

WOOD CARVING

Grinling Gibbons tercentenary festoon

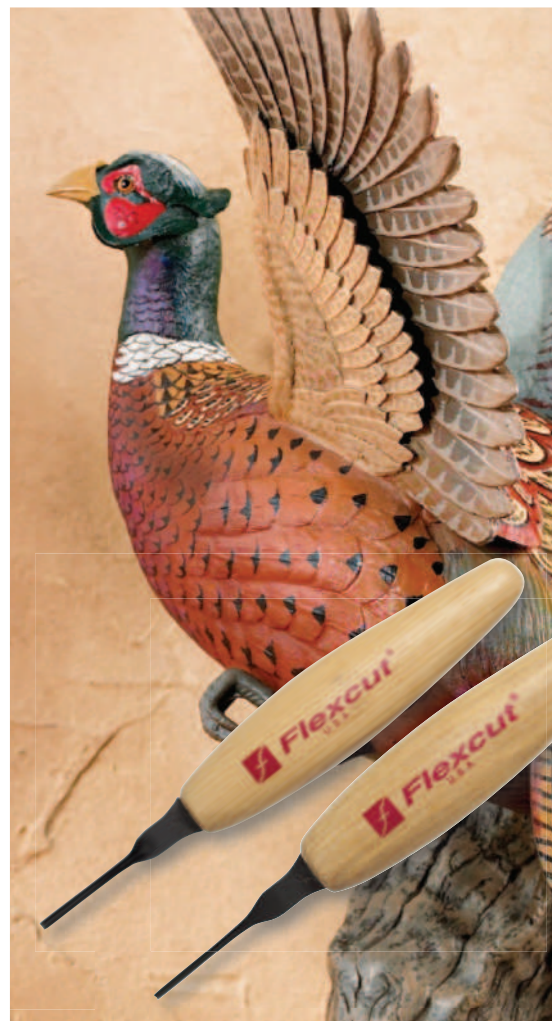
by Steve Bisco



TECHNICAL ADVICE Deep relief scene carving • Sharpening hook knives
• Carving human likenesses **PROJECTS TO CARVE** Netsuke dove • Shrink cup
• Walrus • Spoon carving • Doll's pram • Cocker spaniel walking stick • Combs



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Welcome



PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVE WESTERN

There's a buzz in the woodcarving world as the tercentenary of the death of the most famous carver, Grinling Gibbons, approaches. Steve Bisco creates a stunning commemorative tribute with a Grinling-style festoon, and Graham Thompson uses a relief carving of Mr Gibbons as part of his tutorial on carving a likeness.

Mark Gough carves a beautiful cocker spaniel stick head for your summer walks and Peter Benson introduces the art of netsuke with a dove miniature.

This issue concludes John Samworth's relief carving series with a deep relief sailing scene, as Nic Westermann continues his with the sharpening of a Mora hook knife. Ever interested in love tokens,

Dave Western makes a pair of Georgian-style combs (pictured above) and Zoë Gertner carves a pram as a date of birth memento.

Drawing inspiration from around the world, Cedric Boynes shares a whimsical walrus from his trip to the Russian Far East and Iain Whittington looks at the ornamental carvings of Norway.

We announce that the lucky winner of the Beavercraft leather apron prize is Keith Challis from Somerset, and introduce the giant work of chainsaw carver Simon O'Rourke.

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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Grinling Gibbons: tercentenary festoon

Steve Bisco carves a limewood festoon to commemorate the 300th anniversary of Gibbons' death.

Grinling Gibbons is just about the only woodcarver whose name is known to the general public. He was born in Rotterdam in 1648, where his English parents had a drapery business, and he died 72 years later in London on 3 August 1721.

He grew up and served his apprenticeship in Holland, and came to England at the age of 19 to set up his business in London, soon after the Great Fire of 1666 when carvers were in high demand. He spent three-quarters of his life in England and all of his great works were produced, and most still remain, in England. His Dutch apprenticeship, however, working mostly in limewood, had a great influence on his style of carving, and it is said he retained the trace of a Dutch accent throughout his life.

The story of how the young Grinling was 'discovered' has entered artistic legend. The

diarist John Evelyn was walking near his house in Deptford in 1671 when he saw a young man in a small cottage working on a magnificent woodcarving of Tintoretto's Crucifixion. He was so impressed he took the young man and his carving off to show King Charles II. The king was impressed, but religious subjects were not popular at the English court so the young carver then created a totally new style based on naturalistic foliage, fruit, game, fish and fowl that was stunningly realistic and immediately popular. His carvings were built up in layers, each piece carved very thinly, deeply undercut and pierced through, so the total composition seemed to have more air than wood in it. This was so successful that he had to establish a production workshop employing many carvers and apprentices to create individual parts and stages of carvings

under his supervision. Out of necessity as well as choice, his method of building up his carvings in layers and sections allowed such a 'division of labour' in the production process.

He was soon established as the carver of choice for the rich nobility of the Restoration period in their great houses, and in the royal palaces through the reigns of Charles II, James II, William III & Mary II, Queen Anne and George I. In 1693, under William & Mary, he received the royal appointment of Master Carver to the Crown.

I have drawn up this design to create a Gibbons-style festoon on a scale suitable for the average home, copying features that Gibbons typically used. It is carved in limewood, built up in three layers, and left with a bare wood finish exactly as Gibbons finished his festoons.

WORKHOLDING

Secure the larger pieces by screwing through from the back into the thicker parts. Make sure your screws aren't long enough to get in the way of your tools when carving. Smaller pieces can be glued to a piece of card, which is then glued to the backing board, and can be prised or sawn from the card when finished. For undercutting from the back, lay the piece face down on a soft surface with pieces of wood around the carving and a thin batten screwed down across the top to hold it still.

Recommended reading

David Esterly – *Grinling Gibbons and the Art of Carving* (V&A Publications) – the definitive fully-illustrated 'textbook' on the life and work of Grinling Gibbons
David Esterly – *The Lost Carving* (Duckworth Overlook) – His own account of a year spent remaking a Gibbons carving at Hampton Court after the devastating fire of 1986 and the complex story surrounding the restoration.

Footnote: David Esterly was the acknowledged world expert on Grinling Gibbons and did so much to make Gibbons' carving methods accessible and understandable. Sadly he died in June 2019, and we should pay tribute to him at the time of this Gibbons tercentenary.

TOP TIP 1

Limewood is an easy wood to carve along the grain, but can be surprisingly hard when carving across end grain. To help with end-grain carving, use a sharp, flat chisel about 18mm wide and slide it sideways as you push. This creates a 'slicing cut' that slices through the tough fibres more easily than a straight push.

TOP TIP 2

The key to a good limewood foliage carving is to make all the pieces look almost as thin to the viewer as they would be in nature. Hang the pieces up at the height they will be seen from and look at them from all the angles they will be seen from. Shave more off any parts that look too thick, and make sure the edges of leaves and petals are sharp.

Things you will need

Materials:

- Lime
1010 x 160 x 75mm

Tools:

Gouges:

- No.3 – 10mm, 5mm bent
- No.3 fishtail – 18mm, 10mm
- No.4 fishtail – 6mm
- No.5 – 7mm, 5mm, 13mm curved
- No.7, 10mm
- No.8 – 8mm, 8mm curved
- No.9 – 20mm, 3mm, 16mm curved
- Spoon bent – 18mm
- Short bent – 10mm, 8mm
- Skewed spoon – 10mm L&R,
- Back-bent – 12mm, 6mm
- V-tool – 6mm straight, 2mm straight, 4mm curved

Chisels:

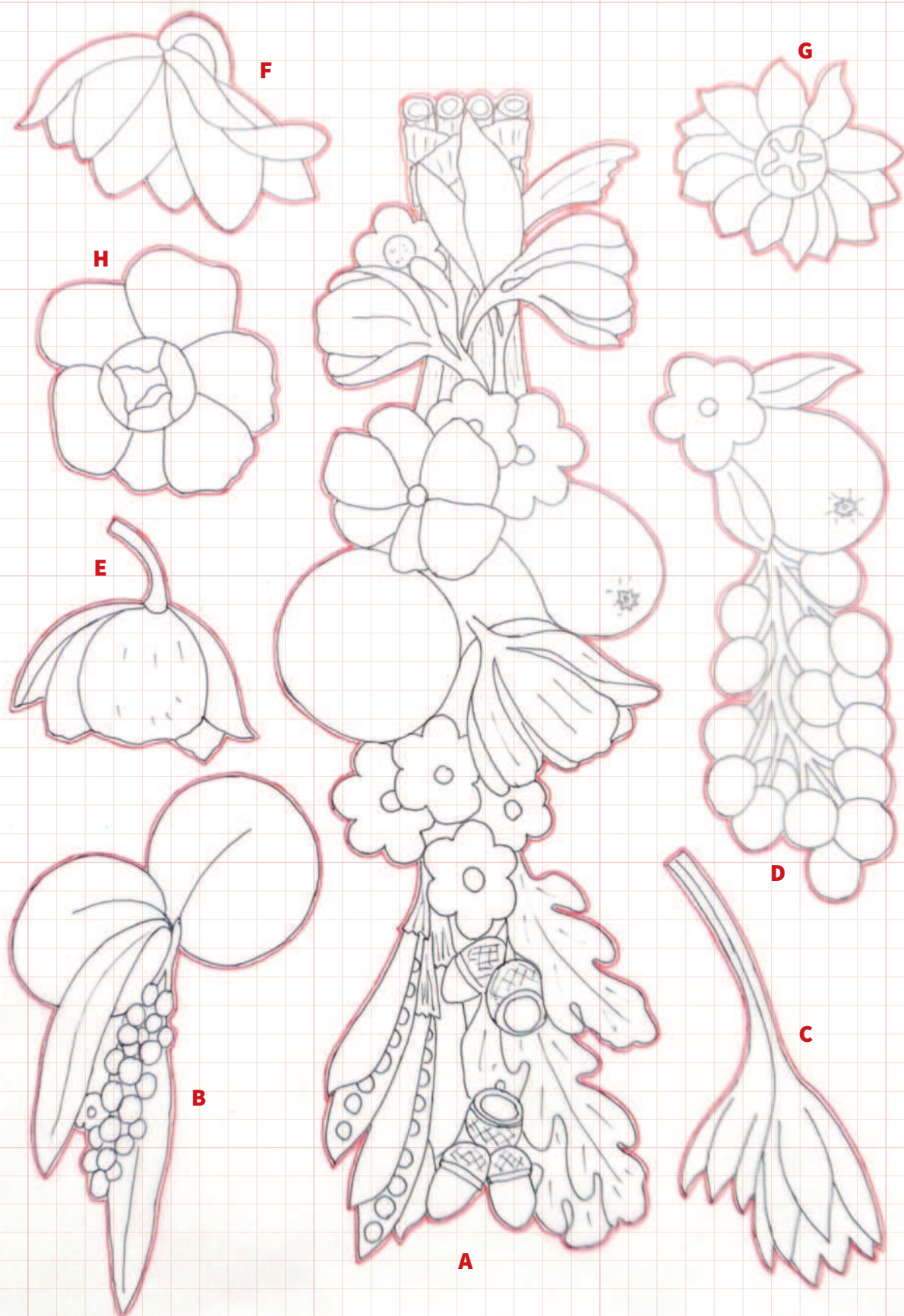
- Flat – 20mm, 6.5mm, 3mm, 2mm
- Bent – 5mm
- Skew chisel – 10mm
- Hooked skew chisel – 16mm

Other:

- Bandsaw, coping saw

USING THE DRAWING

If you get the drawing printed out to fill an A2 sheet of paper, the base section (part A) should be 475mm long x 160mm wide and everything else will be to the same scale when you trace the pattern on to the wood. The various elements of the carving will then all be life-size. It helps if you trace transparencies of each section so you can use them to redraw the pattern after roughing out.



**1****2****3****4****5****6****7****8****PREPARATIONS**

1 There are eight pieces to this carving and there are several options for cutting them out of whatever pieces of 75mm thick limewood you can get. The base section is 160mm wide so that is the best width to use, and by careful arrangement of the pieces you can cut them all from a piece of lime 1010 x 160 x 75mm.

2 Cutting out the pieces in 75mm thickness is really a job for a bandsaw, so if you don't have one it is best to get help from someone who does, even if you have to pay a machinist. (Gibbons would have had an apprentice with a framesaw to do this.)

BASE LAYER

3 Fix the base layer (Part A) to a backing board and fix it to the bench. Rough out the lower section by reducing the pea pods and oak leaves much nearer to the background. To preserve the pattern it is best to 'bost' round key elements while you work down others, then redraw each element in position using a traced transparency for guidance.

4 Now move on to the central section, which basically provides the support platforms and background for the forward add-ons later. Keep this function in mind as you round over the peach, the pear, and the large hollow flower. The flat flowers that provide the link to the peas and oak leaves must be lowered accordingly.

5 Move to the top end and rough out the various flowers and leaves at the top, together with the bunch of stems behind them that form the spine of the carving. The flowers attached to the peach and pear have a role in supporting the forward layers.

6 Start the detail carving on the central section as this sets the levels for the rest. Consider how the peach, pear and large flower will support the forward sections and shape them accordingly. Do some undercutting at the sides so you can form the whole shape. Hollow out the large flower and carve sharp overlaps and thin edges. The plain flat (slightly dished) flowers are a standard feature of Gibbons' background foliage.

7 Carve the detail on the acorns and oak leaves, aiming for total naturalism.

8 Pea pods are a signature feature of Gibbons' carvings. The pods are mostly open, so carve the upper and lower parts of the pod and the peas inside them. Remove the wood around the peas gradually before shaping as 'bosting' down will pop them out.

9 The top part of the base section has two levels—a forward section of flowers and leaves with thin stems, and a rear section of thick stems forming the ‘backbone’ of the carving. To hollow out the sideways-facing crocus flowers and undercut behind them it is best to hold the backing board on side in a bench vice. These flowers extend across the grain, so leave some support underneath them where it won't be seen.

10 Excavate under the forward flowers to create the edge and face of the backbone layer. The bunch of thick stems tied in a crinkly ribbon will form the hanging point for the whole carving. Access is difficult and most of it won't be seen when finished, but the sides may be partly seen from some angles, so carve a few rudimentary leaves on background surfaces.

11 With the front surfaces finished, remove the carving from the backing board and lay it face down on thick padding to undercut from behind. Fix blocks of wood around the carving and a thin batten across the top to hold it still. Carefully and slowly carve away all the surplus wood around the sides and hollows, and shave the leaves and petals to a sharp edge. Check that no unwanted wood is visible from the front.

12 The rounded surfaces of the peach and pear need to be sanded smooth, but the other features need just a minimum of sanding to remove stringy bits. Here is the base section finished.

MIDDLE LAYER

13 The process of roughing out, carving the detail, undercutting and finishing is repeated for all the other parts, starting with Part B, the peaches with leaves and berries. Fix it to a backing board, rough out the shape, then create a smooth, round surface on the peaches. Carve the two leaves with plenty of flick and curl, and the long cluster of small berries.

14 Undercutting these small detached pieces is difficult. Cut under the leaves with a coping saw before removing the piece from the backing board, then undercut from behind, using blocks and padding to restrain the carving. Shape the underside to fit its attachment point on the base section.

15 Here is Part B finished, after undercutting and sanding.

16 Repeat the process on Part C, which should be glued to a piece of card and the backing board. Hollow and carve the two crocus flowers, and shape the long thin stem to fit under the hollow flower on the base section.



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17 Undercut as much as you can while still on the block, then use a coping saw to cut the carving away from the surplus wood beneath it. Here is Part C finished after undercutting and sanding.

18 Part D, the pear and grapes, is the most complex of the add-ons. The pear and the top of the grape bunch have to lay over the pear on the base section, so take this into account. Shaping the pear is straightforward, but the grape bunch must be separated into individual rounded grapes, some touching and some with gaps in between. A web of stems must be created between the forward grapes, with a layer of other grapes behind it. This all requires a lot of careful excavation, undercutting, and opening through.

**19****20**

19 When undercutting from behind, each grape and each stem must be undercut and opened through. The pear, grapes and stems must be sanded smooth. Here is Part D finished.

20 Part E is a large hollow flower that hangs downwards beneath the peaches. Do most of the hollowing at the roughing out stage then refine it as you carve the detail. When carving a fragile section like the petal that extends out to the left, it helps if you brace it with a piece of scrap wood screwed to the bench.

**21****22**

21 Here is Part E undercut from behind and finished.

22 Now assemble parts B to E, that hang down from the middle, on to the base section (A) and glue them into place with uPVA adhesive. This is best done in stages. Test the fit of all the pieces before you fix anything, and make adjustments to the joining surfaces as necessary. Carefully fix one or two dowels into the back of the peaches to give a stronger long-term fixing when glued. On the pear you can use a screw through the leaf or flower until the glue sets, then replace the screw with a dowel. Fix the crocuses (C) under the grapes with contact points to the grapes and oak leaf, and with the stem under the flower on Part A. Use temporary supports on all the pieces while the glue sets.

**23****24**

UPPER LAYER

23 Part F is another hollow flower with loose extended petals that hangs downwards above the peaches. Much of the inside will be visible. The stem curls over the back behind the flower and runs across the grain so needs great care. A coping saw can help with undercutting before detaching from the board.

24 Here is Part F finished.



25 Parts G and H are two open flowers that sit around the pear and peaches and are quite straightforward to carve. Consider their fixing positions in relation to the peach and pear and carve their petals to fit. Give the petals plenty of curl and a little texture, but they don't require the full thickness of the 75mm board, so if you need to economise you can cut them from 50mm board.

26 Undercut the two flowers to fit their fixing positions.

Here are Parts G and H finished.

27 Now glue Parts F, G and H into their positions on the carving. Make adjustments and add extra foliage and even dummy stems if necessary to give extra support. Limewood foliage carving is not an exact science, so don't expect a perfect fit first time.

28 The whole festoon is now finished. Here it is from the front, the side, and at an angle. Hang it on a secure fixing in a place where it won't get damaged, and hopefully it will survive the next 300 years.



