husks. Adjust the shape of each nut as necessary.

21 Between and within the irregular ends of the husks use the point of the skew chisel to tidy and slightly undercut their ends and edges. Then with the No.39, ⅛in V-tool make several short cuts along their lengths to texture them.

22 Working outwards from each nut towards the margins of the leaf with the No.3, ⅜in or ⅛in gouge smooth the upper surface of the leaf ready for marking its veins later on.

23 The underside of the leaf shows the layout of its veins, which are raised and more pronounced than those on the upper surface, each tapering to finish at a serration on the edge of the leaf. Draw the first pair on the underside of your leaf.

24 On the underside, from the first pair of veins which join the main central vein and the stalk, reduce the circumference of the leaf stalk by cutting alongside it with the ⅛in V-tool and paring back the adjacent leaf surfaces. Then round over both edges lengthwise, finishing at its end as when cutting the stalk of the cluster of nuts.



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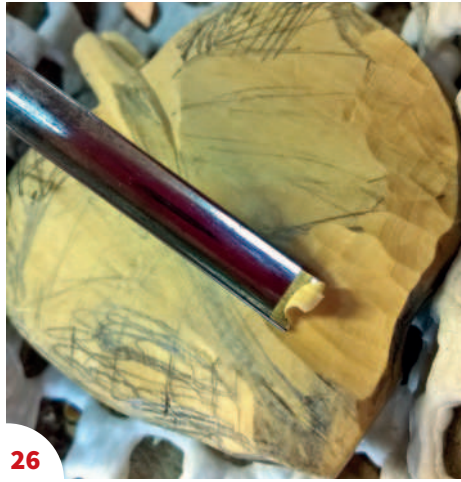
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25 Before the remaining veins can be cut the ups and downs of the upper and lower edges need to correspond so that the leaf edge is of uniform thickness. Around the leaf, mark the line of its edge to the tip of the leaf and shade the appropriate areas that need to be reduced. It may be helpful to feel the leaf between your fingertips to find these areas. Where there is a rise on the upper edge there will need to be a corresponding hollow in the same place beneath.

26 Using the No.5 and No.3, 1/4in gouges, carefully reduce the areas as necessary, working up to the outer edges until they correspond with each other and the leaf edges are finer.



27

27 Smooth and merge the undulations into the under surface ready to draw the main vein from stalk to tip, with the minor veins tapering outwards to the edges from the main vein.

28 Before starting to carve the veins on the underside, adjust the upper surface if necessary, making sure any convexities/concavities correspond with the concavities/convexities beneath and the leaf is of even thickness.

29 Reduce the thickness of the outer edges by tilting the No.5, 1/4in gouge and carefully paring along them, taking great care to cut in the correct grain direction along both inner and outer surfaces, as these will differ.

Carving the veins underneath

30 The easier method of depicting these is to incise them using a V-tool as described later for the upper surface; or as I did, challenge yourself and relieve them, especially if you are carving a very dense fine-grained timber and have good close-up eyesight. On the underside mark the outer edges of each tapering minor vein joining into the main vein using the No.39, 1/16in V-tool. Cut inwards, from the leaf margin towards the main vein to avoid damaging or breaking away the edge of the leaf.



28



29

31 Relieve the veins as described before, using opposing cuts with the appropriate width No.3 gouges so that they taper from the main vein and end at the leaf margin. At the sides of the minor veins the point of the skew chisel turned on its side can be used to pare and reduce the surface of the leaf within the angle where they join the central vein.



30



31

Carving the veins on the upper surface

32 On the edge of the underside of the leaf make a pencil mark at the end of each minor vein. Then on the upper surface draw the corresponding veins from the pencilled mark on the edge across to the central vein and in line with its matching vein on the underside. Use the No.39, $\frac{1}{16}$ in V-tool and incise the veins, starting with a light shallow narrow cut from the edge of the leaf, gradually deepening and widening the V cut towards the nuts and central vein. Beneath the nut where the V-tool will become obstructed use the point of the skew chisel or a No.3, $\frac{1}{16}$ in gouge tilted sideways to cut each side of the V channel and finish the veins under the bottom of each nut.

Finishing the leaf

33 Between the ends of the veins reduce the thickness of the leaf edge, carefully paring from both upper and lower sides until the leaf margin becomes as fine as you dare. Note that each vein ends on a point of a serration. Between the ends of adjacent veins and using the skew chisel or No.3, $\frac{1}{16}$ in gouge with a slicing cut from both upper and lower sides, carefully pare away small sections between to form a wavy edge around the leaf, leaving the ends of the veins on prominent pointed serrations.

34 Again working from both the upper and lower edges of the leaf between the ends of the veins, make short irregular cuts outwards from the edge using the No.39, $\frac{1}{16}$ in V-tool to form the lesser serrations around the leaf.

Finishing the carving

35 Remove any remaining pencil marks with an eraser and check for any errant cuts or digs, removing them by careful paring, and ensure all meeting faces are cleanly cut, especially at the junctions of the main and minor veins beneath and around the cluster of nuts. Finally, I applied a coating of wax polish using a redundant toothbrush then left this for a while to be absorbed and buffed the carving to a shine with a lint-free cloth. ▶



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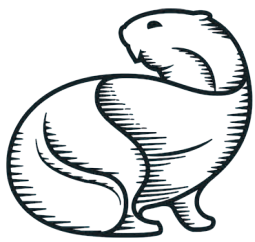
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From the community

A collection of letters and news from the woodcarving community



BEAVERCRAFT

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Also enter on our Instagram page (@beavercraft_tools). The winner will be announced in the next issue.



Plenty more fish in the sea

This is the first time I've ever had the pleasure of seeing your magazine thanks. I will be a subscriber. I thought you might enjoy seeing some of my work so here are a couple of pics. I really learned so much – wow this is a great publication.

Paul Thiesing



Knit one, carve one

Here are two pics of some recent carvings I've done. I started this group back in the spring with the gloves and have just completed the scarf. The hat and gloves are in a wood sold to me as walnut, but I have my doubts. The scarf is in lime.

Best regards, Peter Smith



Puzzling panther

Can anyone help with identifying the artist who carved a lovely wooden panther that I own? The craftsman has only engraved his initials, F.B.

The piece was bought by my late grandmother, Edith Hedley, probably in the 1950s (she died in 1958). She lived in the Lake District, but also had a house in London, and was a keen collector in both locations.

It has a Deco feel to it, with the preponderance of 'angular' cuts, while also being similar in feel to the work of Rembrandt Bugatti. It may well have been over 20 years old when my Grandmother bought it. It is 42cm high.

We love it! Regards, Mark Beattie

Woodcarving: If anyone knows who the woodcarver is, please email Mark Beattie on mbeattie50@gmail.com



Time to carve

Years ago I completed a visual arts degree, but life got in the way as it so often does. The Green Man is one of the first pieces that I made now that I have the time to be artistic. The box is something I've done a year later based on one half of a scene carved on a German Renaissance casket.

Regards, Kevin McLean.