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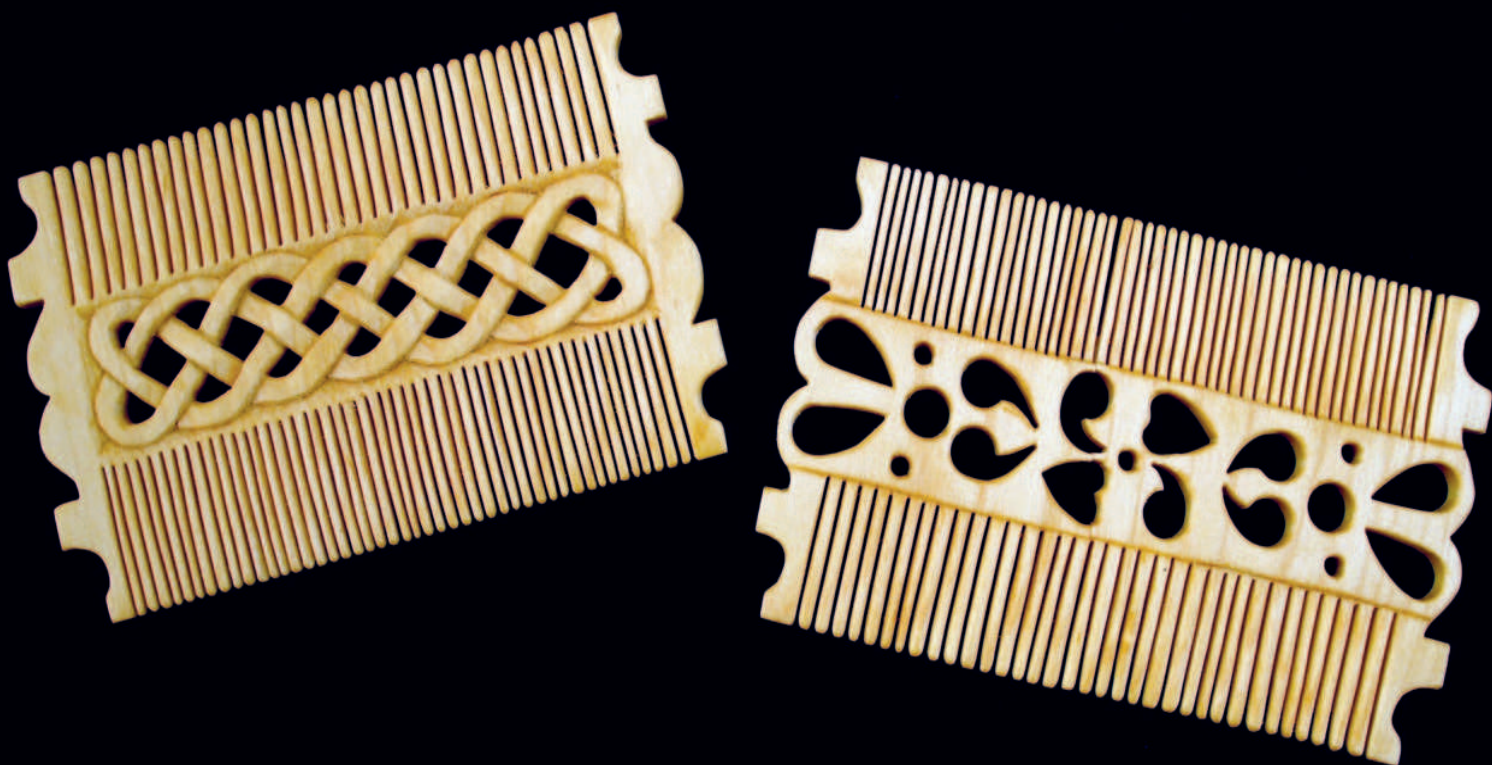
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BUILDING THE SET: This festoon is the fifth in a series of Gibbons-style festoons I have made for *Woodcarving* readers who like to take on a challenge. The previous four are the Foliage Carving in WC113 (and in my book *Twenty Decorative Carving Projects in Period Styles*), the Armorial Panel in WC120, the Kitchen Garden Festoon in WC134, and the Flower Festoon in WC161. This new festoon is similar in size to the previous examples, so if you have tackled any of them you can complement it with the new one. ▀



A pair of combs

Dave Western carves two Georgian-style combs

During the course of doing some research on historical love tokens, I stumbled across some extraordinarily beautiful H combs, so called for the vaguely H-shaped handle which encloses the combing tines and the central structural rib. The combs I saw were carved from ivory in the most exquisite detail and were very likely the property of royalty or extremely wealthy aristocrats of the day. A short while later, I discovered a photo of a rather lovely Georgian-era wooden comb that was more crudely made and was likely a gift given to a young woman by a love-struck young man. I fell in love with that little comb and decided I would have a go at making a version of it for my wife. I enjoyed the process so much that I had a second run at it incorporating a more Celtic design into the central area. With both, I learned a number of lessons, some good and some of the hard knocks variety, which I will share with

you so you can avoid the pitfalls and revel instead in the successes.

In the old days, it seems that most high-quality combs were fashioned from ivory or boxwood. Other spoons were carved from dense and strong hardwoods, ranging from maple and sycamore to fruitwoods like plum or apple. I've used a reclaimed piece of sycamore for mine and so far it seems to have held up to the strains of combing through my knotted Covid hair without any of the tines snapping.

The most important detail in making a comb of this type is to align your wood's grain so that it runs through the tines and not across them. Cross grain on the tines will render them extremely weak and susceptible to breakage, so try to find a piece wood with a fairly close and straight grain pattern. Although the annual rings were perhaps a touch more broadly spaced on my sycamore than I would have ideally preferred, they were still close and straight enough to be good and strong.



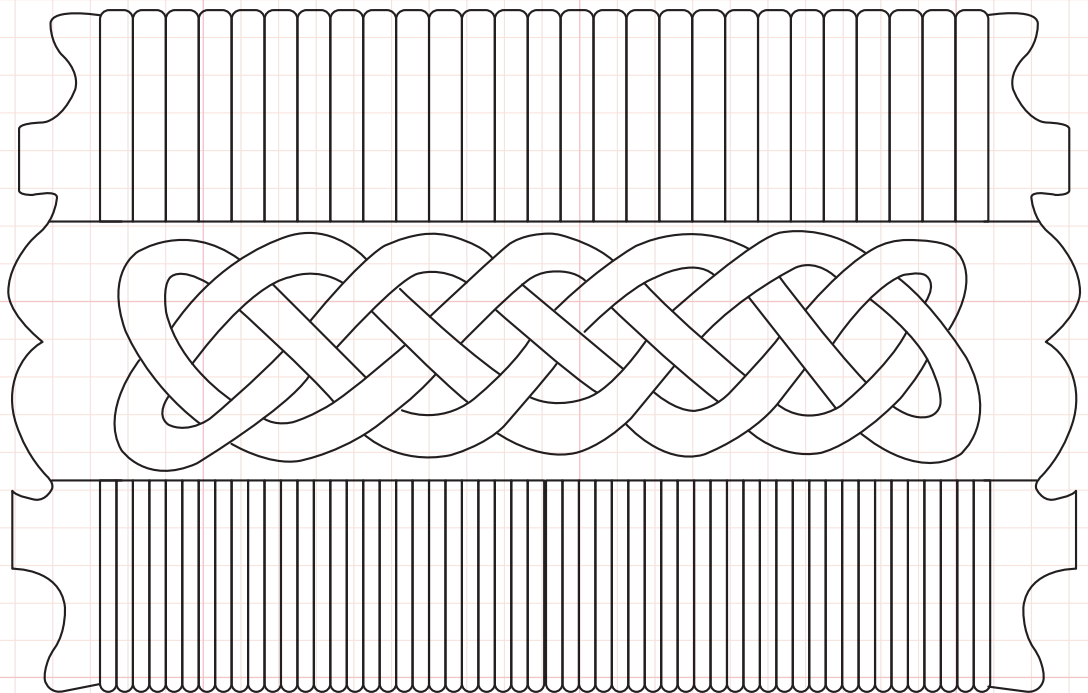
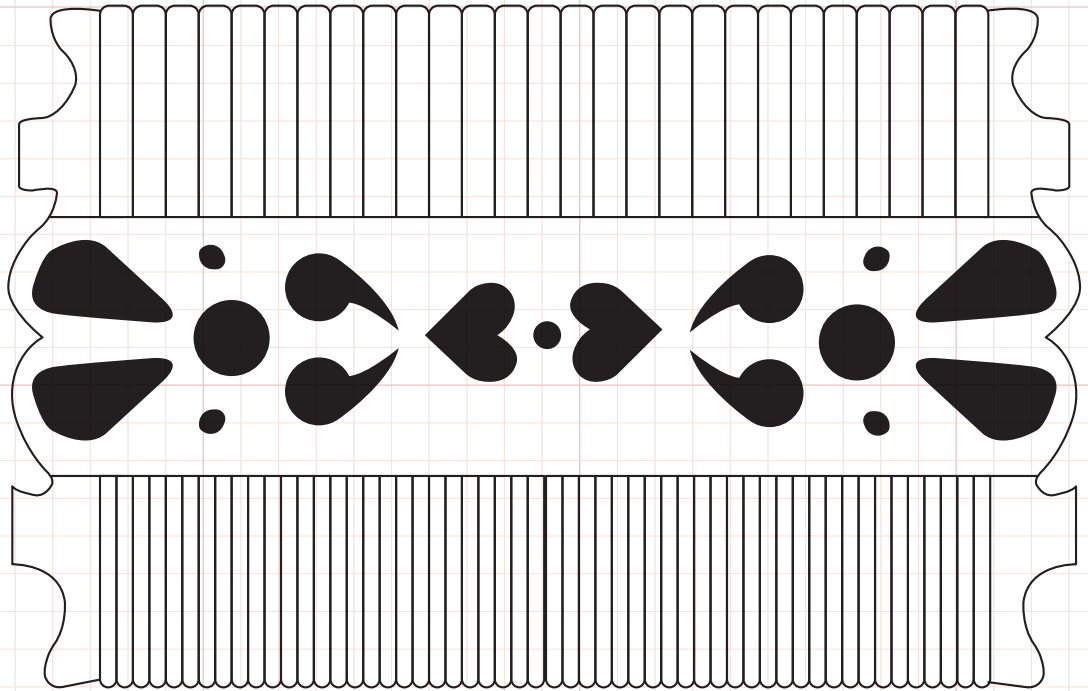
Things you will need

Materials:

- Sycamore
- Danish oil
- Wax polish

Tools:

- Scrollsaw or drill
- ½in flat gouge (#1 sweep)
- ¼in (6mm) chisel
- 1in (33mm) #1 gouge
- Japanese-style dovetail saw (optional)
- Abrasive paper or a small needle file





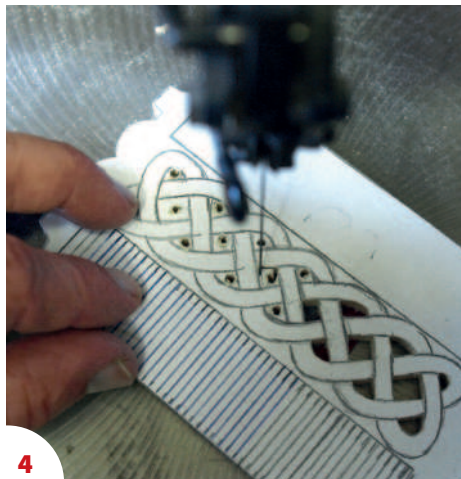
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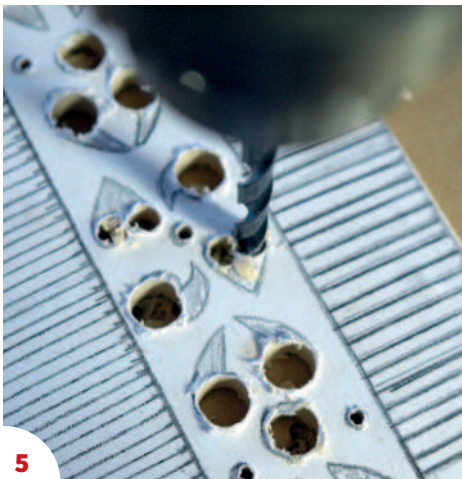
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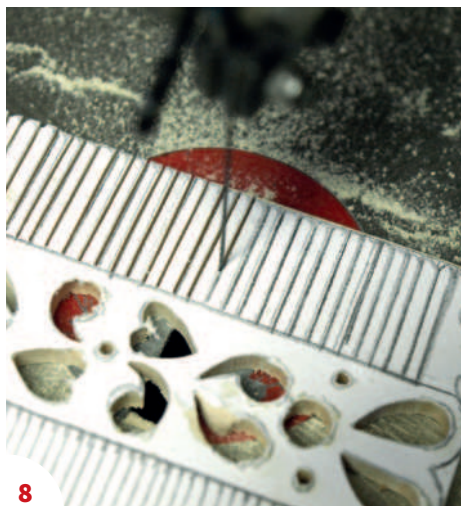
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1 I began with a piece measuring 5in (13cm) across the tines and 3.25in (18.5cm) with the tines that I had planed down to $\frac{1}{4}$ in (0.6 cm) in thickness. The top piece of the two shown demonstrates a much straighter and tighter grain and was the better piece for comb making.

2 Next, I ran a pencil line along the end grain (the bottom of each set of tines) that was approximately $\frac{1}{8}$ in (1.5mm) in depth and was drawn in from both sides. This line would mark the depth of taper I intended to cut along the tines to make them thinner and easier to draw through hair. The goal was to maintain consistency across the cut and to ensure that both sides of the workpiece tapered as symmetrically as possible.

3 My initial cut was made using a $\frac{1}{2}$ in flat gouge (#1 sweep). Once I had shaped a nice clean cut across the entire face which was down to my pencil line, I refined it back with a 1in (33mm) #1 gouge. If you lack either of these tools, a regular chisel will work just as well. I made my tines about $\frac{1}{4}$ in long (27mm), which seems a very odd length, but it seemed to look and work best for me. Feel free to adjust it to whatever you prefer if you find it to annoying to deal with that sixteenth.

4 With the tine taper cut, faired and smoothed on all of the four tine faces, you can begin to shape the central decorations. If you have access to a good scrollsaw, the process is simple, but if you are working strictly with hand tools, then I recommend drilling the largest holes the design will accommodate before final shaping each design with the tip of a small, sharp straight knife.

5 A drill press offers the safest and most accurate way to drill the guide holes, but hand held drills (electric or hand driven) can also be used. Just be careful to keep the bit as close to 90° as you can while cutting.

6 If you lack access to a drill and want to fret your design, you can cut through with the tip of your straight knife. Admittedly, it is a long and tedious process, but it's the way many in the old days had to do it. An easier alternative is to simply etch the design, or in the case of the Celtic design, render it as a low relief carving without the need for any fretting at all.

7 If you are making the Celtic pattern and have fretted the design, use a small $\frac{1}{4}$ in (6mm) chisel to develop the 'over and under' appearance of the knotwork. Take your time with this and remember that the knotwork on the opposite side of the comb has to be reversed.

8 Once the rough shaping of the design work has been completed, it's time to cut the tines. There's no way to sugar coat it, this process is arduous and more than a little bit time-consuming. Once again, if you have access to a scrollsaw, the job is much easier and faster, but if you are cutting by hand, you'll need a fair a bit of patience and a steady hand.

9 I used a scrollsaw for the bulk of the cutting but did do a section using a very fine Japanese-style dovetail saw so that I would know what it was like to do them by hand. Because the cut is only $\frac{1}{16}$ in long, it is fairly easily rendered – but it is critical to concentrate and not let the repetition of the job lull you to sleep. It is very easy to cut off-line or to start leaning toward one side or another during the cut. A jig might help the process, but I confess that I didn't bother to make one to try that idea out. I found that limiting the cutting to 10 times at a time and then taking a break to do some sanding or shaping helped me to substantially improve my concentration and cutting consistency.

10 With the tines cut, I etched in a line to separate the central design from the tines and to enable me to do some finish work where the tines join the handle. I cut the channel about $\frac{1}{16}$ in (1.5mm) deep and aimed to keep the line as straight and consistent as possible. Start with a shallow cut against a rule to ensure straightness and then add some depth to the cut when you are satisfied it looks good.

11 I found that bevelling the top of the tines to meet the bottom of the channel gave a nice finish and visual appearance to the tines. You can leave this step out, but I think the tines look a bit awkward without this subtle shaping. Initially, I made the bevel about $\frac{1}{4}$ in long, but found it looked nicer at about $\frac{1}{2}$ in (12mm). Undertake this shaping with a $\frac{1}{4}$ in (6mm) chisel and be careful not to snag neighbouring tines with the edge of the chisel.

12 Being careful to follow the flow of the grain and NOT put too much pressure on the cut, gently chamfer off the edges of each tine. This is also a time-consuming job, but it makes the tines much more comfortable to draw through the hair and it makes final finishing a much easier proposition. Be careful not to push too hard during this phase though, as snapping the tines or even the entire handle is a distinct possibility. A light touch and a chamfer of a little less than $\frac{1}{16}$ in is sufficient at this point. Be sure to shape all four edges of each tine.

13 With the tines all rough shaped, they can now be sanded to give them a uniform appearance and a smooth finish. I made use of fine cloth-backed abrasive to round over all the edges and keep them fair and smooth. You can achieve the same effect with strips of paper abrasive, but you won't be able to pull the abrasive back and forth as briskly as you can with cloth-backed abrasives. Be gentle whichever method you use though. It is easy to get carried away and, as with the chamfering, it is easy to put undue stress on the tines.

14 The final shaping of the tines is to gently round over the tip of each using a section of abrasive paper or a small needle file. Even though this seems a tedious task, it makes a huge difference in both the appearance and usability of the comb.



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15 Because the dust generated by this task is pretty limited, I found it a good job to do while I was watching TV or sitting passenger in the car. Aim for consistency with the shaping as it is easy to take more off one side than the other and make the tines look out of balance.

16 Give all the tines one last gentle face shaping with some very fine abrasive paper to ensure all scratches or uneven sections are cleaned up. I used some 320 grit paper at this stage to give each tine a bit of a light doming and to make them all appear as even as possible. I also used the same super-fine abrasive to give the central design a final cleaning up and to remove any last vestiges of the pattern which I had glued to the workpiece.



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17 If you have opted to carve the Celtic design, use this time to shape the area where the knotwork meets the tines one last time. Cut to a healthy $\frac{1}{16}$ – $\frac{1}{8}$ in (1.5–3mm) depth and keep the ledge as consistent and cleanly cut as possible. Having this section refined and crisp will bring up the knotwork and will give the comb a nice, finished appearance. Be careful not to cut too deeply as it may weaken the handle a bit and lead to some breakage at the tops of the tines.

18 Step away from the comb/s for a little while and then return with a critical eye before committing to a finishing regime. Ensure the tines are as smooth and even as you can get them and your knotwork or design is clean and tidy. Look for small chips, lumps or irregularities as well as any scratches. Cleaning them all up at this stage is much easier than it will be once the finish highlights them.



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19 I was going to leave the comb unfinished as I loved the very pale appearance of the sycamore wood, but realised that with the natural oils of hands, the comb would soon look dirty and unappealing. I gave it a couple of coats of Danish oil then a final buff with some wax polish just to give it a sheen.

20 These were a lot of fun to make, and their recipients will enjoy them, but I did make a few serious mistakes along the way that I would strive to fix the next time. The worst was inconsistent tine marking and cutting. I was a bit cavalier from time to time and inevitably paid a price. As you can see from the tines at the extreme left, I lost concentration, and cut one tine too narrow and the other off line. It's amazing how easily spotted these mistakes are after they are made.