Fully booked



During lockdown some folk read books, some write books and some carve books to make a useful side table. A recent offering from myself.
Keith Giddens (From the far west of Cornwall)

Carving bowls

Ernie Conover explores how a couple of gouges and a carver's mallet turned from firewood can transform a common bowl into art



I have turned enough bowls that my family members have concocted a plethora of excuses to ward off proffers of further treenware. However, they will jump at carved examples of my handiwork. I first learned to carve and texture bowls from Al Stirt, a professional woodturner who lives in Vermont. I encourage students in all of my bowl classes to give it a try. Many protest that they have no artistic carving skill. My demonstration of the techniques allays these fears and all leave with acceptable results. This type of carving is very simple – flutes, reeds or Vs – and not sculptural, anyone can do it.

Either the inside or outside of a bowl can be carved but carving the inside relegates it more to art than utility. While outside carving retains most of a bowl's utility, it requires a deep form or a torus shape to the rim to expose your handiwork. I particularly like a torus form for carving and it kills two birds with one stone in my bowl classes. As students move from open to closed forms they can also learn carving. Spiral flutes on a torus form are, in my opinion, stunning.

You also do not need very many tools, two



You don't need many tools to carve

to three gouges and some veining tools will cover the waterfront. I find a 25mm wide deep-fluted gouge and a 3mm V-tool chisel to be most useful. You want them sharp with polished bevels. It is much easier to carve wet wood than dry as it is easier to push to gouge and more forgiving of mistakes in carving direction. That is because it is less prone to splitting ahead of the cutting edge.

At least for your first few bowls layout is very important. Once you get the hang of the



Accurately laying out on your work is a vital key to success

process, layout can be minimised or dispensed with altogether. I start by drawing vertical pencil lines that are a little less than the width of my chisel. I do this by wrapping a piece of masking tape around the bowl and marking the diameter. I then stick this down on the bench and divide it into equal segments that are about 2mm narrower than my carving gouge cuts at full depth. The tape is now reapplied and the marks transferred. This can be done in the lathe and the toolrest used to draw vertical lines from these marks. I then lay out my design in pencil, often straddling two or three vertical bands with each flute.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERNIE CONOVER



The more complex the pattern required the more careful you have to be

Vice

I have spent a good deal of time making vices to hold bowls during carving and have even experimented with vacuum vices. I have an Emerick pattern maker's vice that, with the aid of a square of wood against one jaw, holds better. I have my students hold bowls with the tail vice of one of our Euro benches and a bench hook against one jaw.

While you can start flutes or reeds just below the rim, I think carving them to the rim emphasises the shape. The rim becomes irregular with a repeating pattern and the eye is drawn to the carving. A typical beginner's mistake is to try to carve to full depth with one pass. While this can be done with wet wood it is almost impossible

with dry. You are far better to carve in multiple passes, deepening and widening as you go. I try to leave a small flat spot between flutes but it is easy to inadvertently bring them to a sharp edge. Not to worry – sanding this sharp edge to a matching flat will make things look right.

Speaking of sanding, I sand the bowl to final smoothness in the lathe before carving. I leave the faceplate or chuck on during carving if possible. This allows the work to be put back in the lathe to adjust the rim if a bad carving breakout occurs. I do not sand the carved areas for doing so makes the bowl look machine made and not hand carved.



While you can build a fancy vice you can usually make an available woodworking vice work in conjunction with a homemade bowl-holding clamp

Flutes

It is most important to carve about three flutes in one direction then go back to the starting flute and carve three in the opposite direction. Then you continue the first three for three more and back to the other side for three. By alternating side to side your flutes will match well at the junction. If you carve in one direction your carving will improve sufficiently that the flutes will not match at the junction.

It is almost always better to carve from the rim with careful attention to grain direction. It is important to know the exceptions and this comes from some experience. This is why I maintain chucking. I have had several good friends who carved with power carvers – one with an air-driven chisel and the other with an electric Japanese Automach. This led me to fitting two pneumatic chipping hammers with carving chisels. It is much easier to control the cuts and to take bigger cuts with power. This is because either electric or pneumatic machines take a very short stroke – much shorter than most do with mallet blows. I really do not like power carving for it seems like cheating somehow. I find hand carving much more satisfying and make very short, rapid mallet blows with a fairly heavy mallet. I make two to three passes to carve each flute and



It is best to carve in multiple passes rather than cutting to complete depth in one cut. It is also necessary to pay careful attention to grain direction, which often requires carving from two directions

try to hand push the last pass, paying very close attention to grain direction to get the smoothness I want. It is easy to do this with wet wood but more difficult with dry.

Once you have carved a dozen bowls or so you can minimise the layout or just start

carving. I usually draw my start and stop bands in the lathe then pencil in one or two flutes by eye. Now I just start carving but keep a compass handy to draw a few parallel marks at key places to guide me in carving the next flute.

V-cuts

If fluting seems too daunting try using a veining tool to just carve parallel straight lines down from the rim or across the rim. The lines may be angled slightly to good effect. Anyone can do this and the results can be quite spectacular.

A technique that is akin to carving is texturing, which was also taught to me by Al Stirt. This involves touching a V-shaped scraper down repeatedly at regular intervals. The scraped grooves should about touch each other. The scraper has to be kept very sharp, touched lightly and indexed to the next cut carefully. It is painstakingly slow

but the results can be very pleasing.

I finish my carved bowls with an oil finish, usually Waterlox which is made

in nearby Cleveland, Ohio. I wipe on three to five coats, sanding each coat while wet with 320 grit and finer sandpaper. ▶



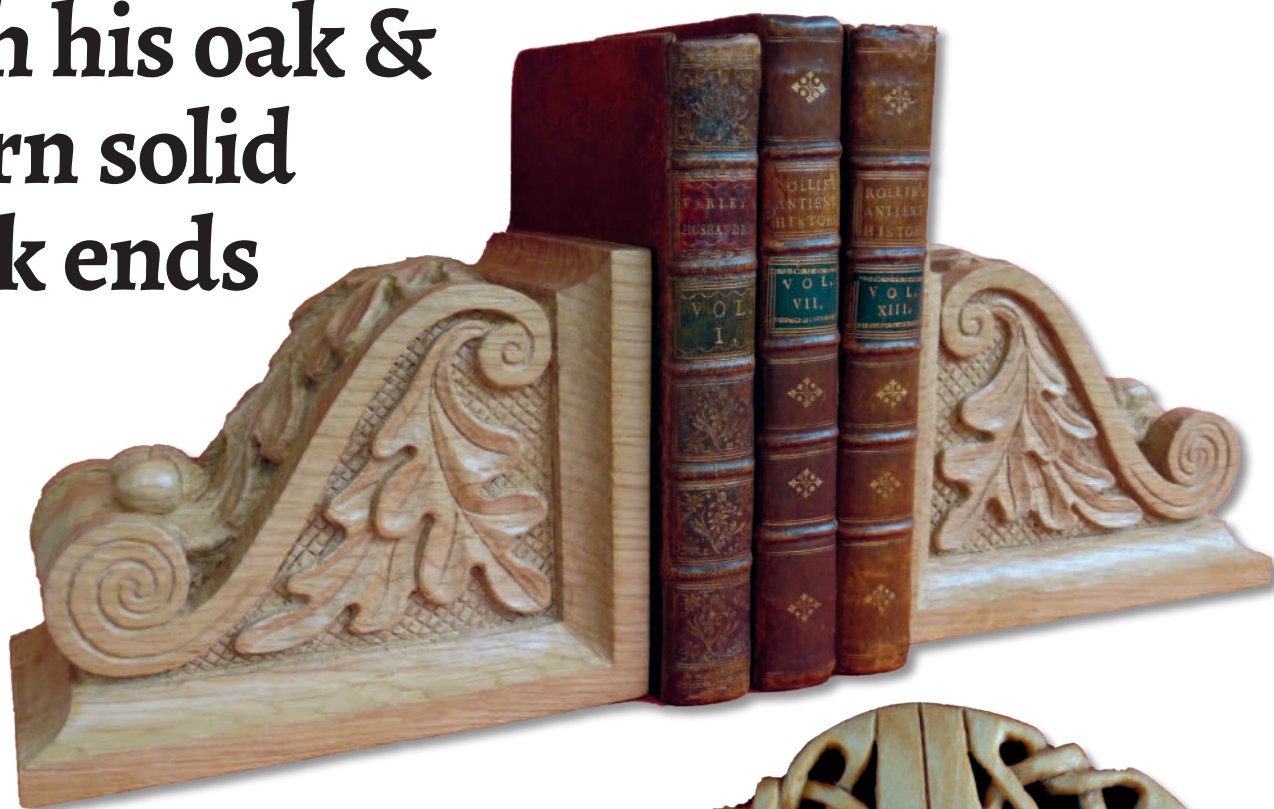
Carving straight grooves with a veining tool lends an interesting look and is super-easy to do. It is also a great confidence builder for the art-phobic