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21 The other big mistake was to let the fretted section of my design stray too close to the tines. This created a very weak section which I did indeed manage to break (three cheers for cyanoacrylate) but which I fixed with a carefully revised drawing for this article.

22 Finally, I made the cardinal sin of not backing up my piece when I drilled it. The combination of no backing and a dull drill bit resulted in unseemly tear-out, which could have easily been avoided with a little bit of care on my part. ▶



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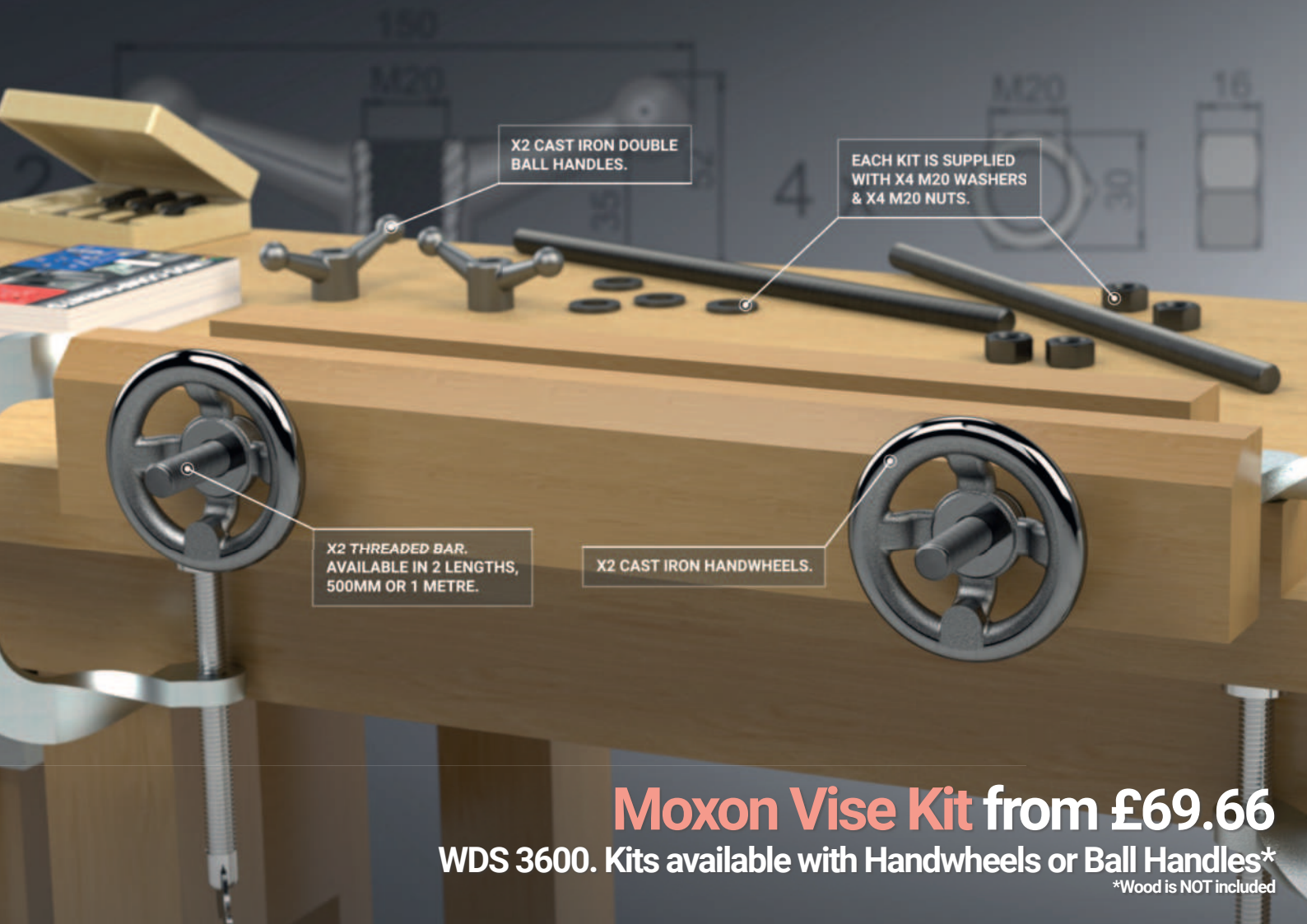
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Norwegian ornamental carving

Iain Whittington researches the history of Norwegian carving

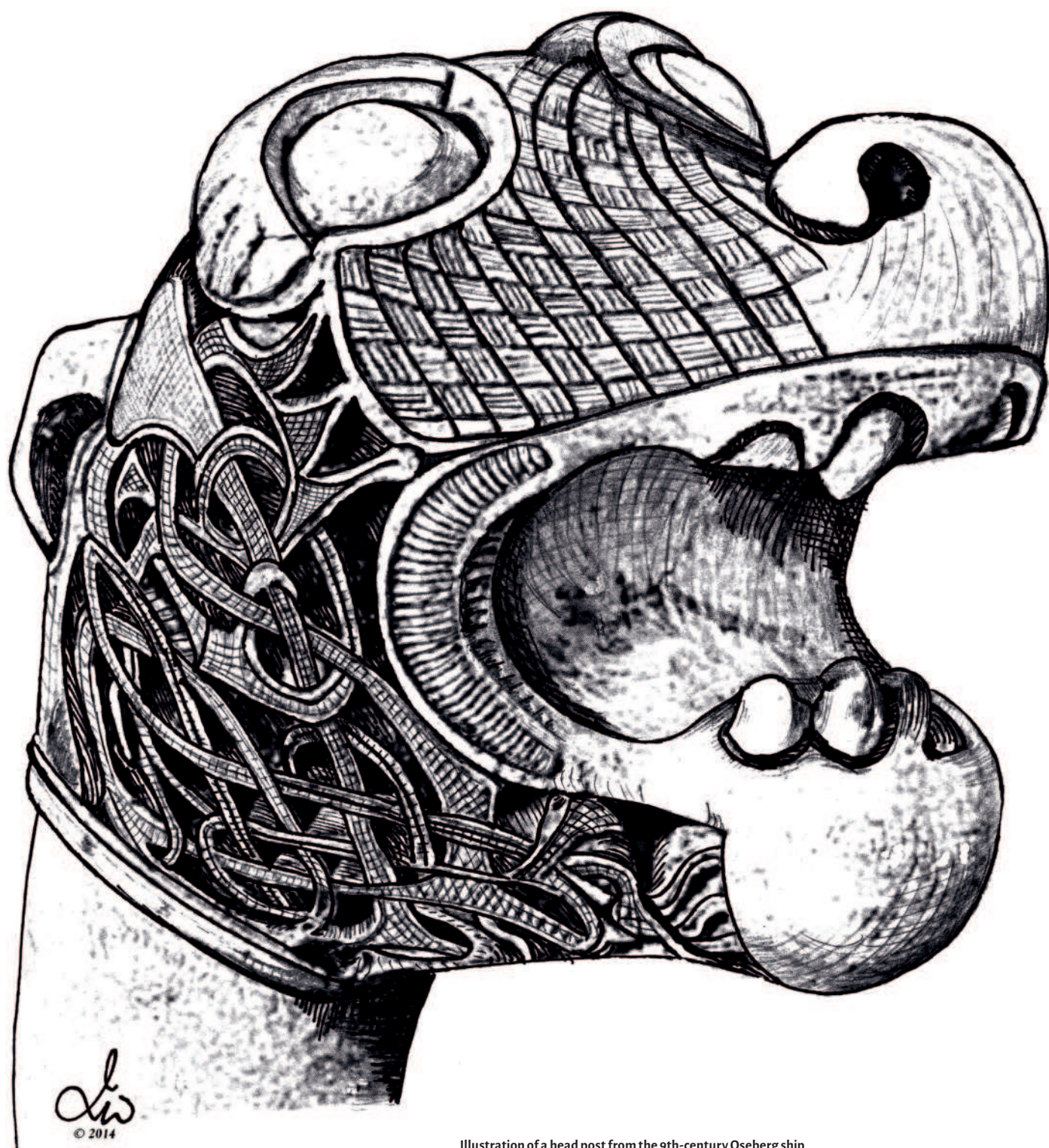


Illustration of a head post from the 9th-century Oseberg ship



The 12th-century Lewis chessmen in the collection of the National Museum of Scotland (CC BY-SA 4.0)

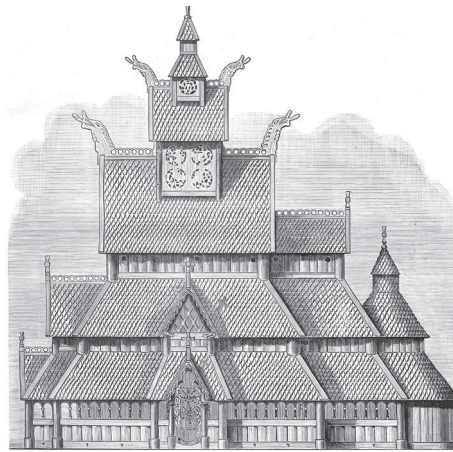
Viking carvings

Carving has been an integral part of Norwegian culture and tradition since the Viking times. The classical Viking-style decoration of the 9th-century Oseberg ship and its associated grave goods, such as the head posts, were almost certainly carved by professional woodcarvers who would have worked for the elite in society. However, many more mundane works in wood and bone from the Viking period have been found throughout Scandinavia and northern Britain. The tools for these carvings have been found in grave sites and were similar to the modern chisel, gouge and Scandinavian craft knife.

There is also extensive evidence of ornamental decoration incised in many household items, made using just the sharp tip of the knife, indicating that carving was not the preserve of the professional. The complex style of the professional work, although only in low relief, was many faceted, giving differing impressions when viewed from different angles – the whole being carefully finished to a smooth surface. The style was exported by the Vikings well into the Middle Ages, in high-value items such as the famous Lewis chessmen (or Uig chessmen, from the bay in Scotland where they were found) that probably originated from Trondheim in Norway in the 12th century, as at this time, the Norwegian Viking kingdom still controlled the west coast of Scotland.

Stave churches

Possibly the largest surviving monuments to the Norwegian medieval carvers' art is in the stave churches (*Stavekirker*) located around Norway, which were undoubtedly stripped of many of their movable items during the reformation but retained their structural carvings. Many of these carvings hark back to the traditions of the Viking craftsmen, with dragon-head finials and coiled serpent motifs and even the occasional pagan image just for good



The 12-century Gol stave church

measure. Again, due to the prestigious nature of these buildings, much of the ornamental carving would have been undertaken by itinerant professional woodcarvers. However, as the old saying goes, '*imitation is the sincerest form of flattery*', so the images and styles of the stave churches also migrated into the decoration of the local vernacular buildings.

The 18th century saw the introduction of the acanthus design from Europe, first used in an altarpiece in the Cathedral in Christiania (modern-day Oslo). From there it spread to the woodcarving environment in adjacent Hedmark county, and later to Gudbrandsdalen, where it continues today.

The dragon style

In the 19th century the Flatskurd low-relief geometric style of the old stave churches and Viking ships, with the coiled serpent and dragon motifs, was revisited over the period of Norwegian independence and the dissolution of the union with Sweden, reflecting the expanding influence of the Norwegian romantic nationalist (*nasjonalromantikken*) movement. The son of a well-known Rosemaling folk artist from Hardanger, Lars Kinsarvik (1846–1925), who had studied Art and

Design at Stavanger and Bergen, was working at this time as a designer, carver and latterly as a teacher at the then newly established Hjerleids Husflidsskole. He is credited with developing the Dragon Style (*Dragestil*) recreating ornamental themes taken from the Viking age. His ideas were the Norwegian reflection of the English Arts & Crafts movement and Mission-style furniture in the US, where a return to traditional furniture construction was emphasised, but in Kinsarvik's case, this was then tempered by the ornate vernacular traditions and cultural identity of Norway. His ornate carved and painted Dragon Style furniture was also in at the birth of Art Nouveau, forming part of the Norwegian exhibition at the 1900 Paris World Fair, credited as the birth place of the later ornate Art Deco movement.

In the early part of the 20th century the Dragon Style was taken up by the Norwegian Art Nouveau architects, such as Balthazar Lange, with building designs featuring massive, exposed log walls, decoratively carved and varnished interiors



Side door of the 13th-century Heddal stave church

with steep roofs and large overhanging eaves, all decorated with dragon finials, reminiscent of the stave churches. The Holmenkollen Hotel (which burnt down in 1914) and the Christiania (Oslo) Sanatorium, also at Holmenkollen, were major architectural triumphs of this style. After the destruction of the original, the hotel business moved to the 'old' Sanatorium, which still survives today as the Oslo Holmenkollen Park Hotel.

Knives and craft education

Norwegians have traditionally made and carried knives and to this day a *tollekniv* is still often included in their national dress, much as the Scots include a *sgian-dubh* in theirs. The blade for these knives is still made from laminated steel, giving a long-lasting sharp edge. The *tollekniv* and its Scandinavian cousins formed the model for the general-purpose Scandinavian craft knife, or *slöydkniv*, used in the formal teaching of handcraft. Educational *slöyd*¹, first introduced in Finland in the mid-19th century, later expanded into Sweden through the establishment of a teacher training college in 1875 at Nääs Castle.



20th-century Flatskurd carving – still a dominant style in Telemark

Here a Swedish-American called Gustaf Larsson trained teachers before going on to establish the *slöyd* teachers' training programme in 1891, at the North Bennet Street School, Boston, US, where *slöyd* education is still thriving today.

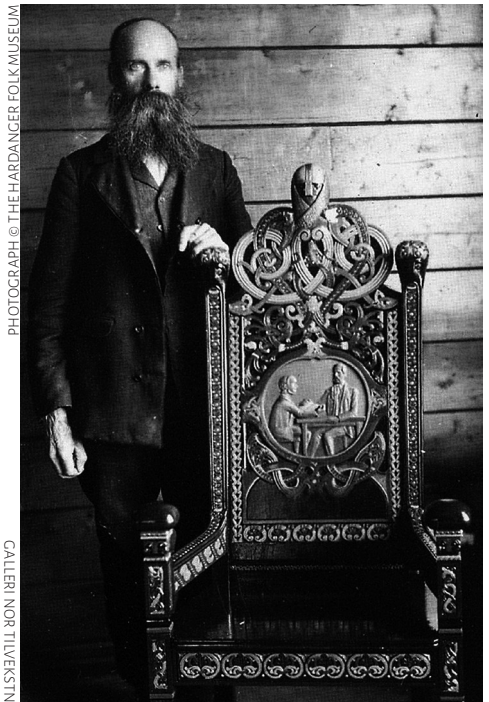
A form of Educational *slöyd* is still compulsory across Scandinavia, although Norway has integrated arts and crafts into one school subject called 'forming'. This handcraft tradition, combined with such a widespread competence with a blade, has strongly influenced the widespread retention of woodcarving skills in Norway. In the latter part of the 19th century, partially driven by the romantic nationalist movement and an early recognition that traditional skills were in decline, a formal educational curriculum for the arts and crafts, including woodcarving, was established in Norway. This began in Hardanger and then Gudbrandsdalen, where the *Hjerleids Husflidsskule* (School of Arts & Crafts) near Dovre began teaching woodcarving in 1886, initially under Lars Kinsarvik. *Hjerleids* became a leading educational institution in the field of traditional crafts, including woodcarving. It was formalised in 1948 as a national Craft High School (*Hjerleid videregående skole*), becoming the foremost Norwegian national craft college, with Johan Amrud as its master carver from 1958 to 1980.

In Norway, woodcarving as a hobby had a further renaissance in the latter part of the 20th century, as those who had learnt basic skills through *slöyd* education were

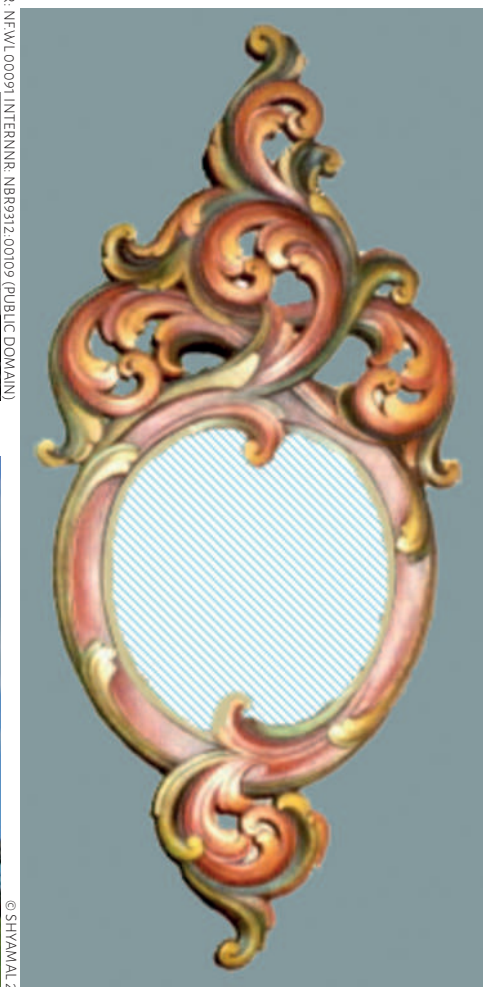


The Holmenkollen Turisthotell (1896–1914)

becoming more affluent and looking to fill their leisure time with craft work. Adult education was expanding to meet this need and often included evening or weekend courses in woodcarving. As a by-product of the adult education expansion, a range of craft books were published in Norway.



Lars Kinsarvik with one of his legendary armchairs



Kinsarvik's spirit is still alive in students' work at Hjerleids, such as this mirror frame with acanthus carving



The Holmenkollen Hotel Oslo today

Books on Norwegian carving

Johan Amrud's book² was one of the first 'classic' Norwegian carving books. First published in 1983, it was re-published in an English translation in 1993³. Now long out of print, you can pay three figures for a copy on the used-book market. However, his plans, such as for the mangle board (*mangletre*) shown in this article, are still available to order online.

Odd Fauske published his first textbook privately in 1973⁴. This was reprinted in 1976, followed by a supporting series of newsletters and pattern books all published to meet the interest created from the adult education courses.

This provided a good source of traditional Norwegian carving patterns, such as the barge boards shown here. Odd's first book was later supplemented with a second series of books with traditional *Rosemaling* patterns.

Odd's works, all published in Norwegian, were not available outside Norway. However, as there continues to be an interest in traditional acanthus carving, such as in this Norwegian heritage, there is now an English translation of Odd Fauske's adult education textbook and all his patterns. The patterns have been reproduced at full size so they can be copied on to A4 paper for personal or educational use. See the panel for more information about the book.