Some finished fluted bowls

Next issue 180 on sale 8th April 2021

Steve Bisco impresses with his oak & acorn solid book ends



Carve Zoë Gertner's kingfisher bowl



Complete Cedric Boyns's money box by carving the hare



Dave Western brightens up your lockdown with a Celtic sun

John Samworth continues his relief carving series



Bandsaw breakdown

Power tool and machine expert Bob Adsett takes us through the techniques for setting up and using a bandsaw

Setting up the machine

1 As a rough guide, the larger blades can be run with the teeth nearer the front of the wheels and the narrow blades more to the centre of the wheels, but the instruction book will give the correct positions for individual machines. To put on a new blade or to change an old one, first read the manufacturer's instructions and always ensure to turn off the power or pull out the plug.

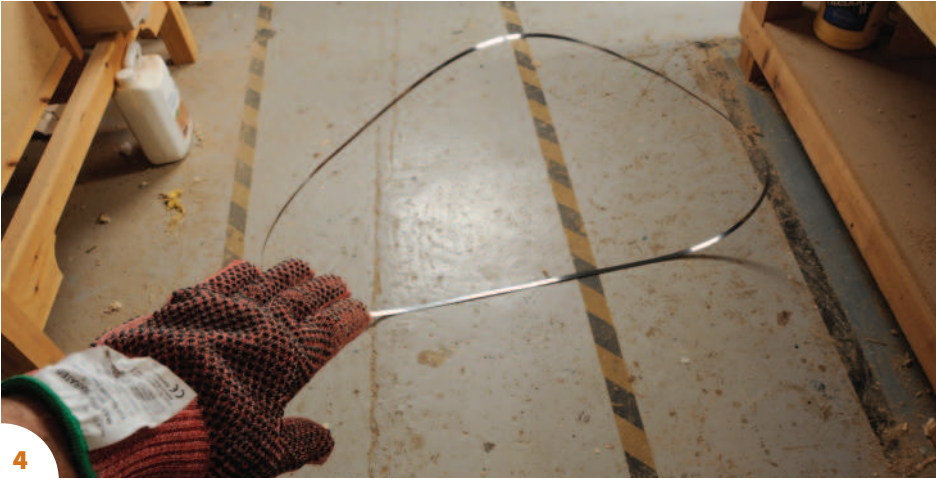
2 Release the piece that holds the two halves of the table flush. Next, release the blade guides and move them away from the rear and the sides of the blade. Release the tension on the blade so that it can be easily removed from the wheels.

3 Now slide the blade out of the machine and give the inside of the machine a good clean, making sure there is nothing stuck to the surface of the wheels.

SAFETY

Wear safety goggles and thick construction gloves or cut-proof gloves when blade changing. Both new and worn bandsaw blades are dangerous to handle.

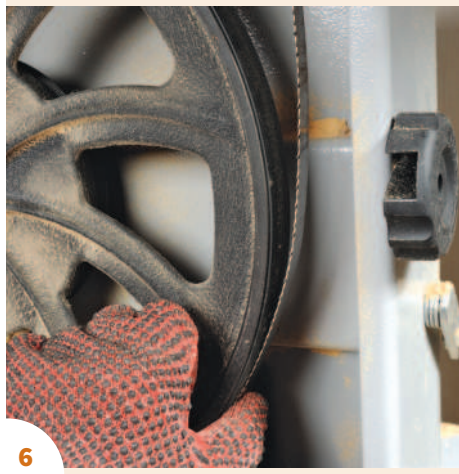


**4**

4 Now you are ready to fit the new blade, so very carefully uncoil the blade – it is normally held in a coil by pieces of tape or wire. As you release them, the blade will jump open if not controlled. I usually face the blade into a corner or open space and toss the blade away from me and instantly turn my back on it until it stops twanging around. If you do this, please make sure there is no one nearby that it can jump on.

**5**

5 The blade should now be one loop of steel with the teeth all pointing the correct way, which means that when the blade is in the machine, the teeth should be facing forward and pointing down. If they face up, the blade is inside out and needs to be flipped so that the teeth face down. This needs to be done carefully as you'll find there can be a lot of spring in the blade.

**6**

6 Slide the blade through the slot in the table and place it in the correct position on the wheels; this will be in the instructions. Some machines have the blade running to the centre of the wheels, and some with the teeth to the edge. Now adjust the tension control knob or wheel by turning it to raise the top bandwheel. The tension controller will be either at the top of the machine or on the underside of the top half of the machine body. Bring up the tension until you feel a firm resistance.

**7**

7 With the power off, gently rotate the wheel by hand, in the cutting direction, and watch how the blade runs on the wheels. At all times, take care not to let the blade run off the wheels. If the blade starts to run too far to the back on the bottom wheel, then increase the tension a little. If it runs too far forwards, then decrease the tension. You must watch both wheels at all times.

**8**

8 Some machines have tension indicators on them – these are spring loaded and will give an indication of what tension to set for which size of blade, but each blade is slightly different in length and will need to be set as such.

**9**

9 When the blade runs about right or as near as possible, check the tracking on the top wheel. There is a tracking control either on the back or the top of the machine, but I've seen them on the front of the wheel itself. Unlocking the tracker and gently turning it one way or the other will pitch the wheel forwards or back and make the blade move across the top wheel. Do not make large adjustments or you could throw the blade off the wheels and have to start again.

**10**

10 As you make the tracking adjustment, this will cause the blade to creep forwards or back on the bottom wheel. If this happens, then simply increase or decrease the tension; this will make the blade on the bottom wheel move to the back or front of the wheel. This process may need to be repeated two or three times to get the blade running correctly on both wheels. I have been asked a number of times over the years how I know if the blade is tensioned correctly. It is very simple: if the tension is right, the blade will run correctly on the bottom wheel and if the blade runs in the correct position on the top wheel, the tracking is correct.