Norwegian 'trevarer'

Adapting the phrase attributed to the Training Sergeant of UK conscripts, 'If it moves salute it, if it doesn't – paint it!' to the traditional Norwegian farmstead of former times, it would probably have come out something like: 'If it moves, feed it, if it doesn't – carve it!' However you look at it, there is a long tradition in Norway, at least dating back to Viking times, of decorating their treenware⁵, a word that is possibly a Norwegian-American adaptation of the Norwegian word for woodware which is 'trevarer'.

The mangle board (mangletre)

In the 17th and early 18th centuries, mangle boards were often carved or decorated with painted figurines, biblical motifs were especially popular. Damp garments were rolled tightly around the pin-log, the smallest garments on the inside and a larger one on the outside. With the right hand on the handle and the left hand on the clothes, the mangle is pressed against the roller while it is pushed back and forth to 'iron' the clothes.

The porridge pail (grautspann/grøtambær)

The 'ambar'⁶ is a vessel that was used for storage and transport of liquids such as milk, butter, porridge and other dairy products. Ambars are rustic food pails made like small barrels of coopered wood to be liquid-tight. They have a round or oval cross-section with straight or slightly sloping sides. They have lids and preferably



Traditional Norwegian mangle board (mangletre), carved by Iain Whittington to a pattern by Johan Amrud



Carved chest by Odd Fauske



Barge boards, carved by Iain Whittington to a pattern by Odd Fauske



Traditional Norwegian carving and Rosemaling board, carved by Iain Whittington; Tine painted by Evaline Whittington



Norwegian woman using a traditional Norwegian mangle board (mangletre)



Porridge pail (Gautspann/Grøtambær)



Storage container (tine)



Log chair (kubbestol) carved by Phil Odden

a handle in the lid. They have ears for attaching the lid, which is secured in place with (removable) pegs. They often have three staves and extended feet, which like a milking-stool, will always sit level.

Storage containers (tine)⁷

A tine (from the Latin tina meaning 'wine barrel') is a round or oval wooden container, usually a bent-wood (birch) box. Containers of this type cannot be used for liquids. Tine or *lauper* were used for various storage and transport purposes, especially for storing and transporting food. Today, they mostly serve as collectibles and ornaments. They are so associated with fresh dairy products that the Norwegian dairy group TINE took its name from them; the brand also has a stylised tine in its logo.

The log chair (kubbestol)⁸:

The kubbestol is a traditional Norwegian chair formed from a single section of log, or 'kubbe', that is first hollowed out and carved to shape the chair's back while still green. Then, after allowing the kubbe to cure for several months, a piece of wood is cut and fitted into the hollow where the chair back begins to form the seat. The full circumference of the log is almost always left intact, with a trunk-like base rather than legs as the support for the chair seat. Traditionally, Norwegian kubbestol were primarily made from birch, which is abundantly available in the forested regions where the craft was popular. Today 'coopered' blanks are often available,

providing a more stable medium with which to work. One of the better works explaining the history of the kubbestol is from the US⁹.

Chest (kiste)

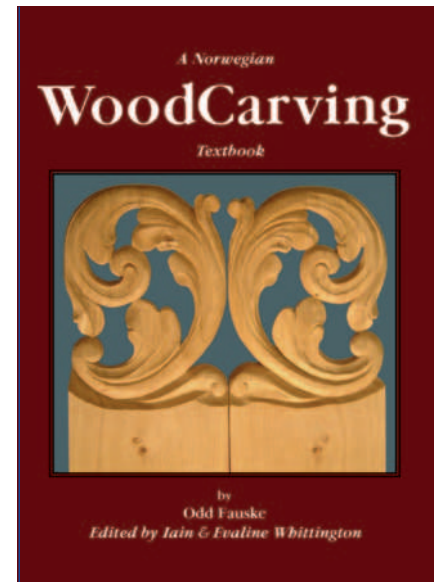
The decorated chest or trunk existed in Viking times, and there are examples of the genre in the various Viking ship burials. These were a practical development of the widely used six-board chests (one each for ends, top, bottom and sides), where side boards were elongated to keep the chest off the ground. The Viking chests were strengthened by end lap-joints, probably enhanced with their typical low-relief carving and reinforced with decorated ironwork. As a lot of this type of practical craftsmanship was retained in subsequent periods, they will be the forerunners of the later 17th to 19th-century ornate carved six-plank chests, many of which can be seen in Norwegian and Norsk-American Museum collections.

Buildings

A building doesn't move, so the Norwegians have made an art form out of their carving. As described above, the old stave churches were erected in the Middle Ages, but with carvings and styles harking back to the Viking era. Many of the older carved buildings have been preserved by removal to various building museums throughout Norway. This extravagant carving style still continues today with one recent example being the Building Museum in Oppdal¹⁰, central Norway, although less elaborate examples are also common.



Log building with carvings by Sverre Stenljøkk



A Norwegian WoodCarving Textbook by Odd Fauske

Acanthus is a popular form of traditional low-relief woodcarving with a long history in Norway. The form also has a strong following in North America, having been assimilated from the Norwegian-American community into mainstream woodcarving. While many books have been published (including some detailed pattern books), few have been available in English. There are English language books published on the subject of the acanthus style, but detailed project plans are hard to find apart from online, and they are expensive. This lack of project plans was recognised in Norway in the 1970s, where Odd Fauske first published his textbook, but Odd's books are long out-of-print and were never previously available in English. Iain Whittington has written extensively for woodworking magazines and is married to a professional translator, so between them (with the assistance of his family) they have re-compiled Odd's work as a revised compendium. The resulting book, with its new introduction to the history of Norwegian woodcarving, has over 80 full-sized patterns, and will appeal to teachers and amateur woodcarvers of all skill levels as a principal source book for traditional patterns. It is probably the largest compendium of such plans ever printed, being a volume of all of Odd's works, each rendered full-scale to simplify their reproduction for educational and personal use. The style of the original has been retained as a black and white book, using the original typewriter-style text. The book is available online and from all good bookshops. ▶

FOOTNOTES

¹ Educational sloyd: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sloyd

² Treskjæring. Johan Amrud. Universitetsforlaget 1983 ISBN 82-00-36171-3

³ Ornamental Woodcarving in the Norwegian Tradition, Johan Amrud, Heart Prairie Press (Mar 1993), ISBN:10:0962266396

⁴ Lærebok i Treskjæring, Odd Fauske, Fauske Forlag: first published 1973 - reprint 1976 ISBN 82-990953-0-1

⁵ Treenware is defined as 'dishes and household utensils made of wood.....' Collins English Dictionary © HarperCollins Publishers

⁶ no.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ambar

⁷ [no.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tine_\(beholder\)](https://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tine_(beholder))

⁸ digitaltmuseum.no/021025936945/stol

⁹ Creators, Collectors & Communities-Making Ethnic Identity Through Objects. Author: Ann Smart Martin (CC BY-ND2.0)://wisc.pb.unizin.org/driftless/CC BY-ND 2.01

¹⁰ By Wolfmann – Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=86258278



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From the community

A collection of letters and news from the woodcarving community

Hydraclamp prize Giveaway

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Creating a buzz



Here is a photo of my latest project. The wasp is carved from lime, 0.8mm plywood and yew clippings.

John Francklow



Announcing the winner of the Beavercraft leather apron prize draw in WC180, Keith Challis from Somerset

Tribute to Jack Smith

Further to Alex Garfield's native American carvings in the last issue, made from a piece of lime wood given to him by his late friend Jack Smith, Alex said: 'This is one of Jack's carvings I found a photo of and thought it would be a tribute to him as he was my tormentor (sorry teacher), he taught me to carve. I belong to a club called Woodart Workshops, they have a website with photos of members' work. I also belong to North Wales & Borders carving club that used to belong to the BWA, which folded during the lockdown due to lack of support which all clubs seem to suffer from.'

Covid carvings



I am John Patterson, chairman of Exeter Woodcarvers club. While we can't meet just at present, we look forward to getting the club busy again very soon.

While we're experiencing lockdown, I've done a bit of carving, some pieces are gifts, a pine lovespoon (for my wife), the cheese boards (one to welcome new

neighbours and one for my sister's birthday).

One of our committee members suggested a theme title of Covid-19 to spur us on with carving. I started with a piece that will show two different hands trying to touch through a pane of glass. Thanks for keeping the magazine going, inspiring stuff.

Kind regards, John Patterson

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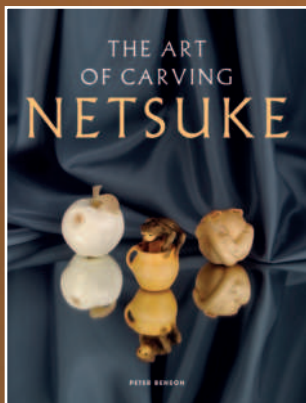
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Netsuke

Peter Benson introduces Netsuke (pronounced net-ski)

This piece is based on one of the most common starting shapes for a Netsuke, an ovoid. An obvious subject for this shape is a bird, in this case a sleeping turtle dove. There is plenty of reference material available to study and often real-life examples close to home.



The Art Of Carving Netsuke
by Peter Benson,
GMC Publications,
RRP £16.99, available online
& from all good bookshops



What is Netsuke?

If you watch any antiques programme or read any books or articles on the subject, you will, sooner or later, come across something described as a Netsuke. Although pronunciations vary, the descriptions are usually not far out, even though the quality of the workmanship can differ considerably, especially as there are large numbers of modern reproductions that are mass produced for the collectors market.

What, then, is a Netsuke and why are they so popular?

They are, in fact, simple toggles from which hangs a Sagemono – a small purse or container that was worn hanging from the belt or Obi of the Kimono (which had no pockets) worn by Japanese men from the 17th to 19th century.

The attraction of the true Netsuke was twofold. They originated as a means of poking fun at the traders that were not really welcome in Japan after the lockdown of the Edo period, and to show the skills of the wood and ivory carvers of the time. These carvers were not paid for their work

but the fact that the Netsuke was worn by important people meant that the work was seen and admired and obviously appreciated. It, therefore must have value. During this time Netsuke weren't necessarily small, some were quite large (and obvious).

It wasn't until Japan again opened the borders to the rest of the World that Netsuke were collected by people in the West and, as a result, became popular in the small size recognised today. With the increase in popularity with collectors came a rapid rise in value. Today, good contemporary examples can fetch five figure sums while traditional versions can reach considerably more.

In essence, what a Netsuke should contain to be true to its heritage is an element of humour (sometimes quite wicked) and a great deal of self-indulgence on the behalf of the carver. It should be intricate and incredibly detailed just because the carver can do it. It is a chance to show off just what is possible. Therefore, if you feel that your skills are limited, keep your design simple but do it well. If you really

want to show off, the world is your oyster. Go for it. After all, what can go wrong? There is no real outlay for materials so all that will be lost if you fail is time, and just think what you will have learnt and how pleased you will be if you produce something worthwhile.

While the majority of early Netsuke were carved in wood they are more commonly associated with being carved from ivory. This is not popular nowadays and is not legal to sell any modern artifacts made from ivory. However, if you wish to carve for yourself you can legally obtain old ivory snooker balls which make an ideal product from which to produce a Netsuke. It is amazing how much fine detail is possible but whether you feel happy to do this is very much a personal choice.

One final point. If you get caught up in miniature carving you could always try carving Ojime. These are the small beads that go with the Netsuke and Sagemono. They can be around 10-15mm in diameter and are equally as detailed as the Netsuke.

Good luck.



Things you will need

Materials:

- You will need a piece of timber around 4in (100mm) in length by about 1¼in (44.5mm) square. Traditionally, wooden Netsuke are carved in fruitwoods or boxwood as these are ideal for holding fine detail. I have chosen to use steamed pear wood as it has a beautiful colour, shows fine detail and carves easily. You may, of course, have your own preference.

Tools:

Full-sized gouges:

- ¼in (6mm) number 3
- ¼in (6mm) number 9
- Palm tools or block cutters:
- ½in (3mm) number 3
- ¼in (1.5mm) number 39 V tool

- ¼in (1.5mm) veiner
- ¼in (6mm) number 3
- ¾in (4.5mm) number 2 skew chisel

Additional:

- Plasticine
- Small knife and/or scalpel
- A magnifier
- A suitable holding device



Creating the maquette

The pictures show the maquette from all sides, so you can make up patterns from any angle.

When making the maquette, look carefully at birds resting, either in real life or in photographs. Make a note of the elements that strike you. I have chosen to create a turtle dove, although my work is not an exact resemblance. The aim is to capture the essence of the bird and portray it in your own way, not to get too complicated or tied up with details.

The two sides of the bird are obviously going to be very similar, while the top can include any turn of the head you choose. Most importantly, ensure you look carefully at the balance of the piece. The bird should not be tipping forward or backwards, nor leaning left or right.

Producing the basic shape

1 When you are happy with your maquette, mark the largest oval possible on the top of your block, then secure the block in a small vice. As this wood is pretty hard, you will find it difficult to work with if you are holding it in your hand.

2 Measure down around $1\frac{1}{4}$ in (32mm) and draw a line all round the block.

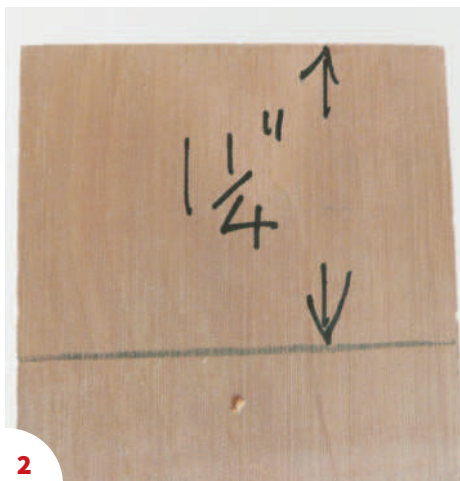
3 Cut this line about $\frac{1}{4}$ in (6mm) deep with either a bandsaw or a hand saw to mark the bottom of your carving block.

4 Using a number 3 gouge, cut down to the base around the oval you have marked out to create an oval cylinder shape. You may need to use a mallet for this.

5 Pear tends to have a rather wild grain, so be careful that the cut does not go out of control. If you have a problem, cut across the grain with your number 9 gouge.



1



2



3



4



5



6 When you are satisfied with the shape, round it off at both the top and the bottom with your number 3 gouge. It is worth noting that this is the most wood you will be removing throughout the whole project.

Mark in the head

7 Draw the position of the head on the top of the block, so that you can see where you need to leave wood. If you wish to change the position of the head from that shown in your maquette, do so now. You will not be able to do it further along the line.

8 Reduce the level of the top of your oval, remembering to leave the head outline intact. Go down to around $\frac{1}{4}$ in (6mm), then round off the body again. The best tool for this is a $\frac{3}{16}$ in (5mm) number 9 blockcutter or a $\frac{1}{4}$ in (6mm) full-sized gouge – whichever tool you feel most comfortable with. From here on, it is usually easier to take the work out of the vice and to work with it in your hand.

9 Using the maquette as a guide, locate all the important parts of the bird's wings, chest, tail and so on. Then, draw these clearly on your block to provide the rough form of the bird.

10 Next, start to round off the head and the beak.

11 Draw on a more detailed outline, so that you can begin to shape your carving. Remember that birds are very soft, their feathers will give to any weight or pressure and their head sinks into the body feathers. So avoid hard edges or surfaces.

12 Use a gouge with a slight sweep to it, ideally a number 3, rather than a flat chisel to smooth the surfaces. At this stage, you are simply refining the overall shape of your bird without adding any real detail. Do not worry about the underside too much, as you can always take wood off here later on. It is better that your bird looks too fat rather than too thin.

TIP: Although the aim is to get all the proportions right, these are often difficult to determine with some animals. In addition, Netsuke carving is more about capturing the essence of the subject rather than its anatomical accuracy. Therefore, it is more important to ensure that the wings match on both sides, whatever their length.



6



7



8



9



10



11



12



**13****14****15****16****17****Smoothing off**

13 Now is a good time to sand the whole carving and to check the contours that you have carved by comparing them with pictures of birds. Bear in mind that rough or incorrectly formed areas will stand out much more on a carving as small as this. Therefore, spend as much time as possible getting this right before going through the grades of abrasive. If you do not intend to carve the feather detail, sand the piece to a finish, apart from the underside.

14 Remove the carving from its base using a bandsaw or a coping saw in order to finish the underside and to carve the feather detail. This will make the piece difficult to hold, but also more manoeuvrable for getting into all the little nooks and crannies.

Adding feather detail

15 If you have never carved birds before, it is a good idea to practise carving feathers. When creating something this size, it is not important to get everything absolutely accurate. You need to know the various shapes of the feathers and how they overlap, but as long as you include the main types in the right places, the number of feathers is not really an issue.

16 When you are confident that you can carve the feathers on your dove, draw them in carefully with a fine pencil, before outlining them with your small V tool. Take your time doing this, as you will have limited opportunity to redo it.

Adding the himotoshi

17 Flatten the base of your dove, checking that it sits flat and does not lean to one side or the other. Refer to your research photographs to ensure that the bird is sitting in a natural position and to check the position of the tail relative to the head. When you are satisfied, sand the underside to a fine finish. Mark in and drill the himotoshi.

18 Once your carving is finished to your satisfaction, apply several coats of finishing oil. When each is dry, buff up to a shine. ▶

**18**



Spoon carving

Part 2 – Knife work. Lee Stoffer finishes carving the sycamore cooking spoon

It's now time to refine the blanks that we axed out in the last issue of *Woodcarving*. If you followed the instructions from last time and froze your blank, take it out of the freezer, out of the bag and allow it to defrost before continuing. The tools used will be a straight carving knife and a 'spoon scorp', a tool I have developed from an original concept made for me by the talented and imaginative bladesmith Chris Grant, which is now produced by me with blades from Nic Westermann. It's basically a looped blade making it a left and right-handed spoon knife in one. Traditionally, various curved blades have been employed to hollow the bowl of a spoon and there is a good selection of quality knives for the task available from various makers. It's often personal preference that determines the best tool for each individual, so if possible, try out a few options before you decide where to spend your money. Going for the cheapest option to get you started will often result in disappointment. Gouges can be used in place of a dedicated

spoon knife, but the techniques shown here will concentrate on knife work.

Again, I would like to stress that the best way to learn these techniques is to be shown first hand. Attending a course will show you safe and efficient ways to use the tools required and allow an instructor to stop you picking up any bad or dangerous habits by coaching you as your confidence and skill level grows.

Whichever tools you use, the most important thing is that they are razor-sharp to begin with and are maintained as such throughout the process. Work in a seated position, but avoid chairs with arms that could get in the way. Sit upright with both feet on the ground for maximum stability. Take regular breaks and do a few stretches to reduce the chance of picking up repetitive strain injuries. Carve with care, taking light, controlled cuts; forced cuts can cause serious accidents if they go wrong. If you slip out of a forced cut, your muscles will react in reverse to try to correct the issue. This is an involuntary reaction and can result in injury so is definitely best avoided.