11

11 The blade should now be dropping straight down the machine and if a square is mounted at the back of the blade, there should be virtually no 'run out' top to bottom.



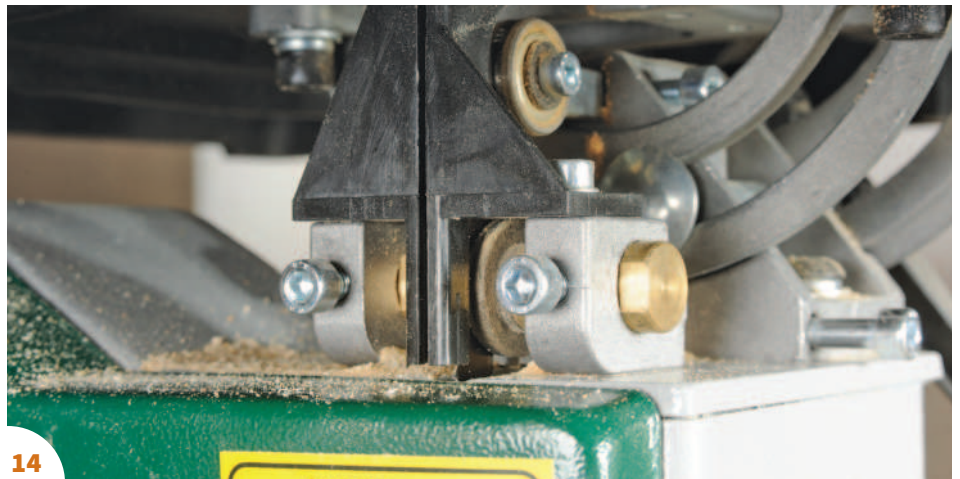
12

12 If there is a 'run out' on the side of the blade, the table is not set true and will need adjusting.



13

13 Once this is all done, the blade guides can be replaced. The rear blade support should be about 0.5mm – that is half a millimetre behind the blade, both above and below the table. The side guides should be the thickness of a sheet of paper away from the blade on both sides and adjusted so that they sit just behind the teeth. They should not touch as the blade moves back slightly under cutting load. Table locks and fence support bars can now be set in place on the machine and table inserts replaced.



14

14 A similar or simplified arrangement exists underneath the table and needs setting up with similar clearances to the guides above the table.

Dust extraction

15 This is a must as there is a lot of fine dust generated when cutting. All modern machines have a dust outlet point to connect an extractor to and use of this is highly recommended.

Using the machine

As with all machines, standing in a comfortable working position is of importance for both ease of working and safety. Make sure there are no obstacles under foot so that if you need to move about, you will not stumble.



15

**16**

16 Never pull back on the wood as you are cutting; this can pull the blade off the wheels. Make relieving cuts on curved work instead or insert a slim wedge at the start of a straight cut if binding occurs.

17 The guides above the table should be set just above the thickness of the workpiece with enough clearance to allow for any variation in the thickness of the wood as it is fed into the saw. If cutting straight, the fence needs to be set to the width required and locked firmly in place.

18 While cutting, all pressure should be on the wood and towards the fence, low down and in front of the blade teeth. This will help to keep the cutting line as true as possible. If pressure is placed too high, it can cause the wood to try to tilt against the fence and if the pressure is past the cutting line of the teeth, the wood can be twisted away from the fence in front of the blade, either of which will result in a bad cut. Maintain a steady forward and slightly diagonal pressure, i.e. from the top right-hand corner to the bottom left-hand corner, if the fence is to the left of the blade, and the opposite if the fence is to the right of the blade. Use a pushstick to protect the hands from accidentally coming into contact with the blade.

**17****18**

19 Cutting curves needs a different approach as now the work is done freehand to a line or maybe a template. Again, get into a comfortable position so that you can move around if needed. As before, the top guides should be just above the work. At times, you will need to be prepared to move slightly to the side of the machine as you work, but at all times, keep the wood moving forwards as you turn to follow the line. Make sure that the hands are kept well clear of the blade and never in line with the cut. Sometimes, on complex curves, it will be better to be working with the hands to the side or behind the blade. Even complex 3D jigsaw puzzles can be made with the right type of narrow, fine-tooth blade. ▶

**19****Regular****Raker****Skip****BLADE TYPES**

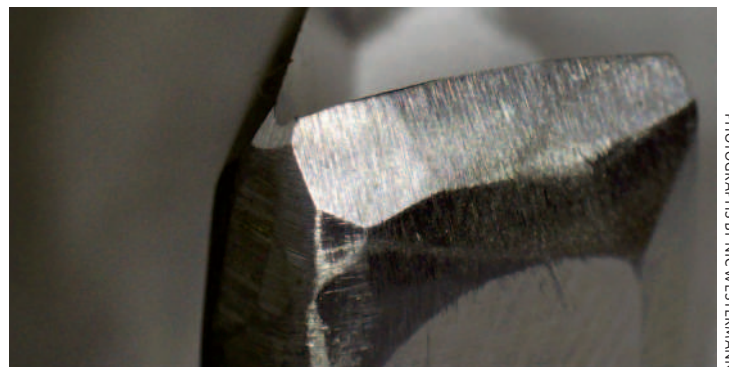
Part of the fun is trying out different blades to see how well they cut for particular tasks. Regular teeth are suitable for thin sheet material so, for instance, a narrow fine-tooth regular blade will cut tight curves, while a wide skip coarse-tooth blade will tackle deep ripping – two very different tasks. A good standard is 9-12mm wide skip-tooth with 6TPI – teeth per inch – for tackling most tasks. Bandsaws will cut hands as well as wood if care is not taken – in fact, there are special frozen meat and fish blades available for the food industry and I have used them very successfully on wood over the years. They have a thin kerf and work very well, but the machine must have a stable body frame and be set up perfectly.

Sharpening Clinic – V-tool nightmare

Nic Westermann tackles your tool-sharpening problems



The V-tool, as it arrived



Multiple bevels show that the basic geometry has been lost

This was the intriguing title of an email I received last month. A reader had turned to me for help after being unable to satisfactorily sharpen this tool, despite following online guides. I must admit to being flattered – and a bit daunted. Although I have sharpened versions of this tool for clog making it was definitely outside my comfort zone – I specialise in making green woodworking tools.

However, my whole series of articles has been to the effect that if you follow simple rules, then you should be able to tackle any tool. Time to put it to the test. This will be the start of a series where I will choose a tool that a reader wants to send in for sharpening. This is great for two reasons – it will take the pressure off trying to think of something new and fresh each month, and it allows me to interact with readers, something that has been lacking this year. It means I can be sure the articles will be of interest and relevant to at least one, but hopefully more carvers.

I thought that this new carver was being overdramatic in his description, but having seen the tool I think 'nightmare' was a valid description. Admittedly any hand sharpening looks a bit brutal close up, but as you can see from the photos there were multiple issues with the grind on this tool.

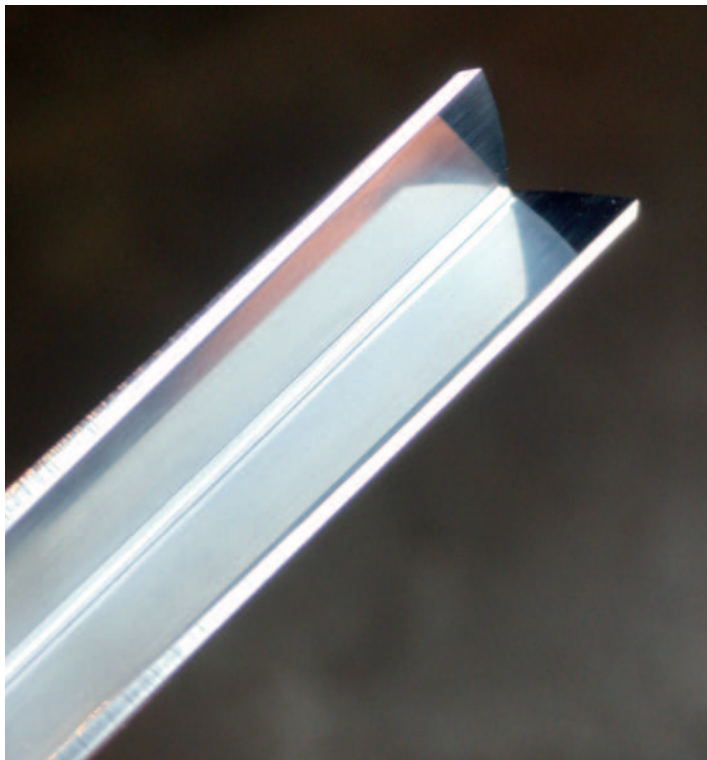
Later in the article you can also see the 'cut' it made in end-grain birch. With the benefit of hindsight, I should have done my test cuts in a better finished piece of wood, but as I started with this, I had to finish with it.

So, to sharpen this tool according to my rules, I need to set the bevels accurately then work down through the grits. The tool can be broken down to a couple of flat chisels and a micro gouge – the difficulty is that they all need to be forming an unwavering edge.

Basic geometry for a V-tool

2 chisel
edges at 25°

Micro gouge at 25°

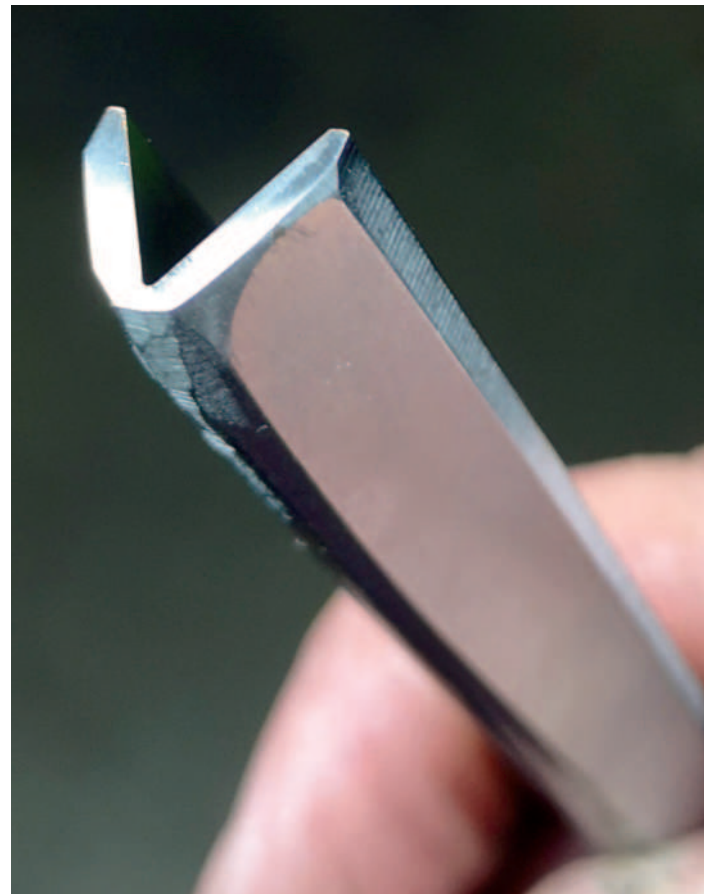


Confusing reflections maybe, but it shows how dimensionally accurate the finish is

Next I joint the edge at 90° I am not going to go for a swept-back edge on this tool, it's complicated enough as it is. Jointing will remove any micro bevel put on in the preceding stage, and largely completes all the work that will need to be done on the inside. In future a very fine grit slip or V-felt can be used to remove any burr formed by working on the outside bevel. It also allows us to see if there are any issues that need looking at further – I had heard from the owner that this tool was thicker at the root of the V than was ideal. I was tempted for the article to joint the edge all the way back to show the complete cross section, but it rapidly became apparent that I would have to remove a lot of steel to get there. Not a problem with the grinders I have, but it seemed like a waste and I abandoned this halfway through. So there is no need to take the edge back this far unless there is a huge chip or similar damage to remove.

First off, I will start with an easy job and try to clean up the inside bevel, which in this case is the whole of the inside. It doesn't need much as the tool is basically well ground here, just minor scratches to remove. It is a good foundation to start with.

As this bevel is already set accurately, I just need to work down through the grits. I used self-adhesive sandpaper on a steel block, but a stone slip would work just as well. It is easier to change grits though this way. We are looking for an accurate flat-winged V with a small, even radius at the bottom.



Jointed edge



Grinding flats on the ProEdge

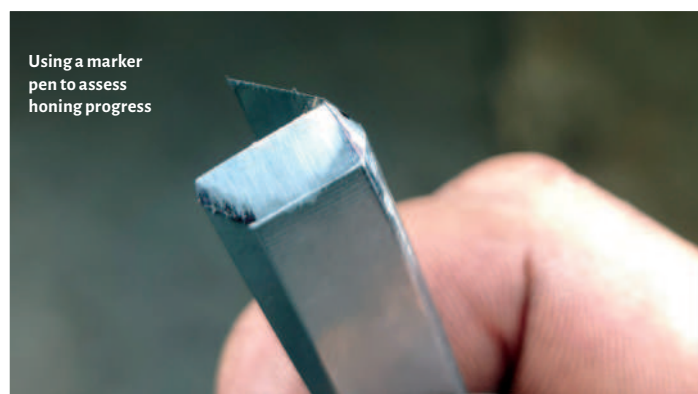


Flats ground



Gouge section blended in

Again, I was feeling my way with this, the first in a series of articles. I had planned to sharpen only using tools that were at the disposal of the owner, but it is so hard to repair bevels that are this far out that I decided to grind it to true everything up. With care it should be possible to follow these bevels by hand.



Using a marker pen to assess honing progress

I used my ProEdge for this, and for the first time used the table that comes with it. Set to 25° the machine made short work of truing everything up. It was fairly easy to do the edges on the wings, it was trickier to roll the tool to get the tiny gouge form at the bottom. Gentle cuts and plenty of checking.

I went down to a fine 400 grit belt then finished sharpening by hand, using self-adhesive paper on a block starting at 800 grit and finishing at 3,000 grit. Using a black marker pen was an easy way to see that I was keeping the bevel flat on the paper.

I removed the burr on the inside with my metal 'slip' and made some test cuts — there is no point stopping if the tool doesn't cut cleanly at this stage. All was good so I stropped the outside using suede glued to a block and the inside with one of our V-felts. As ever, always strop away from the edge.