SAFETY TIPS

- 1 Preferably, attend an introduction course to learn safe and efficient techniques for using the tools required.
- 2 When trying new techniques, always identify any possible risks involved and take measures to avoid injury before proceeding.
- 3 Work in a comfortable position, standing or sitting to reduce fatigue. Keep your work area tidy and free of distractions.
- 4 Always aim knives or scorp away from your other hand.
- 5 I would always recommend eye protection and safety footwear when working with these tools.

Things you will need

- Straight carving knife
- A 'spoon scorp'



1 With the spoon blank and carving knife ready to start work, you can begin by cleaning up and refining the handle shape.

2 When making a drop cut, the elbow is locked and the power comes from lifting and dropping the shoulder only. This gives plenty of power with minimum effort and restricted movement, but to make this as safe as possible, make sure your knife has a safe path of exit.

3 For the chest lever grip, the knife is held close to the chest with the blade facing away from the body with elbows out. Engage the blade in close to the handle of the knife.

4 You can now progress the cut by pushing your chest out and elbows back. You should find that you use most of the blade here in a slicing motion.

5 This is the finished position for the chest lever cut. Note: the elbows are now back and the chest is pushed out. This grip/cut is important to master as it offers a great balance of safety, power and control.

6 Observing the grain direction is important when shaping the sides on the handle, the arrows depict the direction of the cut.

7 For the pull cut, hold the spoon with the bowl into your chest and start to shape the handle by following the arrows and cutting towards the body. Note: my wrist is cocked with the blade pointing away from me, my elbows are held tight to the body to limit movement.

8 You can build up shavings from both directions before making a release cut. Making the transition smooth between grain directions requires some practice.



9 Trim up the opposite side of the handle. You can use the chest lever grip again here; just remember to work with the grain.

10 Now to focus on the neck of the spoon. Trim down towards the bowl on one side, then flip the blank over and repeat, leaving the shavings intact for now.

11 Turn the blank around and, while holding it by the bowl, carefully release the captive shavings and smooth out the transition. In this cut I am actually pushing the knife through the cut with three fingers on my left hand, the right hand only really steers the blade. This limits the travel of the blade and allows you a greater degree of control.

12 Clean up the front of the handle carving towards the bowl – the back of the handle should be carved in the opposite direction.

13 Again the arrows highlight the grain direction. First carve from the line blending the cuts into the handle.

14 Here I'm showing another commonly used grip – the thumb push. Pushing with the thumb of the left hand is great for close controlled cuts, but don't over use it or you'll get sore thumbs.

15 One of the last things I do with the straight blade is to tidy up the shape of the bowl. The knife is gripped with the fingers and the thumb is used as an anchor point. The cut is made by simply closing the hand, ensuring the blade exits into the space between the thumb and fingers. Take care to keep your thumb out of the way and take light cuts.

16 All that remains is to gently soften the edges by removing the arris at around 45° before moving on to the hollowing.




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17 The progression from axe to knife finish should look something like this. Smooth to the touch with a lightly faceted finish.

18 Before taking any cuts from the bowl, run a pencil line about 3-4mm in from the edge. Begin to remove waste working across the grain and keeping your thumb clear of the exit point of the blade.

19 If you have the opposite handed knife you could try a modified chest lever grip. Always take light cuts and gently rotate the blade through the cut for best results.

20 Remove the waste until the bowl is an even thickness of around 3-4mm. You can then start to clean up the roughing cuts following the arrows to work with the grain. You will probably need to take the last few cuts across the grain.

21 Use the most open sweep of the blade when making finishing cuts and gently remove the high points of previous cuts until you achieve a clean finish.

22 When you are happy with the finish of the bowl visually, use your finger and thumb like a calliper to gauge the uniformity and thickness. Check over the rest of your new spoon and fettle where necessary.

23 Leave your spoon to dry for a few days at room temperature, out of direct sunlight. It should feel quite a bit lighter when it's dry. It can be used as is or can be oiled using cold pressed linseed oil.

24 As your skills develop you might want to try adding details such as chip carving and painting on the handles of your spoons. You can also sand your spoon. I will occasionally resort to this if the grain is particularly uncooperative, but generally I prefer the slick, faceted finish left by a sharp blade. ▶

Carving a likeness

Graham Thompson describes and demonstrates his techniques for carving a human likeness

What is a likeness?

I've been asked this many times and over the years have developed a stock answer which, while still being something of a cop-out, is 'the individual's variations from the average'. Pick up any book on carving or sculpting a face and the sage advice is almost always based on a set of geometric rules – triangles feature a lot – that have been about since classical times. All excellent stuff for the basics of a standard face, but nobody's face is standard, otherwise you could, armed with this 'knowledge' be able to reproduce a person's likeness without any images of them at all, just a basic checklist of features: 2 eyes, 1 nose, 1 mouth etc.



Brooding Beethoven

Credentials of humanity

Seven billion faces all with the same features but, other than identical twins or the occasional doppelganger, no two are truly alike – how can this be? The answer has to lie in the mathematics of combinations of small differences. The human face basically comprises two eyes, one nose and one mouth. Let's take the nose, as an example, of which there are dozens of variations of the way that the lower part of the nose joins the upper lip – in three places. Add to this the basic nasal dimensions and proportions and you're starting to get a pretty large number of combinations and we haven't even started on nostril shape/size and that's just one of the main features – the nose. Of course, once you have observed, measured and recorded the main features' differentiations then you can start to consider their relationship to each other and the overall combination with the necessary gaps or joins in between each feature. All of this comes together with the myriad bumps, folds, creases, lines etc. – all of which vary enormously with expression and lighting.

Those in the know tell us that a large part of the human brain is dedicated to reading other faces and body language. Normally the



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF GRAHAM THOMPSON AND PETER BENSON

data is gleaned in a subliminal manner – you're mostly unaware that you are doing it. I'm suggesting that we can turn just a small part of the cerebral effort into usable information for carving a likeness. There's also a part of the brain which, apparently, is dedicated to visualising objects in three dimensions – it's mind boggling to think that without this amazing ability there would be no sculptors or woodcarvers. Just a lot of would-be artists staring at a block of wood or stone with no idea of how to 'see' the object within the whole.

Look AND see

Many times, over the years that I have been a woodcarver, I have heard the expression that the ability to visualise a piece is something that you either have or haven't got – it can't be taught. There may be something in this, but thinking back to when I first took up carving, and looking at some of my early pieces, it's perfectly plain to see that 15 years ago I didn't have much ability to see the subject in the blank material – I obviously had a lot to learn, and still have.

Recognising this educational journey reassures me that the ability isn't necessarily an either/or instinctive gift as such, more a skill that can be acknowledged then worked on and, over time, improved. I certainly hope that I will continue to develop my own methods of looking-seeing-recording-transposing the subject. A sure sign of an under-developed ability to see the subject is when you find yourself unable to decide what to do next, where to remove material, resulting in time

passing with very little result and consequently hardly worth clearing up afterwards. Hopefully this article will help – you AND me – so we can get on with the job and be never short of ideas as to what to do next and be a bit bolder with the actual carving process.



Grinling Gibbons – an example of me looking but not seeing, can you spot the error?

Look and look again

A handy reminder of how your mental image of the current project can become distorted is to conjure up (this best done just as you wake in the morning, so it's some hours since you saw the work) in your mind's eye how the piece looks then go straight to your workplace and I will guarantee that there will be considerable differences between your image and the reality. And, most likely, you will now be able to see what needs doing and where perhaps you were going wrong. It's very likely that you were getting too close – that's close in the mental sense – to the piece and will now benefit from a mental re-boot i.e., a night's sleep.

The subject



Peter Benson

Having been 'nominated', Peter Benson gracefully agreed to be the absentee sitter for this exercise. Peter and I have never met – which is typical for nearly all of my portraiture pieces to date. This also means that I have no preconceived ideas as to what he looks like so I can work entirely from the few pictures provided by Peter plus a few which can be found online. Hopefully this 'innocent ignorance' will help me to define, translate and transpose a likeness on to and, literally, into the wood. As a very well-known figure in woodcarving circles Peter has given his time as the BWA chairman and his name to a range of carving tools, so he will, I am sure, be a good judge of how he sees himself.

If I had to give a brief description (say) to a policeman having witnessed Peter commit a crime it would probably be something along the lines of: average looks for a man in his autumnal years – his most distinguishable feature would be his glasses. I could go on to add thinning, white, hair; eyes probably brown – but that's about it. Not much use to the CID or to me for that matter – yikes!

This is where I have to adopt the role of the police photofit service and carefully analyse Peter's finer details, because if I were to carve him from what we already know the result would be a very average image and not even Peter's best friend would recognise him.

Physiognomy

For the purposes of this article, I will restrict my observations to those required for a bas (low) relief work. Peter can rest easy as far as the back of his head is concerned – having said that the rear cranial outline may well be important, depending on the chosen pose. Working on the assumption that I am to reproduce Peter's likeness as he is now and as most people would recognise him and not to consider taking a few years off or just being kind. However, the main features don't change, so here they are in order of importance:

- **Proportions:** not really a feature but it pays to get this right and keep checking as the piece progresses. Eyeline set just above



Peter side view

halfway from chin to crown, top lip – deep with flat philtrum curved inwards to join the nose (septum). Chin to nose = nose to eye centreline. Head shape: egg. All very average but more detail will emerge.

- **Eyes:** good size opening with hooded upper lids, slightly narrow set and level with ear tops
- **Eyebrows:** not particularly prominent or bushy
- **Nose:** narrow-ish and curved to (his) right, bridge slightly aquiline. From the lowest point the septum (skin and cartilage that separates the nostrils) curves up and in to meet the philtrum (the groove in the top lip)
- **Mouth:** medium width with typically male thin lips. Lower lip protrudes slightly
- **Chin:** deep with slight projection. Shallow cleft
- **Cheeks:** high-ish but indistinct cheekbones, tending to jowl affecting the jaw line
- **Ears:** medium, close-set to the head. Lobes joined to jaw
- **Neck:** slender with some loose skin under chin
- **Hair:** back and sides only with sideburns

Pose

As previously discussed, Peter's main distinguishing feature is his eyesight, or rather the means of optical correction, his spectacles.



Chosen head position

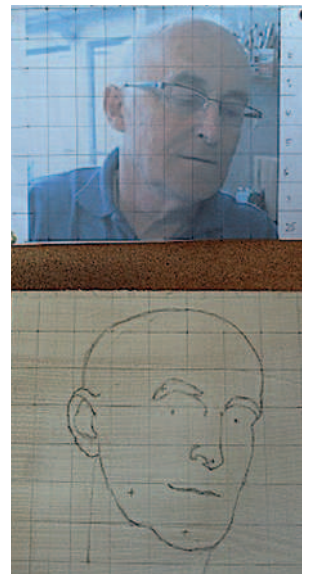
So, in a way, we're starting from the glasses and working out from there – well yes and no. Peter tells me that his specs are 'on and off like a like a gardener's gloves' – so it would be acceptable to depict him sans spectacles, thereby keeping the piece relatively uncomplicated.

As we're considering the overall appearance, we should also discuss the subject's mood: happy/sad/reflective, laughing/crying and so on. On balance I tend to favour anything that doesn't involve teeth or, at least, the baring of teeth. Unless you really are looking to portray a deranged person, I would avoid anything other than a closed mouth. Obviously, some expressions give more facial feature-type interest than others, so let's settle for something positive but not grinning.

Anyone who knows Peter well will certainly see him differently to how I (or for that matter most of the readers of this article) actually do, so I think it's important to concoct a pose which is somewhat atypical for him. So instead of a close friend being able to say instantly 'yes, that's Peter alright', I hope to put over a likeness that requires some study before the viewer recognises (literally) the subject.

To save a lot of work in creating a totally new image of Peter

I decided to use and adapt an existing, online-available picture, one where Peter is actually carving, but I will have him with eyes fully on the viewer instead of looking down at his work. Using a grid system, I can then easily transfer the key points on to the material and get started.



Outline transposed

Pre-production thoughts

The intention here is not to provide a full cat-sat-on-the-mat set of instructions for material, carving steps, tools to use... more a gentle nudge to have a go with your own choice of subject, material, equipment etc. However, for the record, my chosen material is sycamore – because I like it, it's light in colour and I've got a suitable piece in stock, but any lightly-grained wood will do. I like to carve as shallowly as possible and remove the minimum material, but you may choose to go a little deeper, the method is essentially the same. The best amount of material to remove can be described as; just enough.

Shades of grey

Monochrome, or literally one colour, is our restricted palette so we are forced to work with degrees of grey to create our image. OK, the grey may be, depending on the source of light, actually tinted blue or yellow, but overall we will be creating a variety of light and dark – and nothing else. In rejecting any colours (eyes), as such, I hope you find the task just that little bit easier. This is of course assuming that the piece is to remain completely self-coloured. Certainly, for the purposes of this article, that is the case.

Let there be light

A good light but principally from one angle only please, if you want to have consistent shadows. Generally, I would recommend the dominant light source be from straight above and arranged at an oblique angle to the work. Continuity in this angle of light is important to ensure consistency of results. To illustrate this point: in a darkened room try standing in front of a mirror and compare your face when illuminated by a torch from different angles and you will quickly understand the problems created by indistinct or variable light sources.

Compression

All relief work, and particularly low relief work, is quite simply a compression, a flattening, of the subject represented in the wood. The

rate or scale of the compression does not have to be uniform or linear. In fact, the near-to-far features do not even have to be in order of distance. Literally the tip of the nose can actually be further into the wood than the (say) chin – they just have to 'appear' to be in the right order. It's the creation of these, often small, adjustments that produce the desired effect. To illustrate this point, imagine the earth as a globe and view the equator from square-on. As we all know it (the equator) is a continuous band, but from this angle it's a straight line. Now change your angle of view to a higher one and you will see that the equator's curve tightens as it reaches its vanishing point. You may find it useful to recall this information when carving the human facial globe equivalent, the eye.

The technical term for our topic here is, of course, perspective, commonly used and discussed in art classes as well as technical drawing and architectural design. Perspective usually means straight and parallel lines appearing to converge towards a vanishing point. Technically the same rules apply here but (and it's a big BUT) human faces don't have any straight lines – in fact, nature as a whole doesn't. This is why I tend to avoid using tools – especially power tools – which can only create straight lines as it can mean, at best, a lot of work to get the right curves in all the right places or, at worst, a ruined piece. So with straight lines a no-no we have to use curves, in all their fabulous variations. I'm afraid I'm going to ask you to stand in front of the mirror again ('vanity of vanities all is vanity' – torch not required). Looking straight ahead observe your left (or right) nostril, the shape that its outline creates, then slowly tilt your head back and rotate to the side, all the time watching how the nostril's outline changes shape. With that nostril alone depicted in relief (or a drawing for that matter) you should be able to say which way the head is facing because the curves appear to alter as the head moves through the vertical and/or horizontal axes. Also, while we are in front of the mirror, another informative exercise is to view how the relationship between features can vary enormously as the head is tilted or rotated. For example, look straight at the mirror and note how the ear tops are aligned with the eyes – usually they are closely in-line – now slowly tilt the head up or down and observe how the ears quickly move out of alignment. You can use this fact to illustrate the angle of view of any portrait by correctly fixing the position of the ears. Naturally this will vary according to the subject and whether their ears are located high or low – and how far they are from the eyes, the greater the distance the greater the apparent movement.



Side view shows compression



From 3 metres to infinity in 1cm of wood

Inspirational galleries & collections:

- Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool
- National Portrait Gallery, London
- Chatsworth House Sculpture Gallery, Derbyshire
- Castle Howard, North Yorkshire
- Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh
- Salt's Mill 1853 Gallery, Saltaire, West Yorkshire
- Montacute House, Somerset

Highs & lows

Even though we don't have to follow a strict code, or rate, of compression it's still worth deciding where the main peaks and troughs are, and these can vary according to the angle of the head. Most peaks are obvious: chin, point of nose etc. But some are less obvious, such as the cheek bone or eyebrow, which is usually much more pronounced in males. For our purposes with this project and taking into account not just the subject, but the exact pose, I decide to mark the following places on the wood:

Highs

Left eyebrow
Right eyebrow
Cheek bone (right)
Nose tip
Lips (centre)
Chin (right)
Ear (right)

Lows

Nose bridge
Eye inner corner (right)
Eye outer corner (left)
Trough between nose and cheek (right)
Corner of mouth (left)

Time to make some cuts

Remove a small amount of what will definitely be background material – avoiding vertical cuts – just so we can see the general outline. This isn't strictly necessary but I think it's good for the confidence to at least appear to have made some progress.

The next step is to carve into the low points leaving all the high points at the surface of the wood. What we are looking for is a vague image, steadily appearing, of a correctly oriented face with 'sleeping' eyes and indistinct features. We're not yet expecting a likeness to be immediately apparent, but it can happen if the subject and pose is really distinctive – see Winston Churchill's portrait.

The beauty of bas relief carving is that, with a few exceptions, mistakes are usually correctable by shaving off the error and starting again. It's not unusual for me to

carve the eyes and subsequently re-carve them three or four times. Remember that the compression isn't necessarily uniform – all that matters is that it looks right, so there's often plenty of material to re-do most features. The exceptions are, as we said earlier: the outer edge and the nose; the disappearing edge of the nose tip **MUST** be carved at a generous angle and only finished – probably with a small undercut – once you are absolutely certain it's correctly positioned and oriented. If the nose line is too far to one side and the cut is vertical you have nowhere to go and might as well start again or look for a subject with a suitable nose – a retired boxer, perhaps?

End of lecture – enjoy the steady emergence of the eyes (still closed and rounded at this stage). Work on the mouth corners and the

upper lip where it meets the nose, all the time avoiding vertical cuts into the wood so adjustments can still be made.



Unmistakable?



Left side of nose is vertical



Features emerge

Interesting websites to visit:

- www.portrait-sculpture.org
- www.roberthuntsculpture.com/gallery-2
- www.martinjennings.com
- www.dabhandstudios.co.uk
- www.karen-newman.com
- www.ianrank-broadley.co.uk
- portraitsculpture-online.com
- www.wastweetstudio.com
- www.alexjones.co.uk

Next, I suggest that the ear can be given some definition. See how the flexible outline can be exploited to make this incredible organ something special. And be reminded that the ear is only effectively attached at the front edge with the lobe projecting from the jaw. Moving on, this is also a good time to attend to the (outer) hairline – again you will be glad that you left some peripheral material.

From time to time redraw the outline and the nose edge – you will be surprised how the edges move out as you gradually go deeper. This is a happy consequence of using sloping (outwards) cuts and is easily and rewardingly corrected.

Finally, make a few small undercuts where extra, apparent depth is desirable: behind the ears, under the lee of the nose and under the chin. Depending on your chosen pose there may be other areas which would be better defined with an undercut.