Stropping with shaped felt

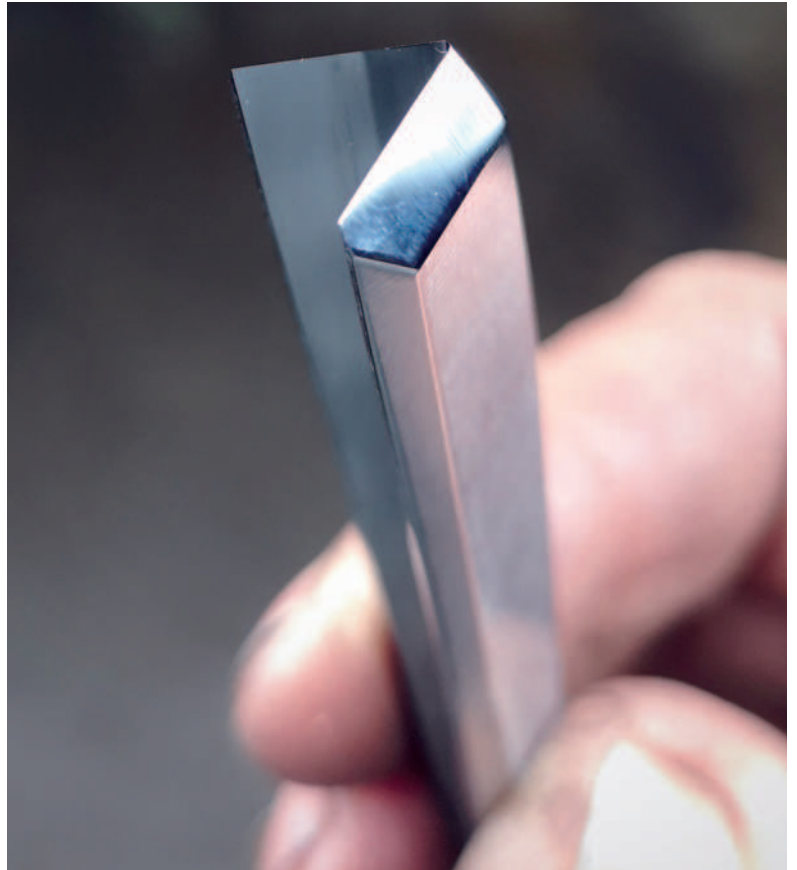


I made a final cut, next time I'll start with a better finished test piece

So, will the owner be able to maintain this edge? We'll see. It has been returned and we are in contact. Maybe we will revisit this later, possibly in person when social distancing restrictions allow. Currently, though, I think practising on a conventional chisel would be the best starting point. The problem with the V-tool is that if you go too far at any one point and put a wave in the edge you really have to joint it back to square, and then go all around the tool to bring the edge back. It's certainly the most challenging tool I have sharpened to date. Do you know of a more troublesome tool? If so, get in touch. ▶



A better example of what the tool can do now



The finished tool

THE SHARPENING CLINIC IS OPEN

I am really excited to be embarking on this new series. As the name suggests I will be helping carvers with sharpening problems – this will allow me to focus my articles on tools that are relevant to you, the readership.

I am looking for readers to send a brief email with a description of the tool, the sharpening equipment they are using and the problems they are having. Please do not send images at this stage as it clogs up my email system far too quickly.

I will try to answer all emails, but will only be selecting one tool per article. You would then send the tool to me

at your expense, I will sharpen it and make it the subject of the article and send it back to you at my expense. Turnaround will be up to a month as I will need to get the tool well before the deadline to be certain I can fulfil my obligation to WC of turning in a quality article each issue. If not selected, please do not send me your tools. I don't have time to sharpen them in my day-to-day business, and I don't have the budget to return them to you if you do. Also, due to the timescales involved with overseas post currently, this is only open to carvers in the UK.

If you are interested, and I hope you are, then please email me at nic.westermann@btconnect.com



Our contributors



Alan Denham is a retired science teacher and got interested in carving at an evening class about 30 years ago. He is an amateur carver, not a pro, but work is sometimes available at www.coquetdalearts.co.uk



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 learned a great deal by 'giving it a go'.



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



John Samworth is the present chairman of Cornwall Woodcarvers, a group of like-minded carvers who enjoy carving and encouraging others to take up the craft. He teaches an evening class at a local college and supports local Scout troops jandjsamworth@btinternet.com



Nic Westermann is a blacksmith and specialises in toolmaking. He is highly regarded in the green woodworking and carving communities. He researches, designs and manufactures jigs and other kit to help make sharpening things easier. nic.westermann@btconnect.com



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



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



Zoë Gertner has been a professional woodcarver and sculptor since 1980. She is experienced in the teaching and practice of all aspects of woodcarving and sculpture, including relief carving, lettering, signboards, ecclesiastical, restoration, fairground and carousel work. www.zoegertner.co.uk

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Pistol-grip walking stick

Paul Purnell carves an elegant and practical walking stick



This project is for a comfortable stick that is suitable for leisure purposes or as a walking aid. This design is sometimes referred to as a pistol grip, although this term also refers to a type of knob stick. The addition of end caps and accent pieces creates a touch of refinement and complements the English walnut handle.

Things you will need

Materials:

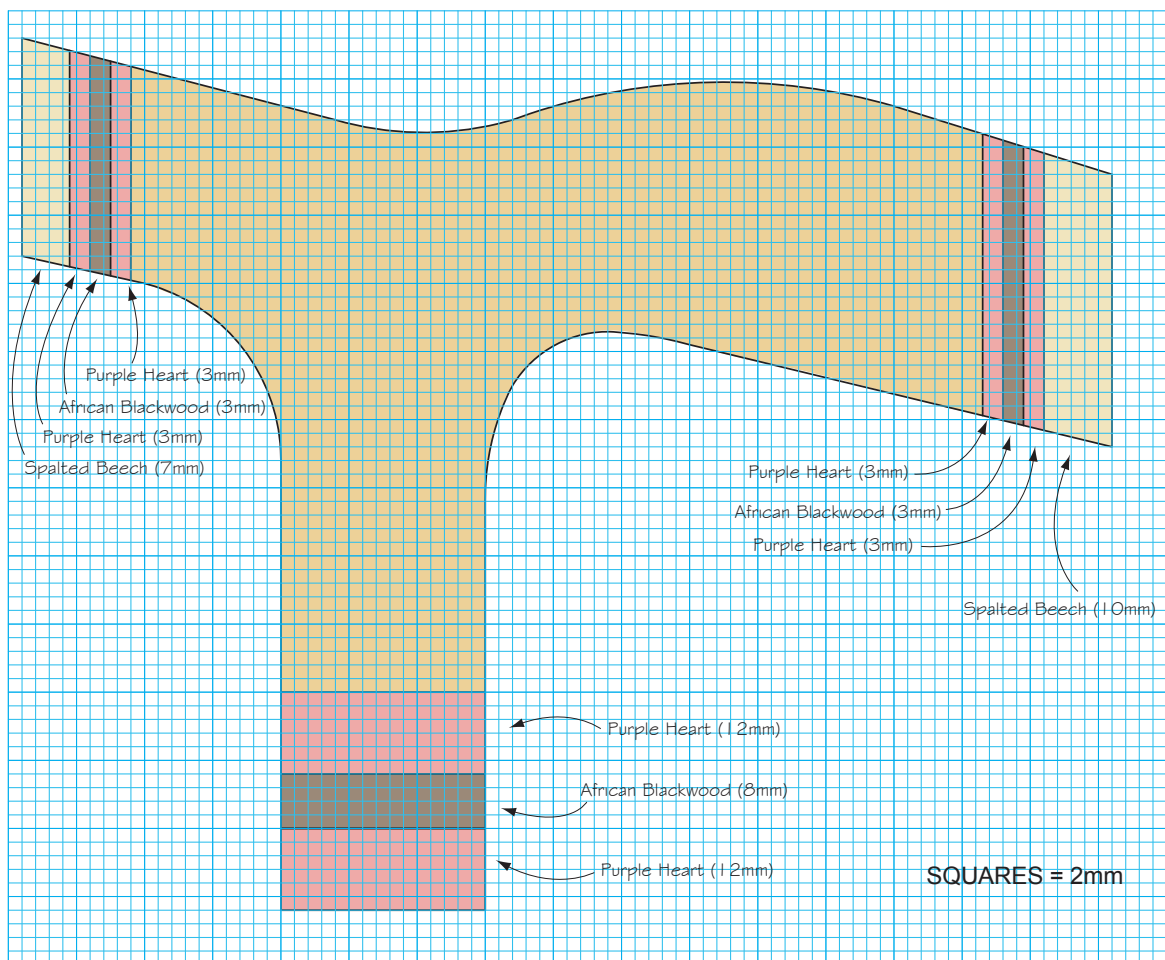
- Piece of English walnut 130mm long x 110mm high x 30mm wide.

- Four pieces of purple heart, two at 40mm x 40mm and two at 50mm x 40mm. All 3mm thick.
- Two pieces of African blackwood, one at 40mm x 40mm and the other at 50mm x 40mm. Both 3mm thick.
- Two pieces of spalted beech, one at 40mm x 40mm x 7mm and the other 50mm x 40mm x 10mm.
- Hazel shank
- Piece of 6mm dowel
- Cloth-backed sandpaper, 120 through to 400 grit

- Brass ferrule
- Epoxy glue
- Finishing oil

Tools:

- Bandsaw
- Rotary carving tool
- Coarse and medium-toothed burrs
- Junior hacksaw
- 13mm wood drill
- 6mm wood drill
- Cushioned-drum sander
- Split-mandrel sander
- Carving knife

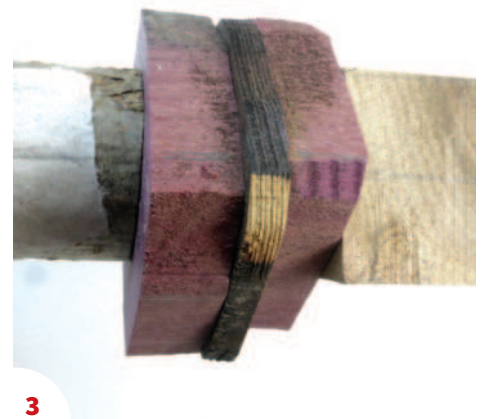


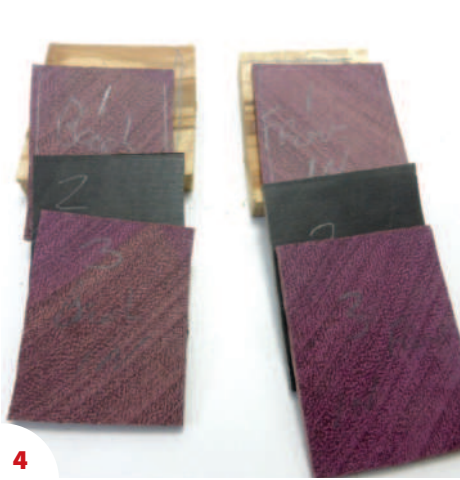
1 Make a side template from the plan and use the bandsaw to cut out the blank. This plan is for a 28mm shank plus a 2mm allowance. If the shank you are using significantly differs, adjust the diagram and template accordingly.

2 Find the centre point at the bottom of the head. Clamp the head into a vice or workbench. Use a two-way spirit level to ensure the blank is level in both planes. Drill to a depth of 45mm with a 13mm wood drill. Ensure you use a sharp drill to stop any wander. This project incorporates three spacers between the head and the shank: two purple heart and one African blackwood. You can change these to woods of your choice. Drill the spacers with the 13mm wood drill.

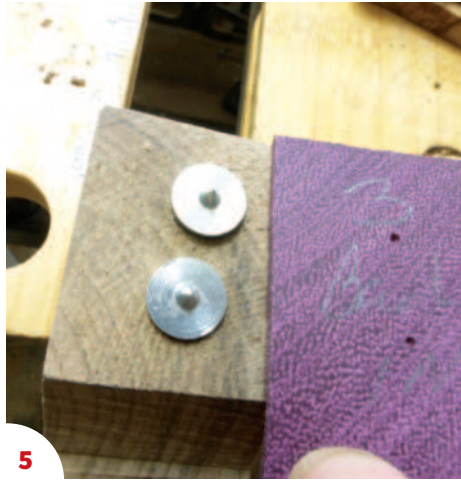
Tip: When drilling into the head, it will help keep the hole vertical if you drill a short distance and then move yourself by 90°. Drill another short distance and move again. Keep doing this until you reach the required depth.

3 Use a carving knife to prepare the dowel from the top section of the shank. It must be long enough to fit into the head and through the spacers (refer to WWC 21 for the full process). Dry-fit the three spacers and head. Wherever you achieve the best fit, mark all pieces with that alignment.





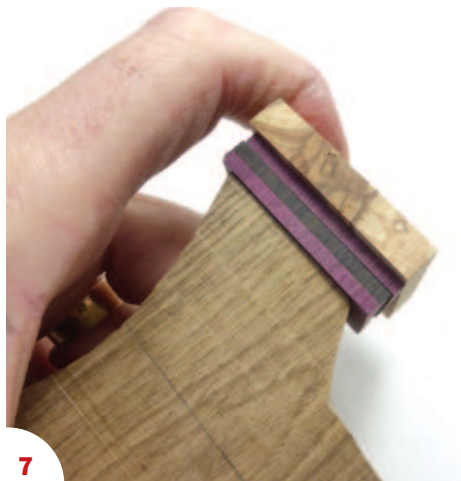
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4 Use a bandsaw to cut out the end caps and accent pieces for the front and rear of the handle. Aim for a new blade and correct set-up, as any gaps between these pieces will spoil the appearance. In total, you will need four purple heart at 3mm; two spalted beech, one at 7mm and the other 10mm; and two African blackwood at 3mm. The front end piece uses the smallest piece of beech and the rear uses the larger. Cut the front pieces to approximately 40mm x 40mm and the rear to 50mm x 40mm. You can use any wood of your choice to achieve a design of your choosing.

5 Once you have cut the slices for the accents and end caps, arrange them so they fit together snugly and leave no gaps. Number the pieces in the order and orientation you have decided on. Drill two 6mm holes, about 10mm deep and 10mm apart, in the rear end of the blank to take a 6mm dowel. Place the dowel pins in the holes. Take the first piece of purple heart that will adjoin the blank, ensure you have the correct orientation and lightly press on to the pins. Ensure you have wood overhanging the blank on all sides. Repeat this process for the front end of the handle. Now you have the centre points for your holes.