Epilogue

Right from the outset, the objective of this article has been to inspire and perhaps coax you, dear reader, into having a go at the fascinating and endlessly complex subject of portraiture. If you don't fancy tackling a full-face piece, I suggest that you consider reproducing just one separate feature – an ear perhaps – but it should be a recognisable ear of a known individual so you can test the likeness. Whatever you do just be bold, get stuck in and enjoy it. All types of carving involve an endless journey of discovery and reproduction. Your time is never wasted, and your work will improve with practice, despite ups and downs along the way.

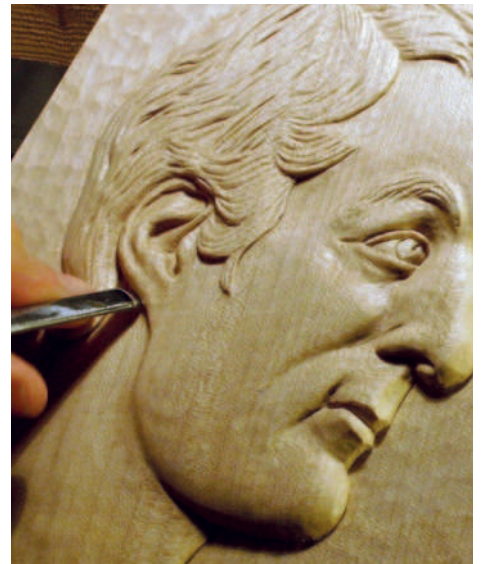
This carving was largely completed during three days of demonstration at the BWA stand during the Great Yorkshire Show. ▶

A few tips:

- 1 Research the subject and obtain images from a number of angles
- 2 Carefully observe your subject and note the key features and proportions
- 3 Prepare a sketch or template for the chosen pose
- 4 Transpose the image to the wood by tracing and/or a grid system
- 5 Resist the temptation to remove large amounts of background material – it will limit your opportunity for adjustments to the image's edges
- 6 Don't create hard (vertical) edges, for the same reason
- 7 As the work progresses keep re-drawing the main lines and feature positions
- 8 Use a mirror – it's useful to see how some features 'work'
- 9 Practise tricky bits on a piece of scrap wood or mouldable material
- 10 Keep revisiting the piece
- 11 Regularly re-draw the grid, outlines and key features
- 12 Never undercut until entirely happy with the work
- 13 Particularly for low relief carvings, a good, uniform light source is essential for consistent results – avoid fluorescent lights, 'warm' LEDs are best. ▶



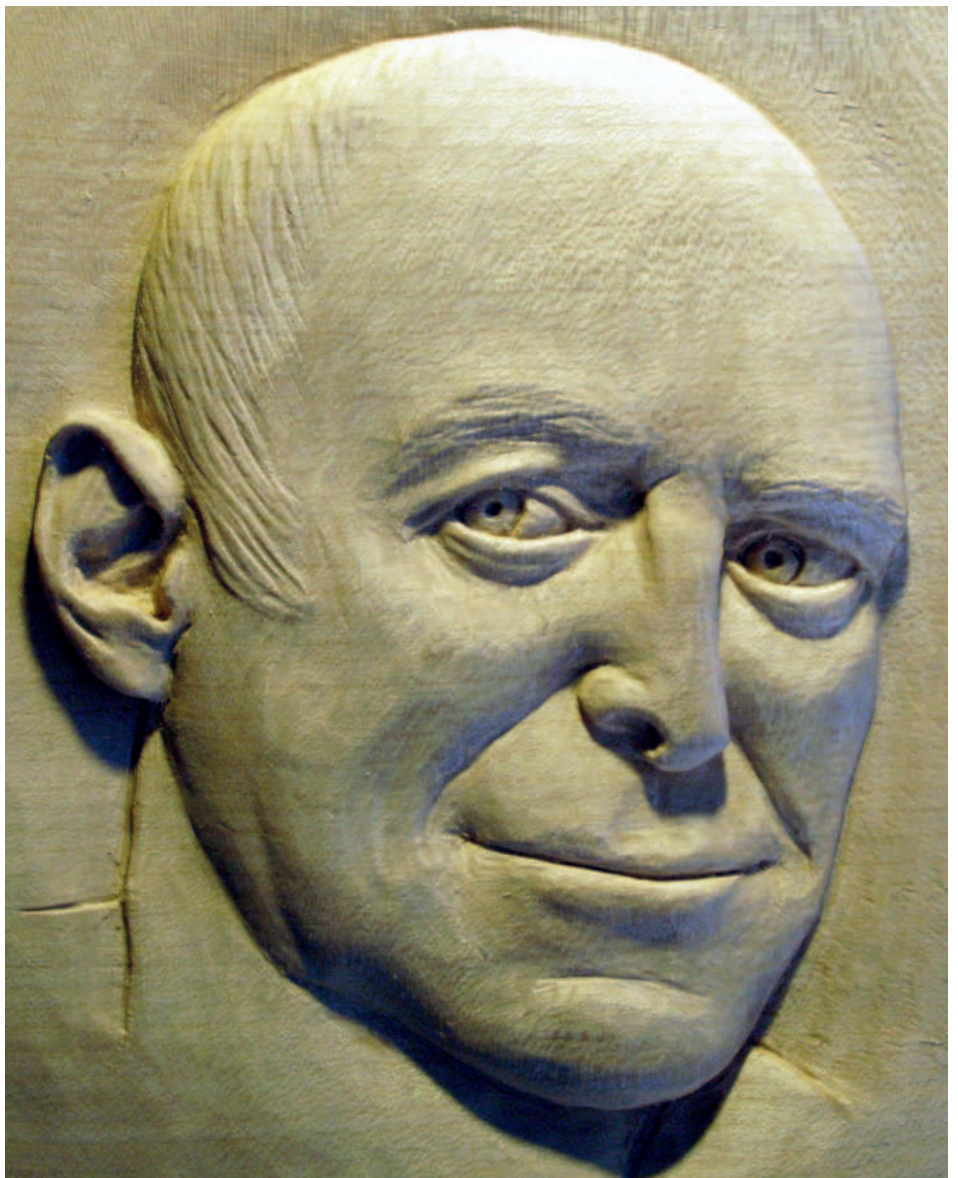
Features in place



Undercutting 'lifts' features & lines

Recommended reading:

- Dick Onians' *Carving the Human Figure*
- Ian Norbury's *Carving Facial Expressions*
- David Esterly's *The Lost Carving*



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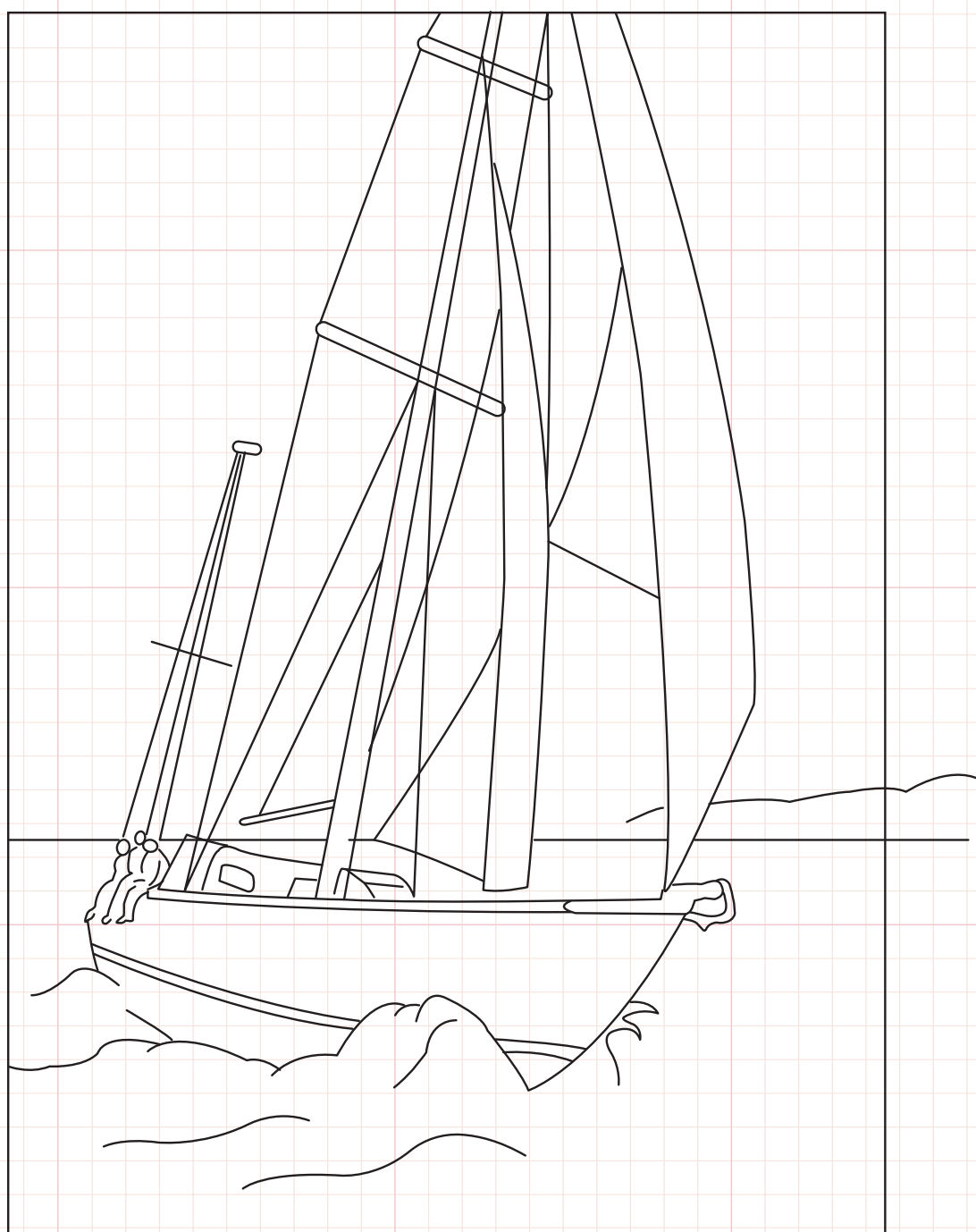


Deep relief carving

John Samworth concludes his series with a deep relief sailing scene

Following on from my earlier articles on relief carving, I'm going to look at how to carve a deep relief image. The distinction between shallow relief and deep relief is intuitively obvious although not clearly defined. When a shallow relief's carving becomes deep enough to be called deep relief is a matter of opinion. The earlier shallow carvings were made from 25mm lime, this deep carving is made from 50mm lime, allowing the depth of carving at points to reach 40mm. But perhaps the clearest distinction between shallow and deep relief carvings is the amount of undercutting used to create the illusion of depth.

For this exercise I have drawn a sail boat racing the wind. It is an image full of energy and movement, where the bow of the boat jumps forward from the carving. The main techniques used to create this illusion are: undercutting to create deep shadows; perspective with the masts and sails trailing off to a vanishing point just off the picture's top; foreshortening of the boat and bow wave; merging the distant areas of carving into the background; and scale, making items in the background smaller than those in the foreground. If extra help is necessary there is the option to include a headland on the horizon. I think we can all be forgiven for not attempting to carve the rigging.



1 Copy or trace the picture on to your wood. My piece of wood included a section of the waney edge down the left, but because this section was to be removed it did not matter. Start by removing some of the background with a fluter. If you carve away from the drawn edges of the areas to keep there is no need to chase out the outline with a parting gouge.

2 Remove further background from the front edge of the leading sail (stay sail). Keep the line smooth and clean in the final position and begin to round off the leading edge. This is to protect the edge as you work around the piece. Note that the back fold in the stay sail and the point where the stay sail meets the bow of the boat are still at their original drawn height. These will be cut later.

3 Begin work on the stay sail's back folded section. Mark where the back fold meets the front and middle sails. These will be invaluable guides as the wood is removed. Lower the background below and above the sail, keeping the edges as clean and vertical as possible.

4 Where possible I have left the guidelines visible for clarity of instruction, but you should work closer to the line for accuracy. All the edges have been kept clean and vertical and taken down to close to their final depth. The top of the boat has been carved, part vertical and the remainder sloped back to the horizon on the same plane as the sea. Remove the waste from the sea area to define the bow and create the sea's plane. For now, leave wood about the bow of the boat and where the stay sail joins the boat. These will be carved later when all the main planes of the design have been settled.

5 Note the hand grip used to produce the clean vertical edges. This is a versatile grip for more delicate work in a number of different situations: either apply downward pressure with the upper hand and control the force with the lower hand; hold the upper hand still and rock the lower hand back and forth pivoting the chisel in the upper hand; hold the lower hand steady with the heel of your hand resting on the wood and rock the upper hand back and forth pivoting the chisel in your lower hand; or apply a rotating action on the chisel with the upper hand while pushing the chisel forward or pulling backwards with the lower hand.





6



7

6 Repeat the process of lowering the background and defining the folded-back section of the central sail (fore sail) then the rear sail (main sail). To aid access, remove more waste wood from the rear mast and cross-section (yardarm) of the main mast. I have left specific sections of timber untouched to guide where the rear mast and yardarm will be.

7 Now lower the rear mast and yardarm. Complete the outline of the hull and remove the waste wood about the bow wave as it rolls back along the hull. Leave a little extra wood at the rear of the hull to create the figures.



8



9

8 Round the edges of the main and rear masts. Here I am using a No.4 swept-back bent gouge. However, an upturned straight gouge will work fine, although access will be a little more awkward. Due to the grain direction, I can carve up the left of the mast, but will come down the right of the mast.

9 Still leaving a little wood to carve the sailors and form the cabin top. From our front vantage point, we are seeing the front corner of the cabin closest to us, with the front and sides sloping away. Make the rear vertical edge shorter than the corresponding front edge. This will add depth into the carving.



10



11

10 Form the outline of the sailors. They need only be the hint of an outline of their form, not in detail. This way they will appear to be further back into the carving. For the detail of the anchor over the front of the bow, start by drilling deep between the hull and the anchor. When we undercut this area, we shall see through to the water behind. Drilling can be achieved by rotating a 3mm veiner. Begin to form the bow wave and the cloud formation. Keep the top clouds projecting forwards and lower the detail and depth as they move towards the boat's sails or the horizon. Remove any remaining waste wood to define the bottom of the sails and the boat's deck.

11 Once you are settled on all the carving, the final work is to undercut the carving. There are two basic undercutting techniques we could use (see left).

12 Finally, apply a finishing coat of oil or wax. The whole piece has been left with a tool finish, no abrasives have been used, but this is a personal choice. By applying the aforementioned techniques of relief carving a convincing three-dimensional carving has been achieved capturing the drama and excitement of the sport. ▀

Undercutting



The first, on the left, is cut as straight lines with straight gouges cutting horizontally and down vertically. This method frequently leaves unsightly vertical cut marks in the background. The second technique on the right is to use a fluter to cut a curved undercut which blends into the background seamlessly. Not only will this create a convincing shadow, but the inside of the sails will appear to flow more naturally.



12

Carving at the speed of thought

Taking his inspiration from the human body, sci fi and fantasy, Simon O'Rourke turns wood into art with his chainsaw





The chainsaw is one of the most expressive tools, as it cuts as fast as you can think,' says Simon O'Rourke, who has carved an artistic career for himself with his chainsaw. 'The saws I use are like a range of paint brushes to me: starting with the larger saws and larger standard bars, I work my way into the piece until I can use smaller saws with carving bars. The tips of the smaller bars I tend to use to "sketch" on the wood before committing to a cut.'



Simon describes himself as an environmental artist and specialises in large scale sculptures, many of them destined for display outdoors. He initially took a degree in illustration, then became a tree surgeon. He got into chainsaw carving after seeing Andy Hancock, who now teaches sand carving in the US, do it – and decided to teach himself the skill. His first carving was a mushroom.

‘I started practising and realised I was quite good,’ he recalls. ‘My boss in the tree surgery business started hiring me out to his clients, and I attended a few local shows. After a couple of years on the scene I was invited to the first English Open Chainsaw Carving Competition, in which I came third. This gave me the confidence to start it as a business.’

Simon loves sculpting the human form and has completed a wide range of pieces based on this, from classical statues and angels through the Beatles to legendary and fairytale characters such as Beauty and the Beast. He has also made a number of sculptures for film and TV, including a container for dragons’ eggs to promote

the release of the final season of smash hit TV series *Game of Thrones*. He says: ‘I’m inspired in the most part by the natural world, but love to adapt animal forms into fantasy creatures. I watch a lot of fantasy and sci-fi films and love books in the same genre, so a number of my ideas come from those. When I’m carving someone’s tree stump I get inspired by the natural shape of the wood too.’

A lot of his work is done on commission, and his first job is to make sure he knows exactly what a client wants. ‘If they’re unsure then I will offer suggestions,’ he explains. ‘I’ll study the subject and get familiar with it, unless it’s something I’ve carved many times.’ How much he draws on the wood before making his initial cuts depends on the subject and how complex the pose is. ‘I often use spray paint to make reference marks for proportions. Once I find the main shape I don’t usually do any more mark making on the timber,’ he says.

For him, the most vital part of any sculpture is the blocking out process, because ‘the overall pose is the key to any sculpture’. Simon explains: ‘Animals,

birds and figures need to have movement. I focus on form and proportion over finish, and will then focus on the sensory elements of the subject like the face, hands, paws or claws, and feet.’

He goes on: ‘It’s important to understand and to visualise the sculpture within the solid material. Starting with visualising the silhouette from a couple of different angles is the best way to be able to take off the bulky parts of the log that aren’t needed. After that it becomes easier to work the figure from the outside in. The height of the finished piece and all the other elements will remain the same, it’s just a case of narrowing the whole thing until it’s right. At this stage on a more complex piece I will keep measuring the height of all the elements as I’m working to ensure they all stay the same.’

Simon has a partnership with Stihl and uses only that brand’s chainsaws, which he loves. ‘The specialist carving bars I use have a solid tip that is generally a lot smaller than a standard bar tip,’ he says. ‘This allows finer detail to be achieved. I use several different sizes of carving bar,



ranging from 8in long to 20in long, with tips that range from being as small as a 7mm radius up to a 20mm radius. The chainsaw chains are standard chains, but I will often grind the heels down on the backs of the cutters to make it smoother, passing round the tight radius of the tips.'

Apart from chainsaws he uses various straight and angle grinders, mainly cordless. He says: 'I use a range of Saburr-Tooth burrs in the grinders, and attachments like the Manpa Multi Cutter. It's important to me to have tools that can achieve the level of detail required. The various size burr bits and discs allow me to create various textures and details down to pupils in the eyes, or wrinkles on the skin.'

He loves working with oak and cedar, mainly because they last well outdoors and are hard enough to take good detail. 'I don't like to be too refined with finishes, I consider myself more of an impressionist,' he says. 'I like my sculptures to look great from a distance, as most of them are large scale. I find I get bored when going into too much detail! If I use a wood finish it's

usually a UV-resistant outdoor oil finish.'

When asked about his favourite projects, he says he has loved all of them. 'I really enjoyed the Giant Hand sculpture at Lake Vyrnwy in Wales because of the sheer size and scale, and working in a stunning environment,' he says. 'I also really enjoyed the challenge of the Spirit of Ecstasy, working in a garden where we couldn't get lifting gear to help with the additions, so I had to improvise with the way I constructed it.'

'The most challenging project I had was creating a tree from numerous pieces and constructing it in a building. The Museum of Somerset in Taunton commissioned me to create the tree as a centrepiece for the museum. It was 6m tall and had a 7m crown span. The trunk was intricately carved with numerous items from the collection, and things that related to the area. I had to carve the trunk, then cut it into sections and hollow it out in order to get it into the building. Each branch needed to be measured, stripped back, and a socket joint created to position it. It took months to complete and was easily

the most challenging project I ever did.'

More recent projects include a dragon emerging from an ash tree and a World War 2 soldier which is to be installed in Workington, in Cumbria. Simon has noticed enquiries fall off a little during the Covid-19 crisis, but it hasn't affected his income much apart from during the first lockdown, when he stopped work for a couple of months and some of his public commissions were postponed because the clients couldn't take delivery of the sculptures.

In the future he hopes to carry on carving as long as he can, continuing with the large scale projects he loves, but his workshop may have to move as the dairy farm where it is based is currently up for sale. A big part of Simon's work is social media, which he says has been instrumental in furthering his business over the past five years. He says: 'The best thing about social media is being able to show people what you're working on right there and then. People really feel more connected to you when they can see the process happening!' 

Dolly's pram

Zoë Gertner carves a small, but perfectly formed pram

A new arrival in the family is always a happy and exciting event that is looked forward to, whether it be a first son or daughter, or one of perhaps several forthcoming grandchildren. Some years ago, I made a similar carving for a friend to celebrate the arrival of her first son – and now, the years having passed by, this carving will mark a joyful addition of her son's child, the first grandchild to become part of the family. The wood was grown on the family farm in the US and brought to me on a recent visit.

Preparation

Although for sentimental reasons, I used a block of black walnut wood 3.5in long x 3in high x 2.5in wide, it was not of the best quality and I would advise you to use a lighter coloured, close-grained wood such as box, lime, cherry or sycamore with its grain direction lying horizontal, i.e. lengthwise along the arms of the pram handle, all of which are better alternatives.

Starting the pram

1 Trace or copy my drawing on to cardboard (a cereal packet is ideal), cut it out and draw round the template on the side of the block.

2 Across the top surface draw a guide line marking the front edge of the hood. Turn the template over, align the front of the hood with that guide line and draw the outline of the pram on the other side of the block. You may find it helpful to draw the front (a), back (b), underneath (c), and top (d) views on your wood.

3 Using a fine-toothed saw, remove the corner of the block across its width behind and in front of the pram wheels and behind the back of the hood.

4 At the front of the hood make a vertical saw cut downwards as far as the top of the side of the pram body.

5 Using the ½in No.5 gouge remove the wood in front of the hood above the pram body by working towards the saw cut and removing narrow sections of slivers along the grain. Make sure the corners of the gouge are outside the section you are cutting into and that you are cutting in line with the grain to remove the wood easily and cleanly.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ZOË GERTNER



1



2



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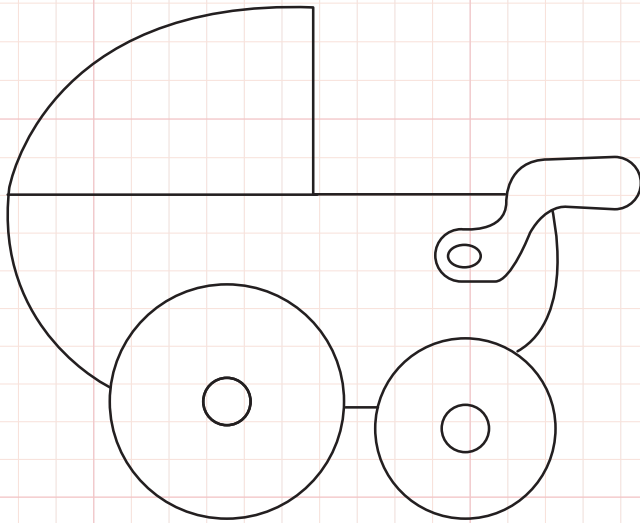


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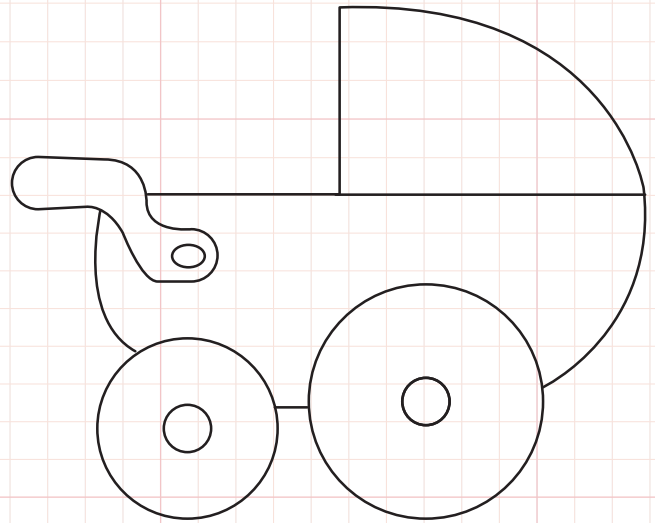


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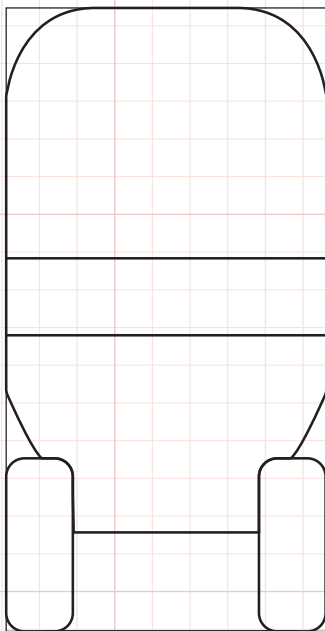
Left-hand side



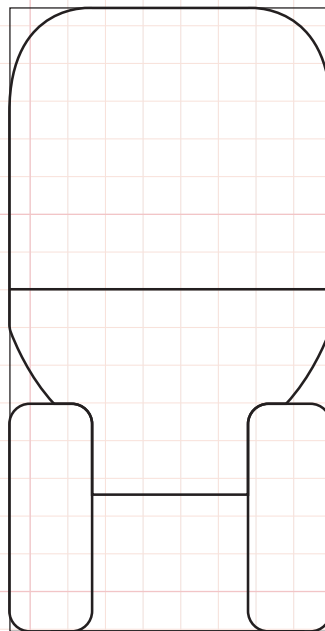
Right-hand side



Front



Back

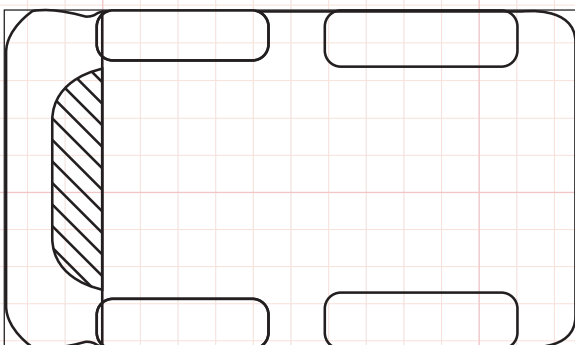


Things you will need

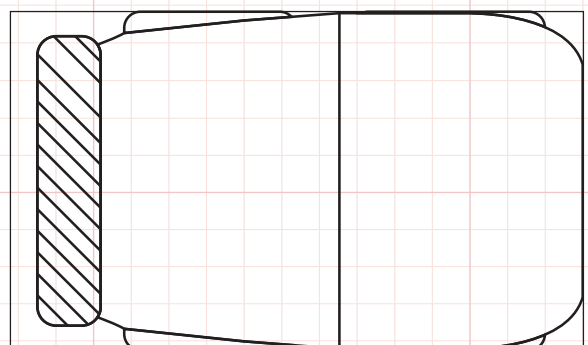
Tools:

- Small fine-toothed saw such as a coping or hacksaw
- Microplane/surform
- Mallet
- $\frac{1}{4}$ in and $\frac{1}{8}$ in No.39 V-tool
- $\frac{1}{2}$ in, $\frac{1}{4}$ in and $\frac{1}{8}$ in No.5 gouges
- $\frac{1}{2}$ in, $\frac{1}{4}$ in, $\frac{3}{8}$ in, $\frac{1}{8}$ in and $\frac{1}{16}$ in No.3 gouges
- $\frac{1}{4}$ in and $\frac{1}{8}$ in No.8, 9 or 10 gouge
- $\frac{1}{4}$ in No.2 skew or corner chisel
- Pre-decimal penny coin and a decimal tenpence coin
- Light hammer, circle punch and froster punch
- Small scraper

Bottom



Top



6 Round over the top of the back of the hood with the $\frac{1}{2}$ in No.5 gouge, remembering to lift your gouge hand as you cut over its edge and towards the back of the pram.

7 On the underneath, mark the inner edge along (approximately) the inside of the wheels on each side, and working from behind the rear wheels, round over the lower part of the back of the pram body so that the back of the pram, including the rear wheels, curves up towards the hood.

8 Remove the area above the back wheels and round over their surface across the width of the pram as if it were a cylinder.

9 Across the remaining flat surface, on the end grain at the back of the pram, mark a line at the middle of its curve, then with the $\frac{1}{2}$ in No.3 gouge, work with shallow cuts towards this line from both above and below it. You will then be working in the correct direction of the grain and your cuts should produce a shiny surface. Continue until the back of the pram is fully rounded and no original flat sawn surface remains. Being end grain, the wood may be very hard and slippery to work.

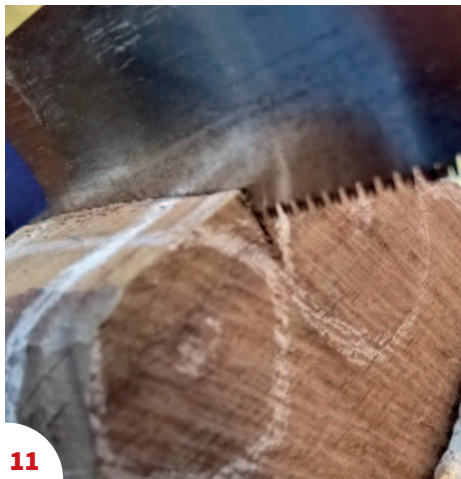
10 Smooth the rounded surface of the pram body using a microplane/ surform or spokeshave and working in the same directions as shown above, i.e. outwards towards the middle of the convexity from both above and below it.

11 Repeat Step 10 to round over the outer edges of the front wheels across the width of the pram. Then where the front and back wheels meet each other at the middle of the pram, make a vertical saw cut between them across the width.

12 With the $\frac{1}{2}$ in No.5 gouge, round over the inner surfaces of both front and back wheels, meeting the cuts from opposite sides at the bottom of the saw cut.

13 Now round over the outer surfaces of the lower halves of both the front and back wheels using the $\frac{1}{2}$ in No. 3 gouge.

14 Smooth and carefully adjust the shapes of the wheels so that each of their lower halves are rounded to half circles. More accurate shaping will be finished later. As you round them it may be helpful to draw a line at the base of the wheels where they would rest on the ground to remind you in which direction to work with the grain of the wood.





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Starting the pram body – the sides

15 On each side of the pram body draw the outline of the handle projecting forwards, then the edge of the two sides along from the hood to the handle at the front. Mark them using the $\frac{1}{4}$ in No.39 V-tool, then with the $\frac{1}{2}$ in No.5 gouge followed by the $\frac{1}{2}$ in No.3 gouge, round over the upper outer edge of the handle, cutting outwards and across the width at the front of the pram. Mark each wheel using the $\frac{1}{4}$ in V-tool in the correct directions shown, starting from the highest point at the top and curving round to join the lower halves of each wheel, so completing their circular outlines.

16 The upper half of each wheel is then relieved in the usual way using opposing cuts. Start the first set of cuts by inverting the $\frac{1}{4}$ in No.3 gouge and cutting round each upper half, holding the cutting edge angled away from the wheel and resting against the edge of the V channel.

17 The second set of cuts, the opposing ones, are then made using the gouge with its bevel downwards and the adjacent surface of the pram body is then removed so that the wheels stand proud. To avoid any splitting at the top of each wheel where the grain lies horizontally, cut alternately from each side as shown.

18 Using the $\frac{1}{4}$ in No.3 gouge with opposing cuts as above, relieve the handles each side on the pram body. With the $\frac{1}{4}$ in No.3 gouge, make vertical cuts from each side between the handles and the top of the front wheels and in line with the front of the pram.

19 From each side, begin to remove the area in front of the pram, starting from the outer edges and cutting towards the middle with the $\frac{1}{4}$ in No.5 gouge. Across the width of the pram body keep the handle supported from underneath, it will be rounded under later on.

20 The length of the handles into the pram body is now extended using the $\frac{1}{4}$ in No.3 gouge with opposing cuts. The first set of cuts are made along the inner edge of handle inside the body of pram, continuing its angle down and inwards towards the hood, at the same time rounding its upper edge across the width of the pram.

21 The second set of cuts, the opposing ones, are made towards the previous ones, gradually deepening and extending them and reducing the adjacent surface within the pram. Repeat the series of opposing cuts starting at the bottom of the hood and reduce the adjacent surface. Continue until the whole surface is level with the sides of the pram.

Putting baby in the pram

22 Using the $\frac{1}{4}$ in No.39 V-tool cut along the inner edges of the sides (ensuring their widths are the same) then around inside the hood and the baby's head. When working on end grain, i.e. within the hood and around the baby's head, always be aware that small sharp chips may be released and eye protection may be advisable.



23 Using the $\frac{1}{4}$ in No.8, 9, or 10 gouge, remove around the baby's head and within the inside of the hood by scooping the tool edge forwards and towards the front of the pram, thus 'with the grain' to remove the chips cleanly and easily.

24 Now align the appropriate blade of the V-tool against the head and the inner edges of the hood and re-cut round them. Repeat the above steps, scooping and V-tooling until the baby's head projects forward. Then smooth within the hood, scooping forwards towards the front of the pram with shallow cuts using the $\frac{1}{4}$ in No.3 gouge.

25 Draw the centreline on the baby's head then with the $\frac{1}{4}$ in No.3 gouge inverted, pare it to a rounded shape. Cut with a slicing action, working with the grain towards the centreline from each side and towards the front of the pram at the same time, carefully removing and rounding over the sharp edge left by the V-tool.

26 Within the hood, cut along the top edge of the pillow with the V-tool and further deepen within the hood above it so that the baby's head is resting on the pillow. Using the corner of the $\frac{1}{4}$ in No.3 gouge tilted, scoop hollows on both sides of the head so that the head is resting in the pillow. Then smooth the baby's body ready to be covered by a blanket which will be textured later, rounding it over from head to toes each side. If you are carving a close-grained timber such as those previously suggested you may like to add tiny features, unfortunately my walnut wood was unsuitable to do so, being too coarse.

Starting the wheels

27 Using the coins as guides, carefully pare to adjust the outer circumferences of each wheel as necessary until each is as near to a complete a circle as you can make them.

28 Draw the hub at the centre of the wheel, the inner edge of the tyre and the spokes converging on the hub, then cut around the inside edge of the tyre using the $\frac{1}{4}$ in or $\frac{1}{8}$ in No.39 V-tool. Using the analogy of a clock face, the correct directions to cut around the inside of the tyre will be to start your V-cuts first from 9 o'clock, then from 3 o'clock, meeting them at 12 o'clock, and likewise from 9 o'clock, and then from 3 o'clock meeting them at 6 o'clock to complete the inner circle. Repeat for the other three wheels. It may be helpful to practise on scrap wood beforehand.

29 Now mark the hub in the centre using a circle/nail punch with a light hammer and with the $\frac{1}{8}$ in No.39 V-tool, cut the spokes, working from the tyre towards the hub at the centre of the wheel, then repeat for the remaining wheels.

Finishing the outer ends of the sides of the handles

30 Using the circle/nail punch as above, mark the centre of the curled end each side of the pram.



23



24



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**31****32**

31 Using the $\frac{1}{8}$ in No.3 or 5 gouge with opposing cuts as detailed before, cut a channel from the centre of the curled end, curving it round to the top of the handle on each side of the pram. Then mark the bolts fastening the handles on to the sides of the pram using the punch.

32 Along the sides mark the bottom of the hood along the pram body using the $\frac{1}{8}$ in or $\frac{1}{4}$ in V-tool.

33 Across the back of the pram, across the end grain, cut halfway across from each side meeting at the middle, to finish the bottom line around the bottom of the hood.

**33****34****35****36**

Refining the back wheels

34 With the pram inverted, draw an inner line to mark the width of the wheels on each side. Then between the top of the back wheels and the back of the pram, cut a channel separating the wheels from the back of the body using the V-tool, starting the cuts from each side and meeting at the middle.

35 Using the $\frac{1}{8}$ in No.3 gouge inverted and sliding it sideways, carefully pare the upper quadrants of both back wheels until each is rounded and symmetrical.

36 Repeat the process on the pram body above the wheels with the gouge as above and adjust the curve of the adjacent pram body as necessary.

**37****38**

The front of the pram

37 Working from each side to meet at the middle, using the $\frac{1}{8}$ in No.39 V-tool, cut a V channel across the top of the front wheels; then across beneath the handle, defining the area in front of the pram ready to remove.

38 With the $\frac{1}{8}$ in No.9 gouge begin to remove the excess wood adjacent to the handle and wheels. With the $\frac{1}{8}$ in No.3 gouge inverted and its corner at the side of the V channel, round off the underneath of the handle, then the front wheels, paring them rounded by using a twisting slicing forwards action, cutting towards the middle from each side.

39 If necessary, re-cut the V-tooled channels, deepening them so that you can further round over the wheels and under the handle using the corner of the gouge along the V-channels as described in Steps 38 & 39. With the $\frac{1}{2}$ in or $\frac{1}{4}$ in No.3 gouge as described before, smooth off the front of the pram and adjust the curve of the upper quadrant of the front wheels.

40 If necessary, deepen the edges of the blanket covering the baby then texture it using a light hammer and a frosting punch to contrast it with the pram body.

41 Now with the pram inverted make a vertical cut along the inner edge of the wheels on each side, down to the base of the pram, using a fine saw, making sure all the wheels are the same width.