6 Drill 6mm holes through the three accent pieces – two purple heart and one blackwood – of the rear of the handle. Ideally, clamp the three pieces together on a workbench while drilling. Use these pieces as a template to transfer the position of the holes in the end cap. Drill the holes in the spalted beech end cap, but this time drill only halfway through. Mark the depth on your drill to ensure you do not break out of the other side. Repeat the process on the accents and end cap for the front of the handle.

Tip: The 3mm accent pieces, especially the purple heart, are brittle and easily crack. When drilling the holes use a piece of backing wood for support.

7 Cut four pieces of 6mm dowel long enough to fit into the blank by approximately 10mm, through the accent pieces and into the end cap. This will be approximately 22mm for the front and 25mm for the rear. Test-fit both sets to ensure everything fits flush and there is sufficient overhang of wood for shaping.

8 Glue on the accents and end caps with epoxy glue and allow to dry.

9 Glue the three spacers to the shank with epoxy glue, making sure you accurately line them up with your marks. Allow to dry overnight before further working on them.

10 Temporarily, put the head back on to the shank. Place a couple of wraps of masking tape around the shank where it meets the spacers. With a coarse burr, round over the spacers to the shape of the shank.



8



9



10

11 Using the same coarse burr, shape the neck of the head while still attached to the shank.
Tip: Never shape the spacers or the neck without them being together. No matter how careful you are, there is always the tendency to round over the edges.

12 Sand the spacers and the neck with 120 grit paper on a cushioned-drum sander. Leave sufficient wood for fine sanding later on. Good 120 grit paper is usually capable of removing deep burr marks. However, you can use a medium burr before sanding if you wish.

13 Remove the head from the shank. Using a coarse burr, shape the capping on both ends to match the rectangular shape of the handle.

14 Divide the top and bottom face of the handle into quarters lengthways. Draw on the $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$ positions. Mark approximate width lines on the side faces. Use the coarse burr to flatten the outer-quarter edges.

15 Use a cushioned-drum sander with 120 grit paper to smooth out the sharp edges but do not round them over. Leaving the edges this way gives the head a touch of character. Sand the head by hand with 240, 320 and 400 grit paper. Sand only the edges – do not touch the bottom of the neck.

16 Refit the head to the shank. Wrap a few wraps of masking tape around the top of the shank. Sand the spacers and the bottom of the neck using the cushioned-drum sander and 120 grit paper. Finish the sanding by hand down to 400 grit paper.

17 The finished handle showing the accent pieces.

18 Glue the head to the shank with epoxy glue. Prepare the tip of the shank for a ferrule. Rub down the stick and head with white spirit and a lint-free cloth to remove any dust. Apply four coats of the finishing oil of your choice. This stick has been finished with matte oil. Fit the brass ferrule on the tip with epoxy glue. This is the completed walking stick.

19 A different view showing the spalted beech end. ▶



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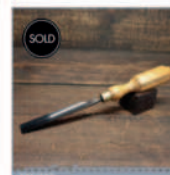
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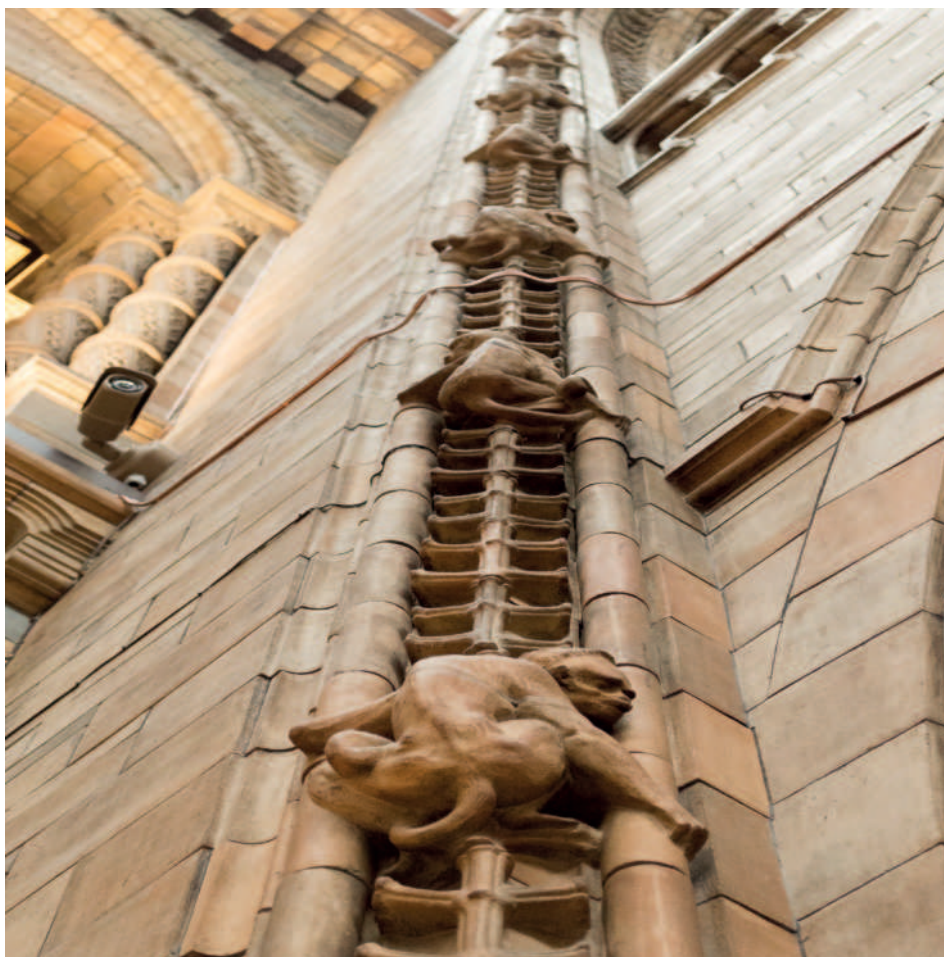


The Natural History Museum

We take a closer look at London's 'cathedral to nature'

The idea for the Natural History Museum came from Sir Richard Owen, the natural scientist who coined the term 'dinosaur'. Owen's vision was for a 'cathedral to nature', which would be accessible to everyone. Alfred Waterhouse was hired as the architect and his design, was inspired by Gothic Revival and Romanesque architecture. Waterhouse chose to make the entire building from terracotta as this was more resistant to London's heavy air pollution; terracotta was also quicker, easier and cheaper to carve. Following Owen's direction, all the decorations are inspired by nature and the museum's professors checked Waterhouse's designs to ensure they were scientifically accurate. The richly decorated interior was intended to reflect the variety and abundance of the natural world, featuring randomly placed foliage, columns carved with patterns inspired by fossilised tree trunks and a tiled ceiling painted and gilded with images of plants from around the world. Owen was committed to the idea of taxonomy and the 'divine order' of animals, so the animal carvings were arranged in separate groups: the east wing is decorated with carvings of extinct species, while the west wing is adorned with living species.

If you want to see these remarkable carvings for yourself, virtual tours of the museum are available at www.nhm.ac.uk.



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