42 Between the saw cuts remove the marked area between the wheels using the $\frac{1}{4}$ in No.9 gouge. To avoid splitting, start at the outer edges and cut outwards, reaching the middle from each end. Then flatten and smooth the underneath of the pram in the same way with the $\frac{1}{4}$ in No.5 gouge followed by the $\frac{1}{8}$ in No.3 gouge. Tidy along the edge of the inner side of the wheels each side where it meets the flat bottom of the pram underneath, here a $\frac{1}{8}$ in No.2 skew chisel may be helpful.

43 With the carving still inverted, start at the centre where the front and rear wheels meet and carefully adjust the shape of the touching front and rear wheels using the $\frac{1}{2}$ in or $\frac{1}{4}$ in No.3 gouge inverted. Start by making short paring cuts, working towards and into the saw cut between them (see Step 11) lifting your gouge hand over as you extend your cuts, making the inner sections of the wheels completely circular. Take great care at the point where the wheels touch the ground – here you may need to change the cutting direction to avoid splitting along the grain and spoiling the wheel.

Finishing the pram

44 Place the carving on a flat surface and check that the pairs of wheels match each other, and each is circular when seen from the side, adjusting them if necessary. Remove any deep digs and errant cuts and check all meeting edges are cleanly cut. A small scraper may be useful for smoothing the pram body. On the underneath I incised the baby's name and date of birth, though this could be done on the side of the pram body if you prefer. Although there are many alternative finishes, I used a colourless wax polish applied with a redundant toothbrush, buffed it to a shine using a lint-free duster, and posted it off to my friend in the US. ▶



Our contributors



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



Graham Thompson A career change in 1998 presented an opportunity for Graham to do something with a selection of found materials resulting in a collection of animal-based pieces. More recently Graham has been drawn to 3D and bas relief portraiture. He lives and works in Yorkshire, England. gtgrahamthompson@googlemail.com



Iain Whittington is a retired Army engineer who started woodworking as a lifelong hobby under his father's guidance in the family's garage, where he picked up many new skills. Iain has shared some of his experiences by writing about woodworking, restoration and carving for various magazines.



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



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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



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Cocker spaniel hiking stick

Mark Gough demonstrates how to carve a country-style hiking stick

Stick-making has become very popular in recent years and more people than ever have taken up the craft in the past few months. The availability of materials and suppliers has helped, along with online groups full of great examples and friendly advice for the newcomer. With a small handful of basic tools and some guidance, great results can be achieved, and it seems to be very addictive too. The stick-making community as a whole are a very helpful bunch, many willing to give one-to-one tuition and many more guidance and advice via social media and there are plenty of opportunities to show your work if you have a competitive spirit, which is a great way to improve your skills by comparison with other stick makers' work. I myself have been guided along the way by many excellent carvers whose constructive criticism has been welcome, so I am passing on those favours here with a step-by-step guide to carving a cocker spaniel hiking stick. Obviously not everyone wants a cocker spaniel top, so it would be no problem substituting it with a dog of your choice – the step-by-step instructions remain more or less the same.



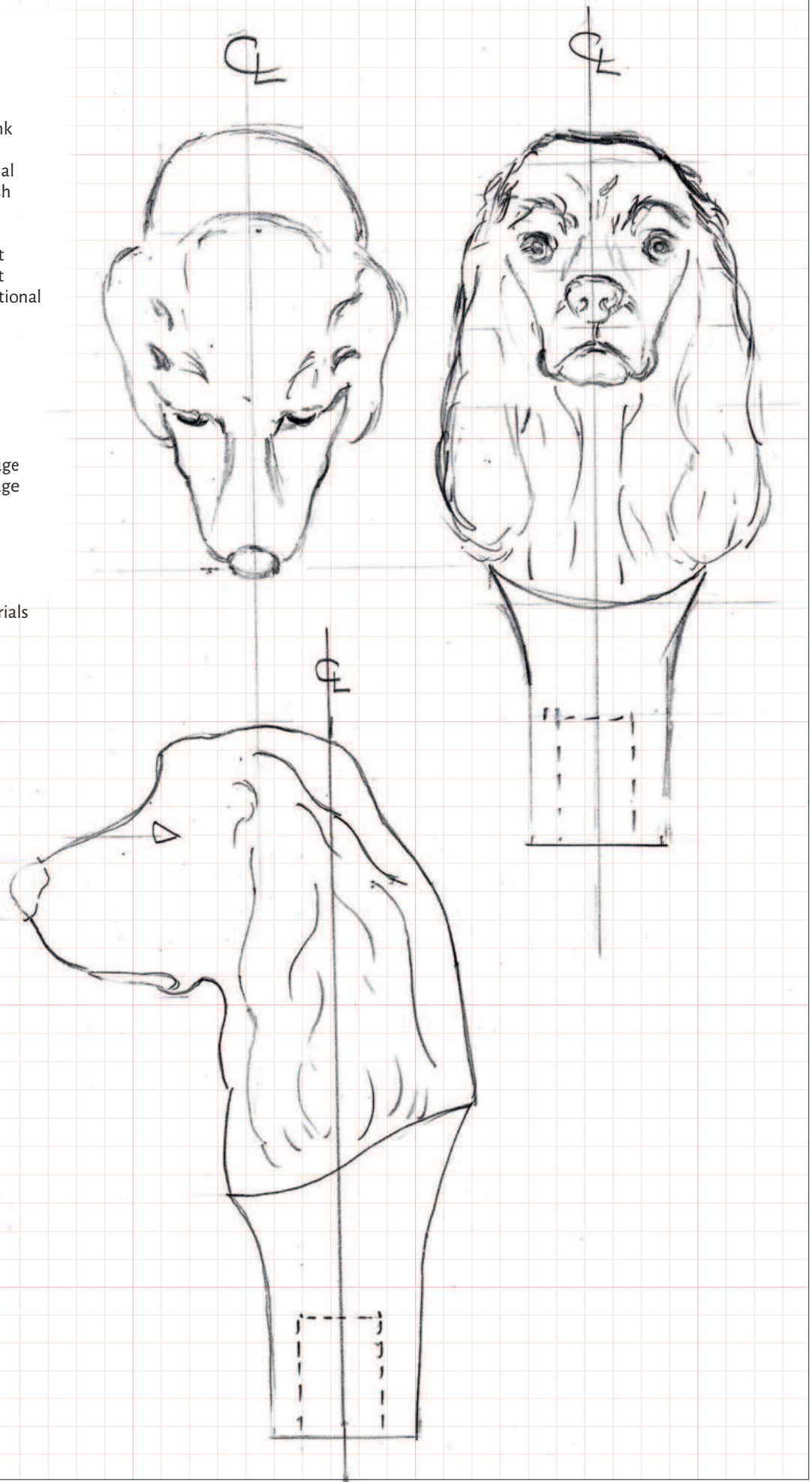
PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK GOUGH

Things you will need**Materials:**

- European lime
150 x 100 x 75mm
- English hazel natural shank
- Two-part epoxy adhesive
- 1 x pair glass eyes – optional
- Gloss polyurethane varnish
- Satin acrylic varnish
- Black spirit stain
- Black & white acrylic paint
- Abrasives down to 180 grit
- Brass collar & ferrule – optional
- Black epoxy putty

Tools:

- Bandsaw
- Drill press
- Rotary power unit
- Power drill
- 16mm shallow fishtail gouge
- 12mm shallow fishtail gouge
- 6mm deep flute gouge
- 3mm deep flute gouge
- Wood rasps
- Saw rasp
- Needle files
- Callipers & drawing materials
- Small wire brush



1 Using the pattern provided, mark out the blank and cut the profile out with a bandsaw or coping saw. Mark a centreline on the front, top and rear faces running centrally through the mouth, nose and forehead. The blank has been pre-drilled with a 16mm hole to accept the peg joint (see sidebar).

2 Refer once again to the pattern, mark the position of the eyes on the front with callipers and sketch in the mouth and nose positions with a pencil.

3 Start by carving away the waste around the ears with a 16mm shallow gouge. Work in the direction of the grain to avoid splitting, working on both sides in equal measures.

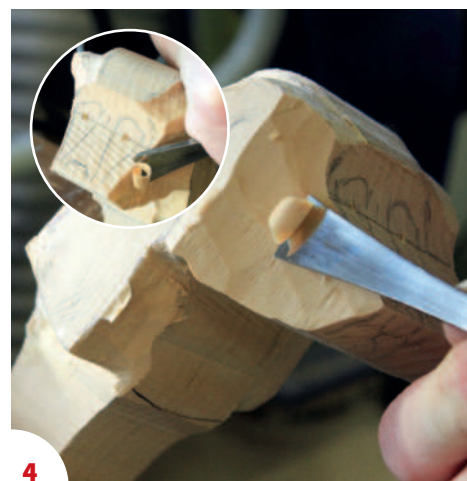
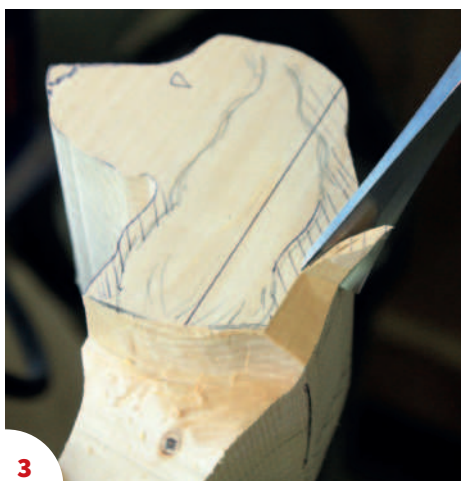
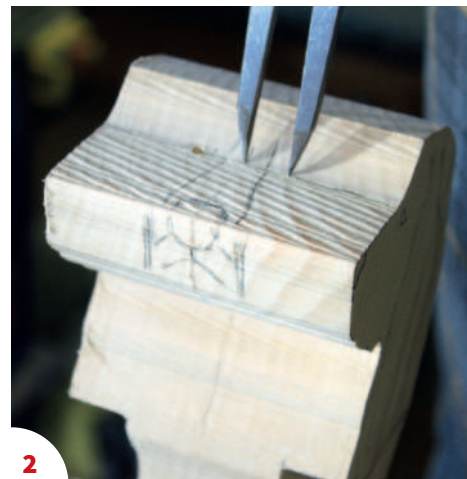
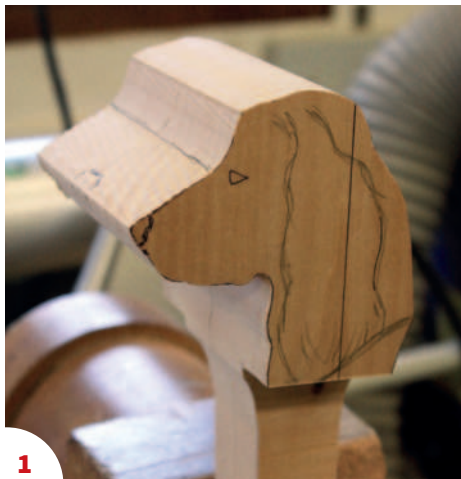
4 Using the same gouge, carve out the bulk of the waste to form the shape of the muzzle back to the front of the ears, stop a couple of millimetres from the lines to allow for refinement.

5 Flip the blank over in the vice to allow access to the neck and round over each corner with a suitable rasp. Note the pre-drilled hole for the peg joint. The diameter of the pencilled-in circle is 30mm, work to this line at this stage.

6 Before you go any further it is a good idea to drill the position of the eyes with a small drill bit so that you can track them as you carve away the rest of the face. Position the drill squarely in front of the head and drill perpendicular to the vertical centreline on each side. If you have opted to carve the eyes instead of using glass inserts you will, of course, omit this step.

7 Mark in the exact position of the eyebrows, nose and mouth and start to refine the features with 16mm and 12mm shallow gouges

8 Use the inside edge of the gouge to pare away each side of the nose. Be very careful to avoid chipping the edges – do this by hand without using a mallet for best results.




9

10

9 A rotary power unit and carbide burrs are useful for removing tool marks and refining the features of the face, especially the eyes. If you don't have this option use small rasps, files and 80g sandpaper in strips.

10 Turn your attention to the back of the head, shape the top through to the forehead and round over the back of the neck each side. Use the centreline for reference.

11 The jawbone and underneath of the neck is cut in with a 6mm deep fluted gouge and then reshaped with carbide burrs. There is still a significant amount to be removed around the top of the muzzle and eyes down each side of the face to make it represent a cocker spaniel. This will be done once the ears have been sculpted.


11

12

12 The mouth can be cut in with a 3mm deep flute or V-gouge. Take the line back each side to form the jowls.

13 In this image the mouth and nostrils have been roughed in and the waste area marked each side of the ears. The nostrils are formed with a small carbide round burr and the eye sockets have been opened out to the correct diameter to accept the glass eye inserts.


13

14

14 Cut away the waste each side of the ears, paying particular attention to the top where the ears flare out towards the back of the head. It is useful to have some photographs at hand to refer to – these can be obtained from books or the internet. Leave enough mass to carve in the detailed folds of the fur around the ears – remember it is easier to remove wood later on than it is to add it. Work evenly on both sides simultaneously and blend the ears in to the front of the head above the eyes.

15 Carve out the sides of the neck and form the lower edges of each ear. The front of each ear folds round slightly on to the front of the neck – this gives a much more realistic appearance.


15

16

16 You can now start to add some detail to the overall shape of the ears. Mark in the main folds and direction of the fur and shape these with gouges and small rasps. These don't have to be identical each side but a near match will look aesthetically pleasing.

17 After you have formed the basic folds of the ears the whole head can be sanded with 80 grit strips of sandpaper. This will highlight any areas that need attention to achieve the final shaping. View the head from all angles and compare with photographs for accuracy. When you are happy with the overall shaping sand the whole head down with 120 grit sandpaper and 180 grit around the nose.

18 If you are using rotary burrs start by choosing a large nail-head burr to cut in the most prominent groups of fur, then reduce the size of the burr and add finer detail to each area. Pay attention to the direction of the fur – it is not all uniform. The debris can be removed with a small wire brush. This step can be done with a V-tool if you prefer.

19 The remaining fur detail can be cut in with a small nail-head burr, blending it into the larger cuts around the ears. This finer detailing is difficult to achieve with a V-tool.

20 The eyes are set in with black epoxy putty – other colours are available if you are carving a different dog. The putty can also be painted with acrylic paints once cured.

21 The finished head has been stained with black spirit stain, highlighted with white acrylic paint and coated with three coats of satin acrylic varnish. For this project the neck has been shaped to accept an engraved brass collar and the final finished stick was complemented with an embossed leather hand grip. To join the head to the stick, a 16mm peg was cut on to the top of the shank and the whole assembly was fixed with two-part epoxy adhesive.



17



18A



18B



19



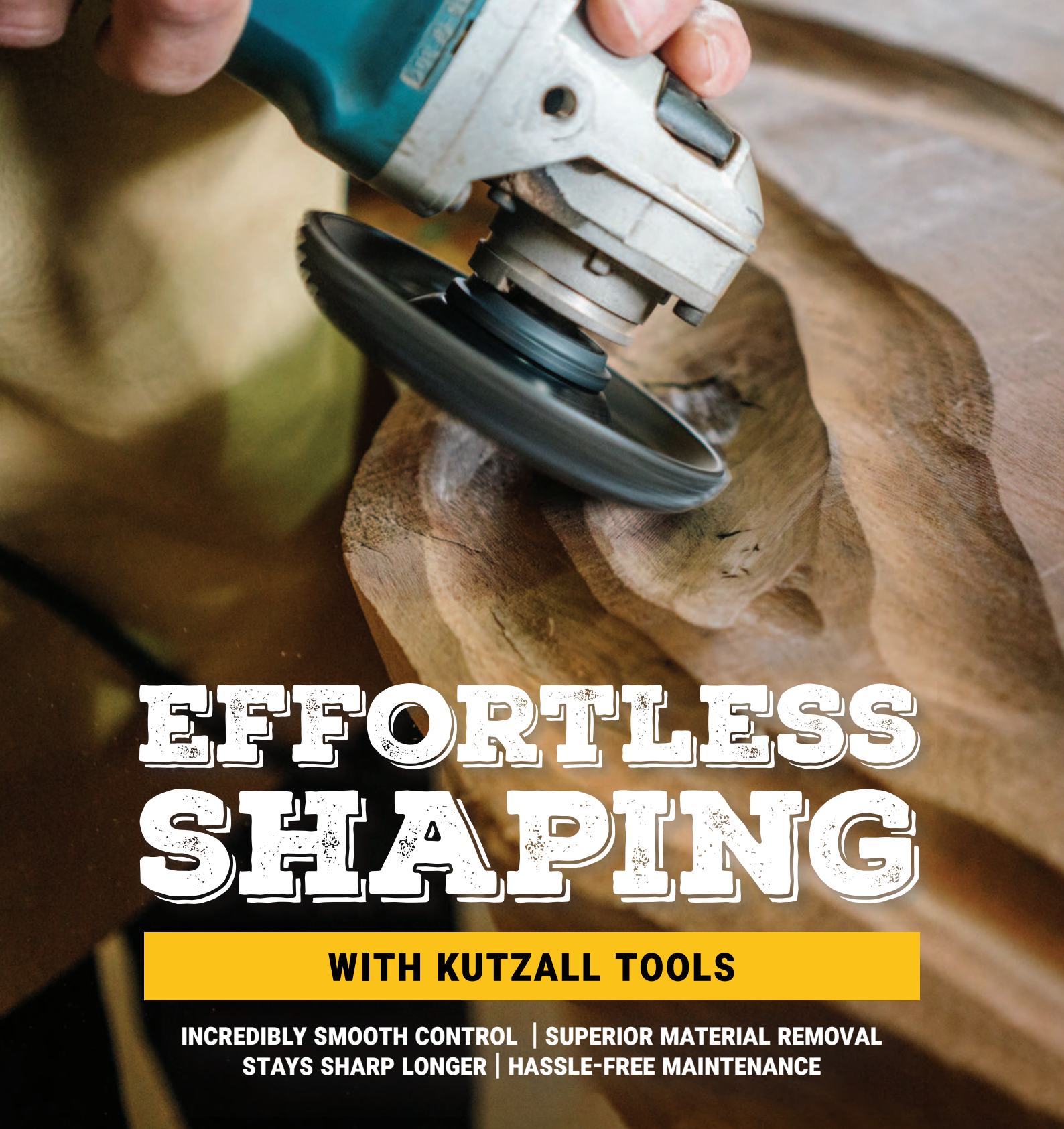
21

DRILLING THE PEG HOLE

The peg hole for the joint is drilled while the blank is square, held in a jig, the drill bit is aligned to the centreline and the blank and jig are clamped to the drill press table horizontal and perpendicular to the drill. ▶



20



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BDWCA NEWS & EVENTS



The BDWCA team with our best stand award

As I write this (in mid-April) the current plan is still for our Annual Show and Competition – the Festival of Bird Art – to be held on the weekend of 11 and 12 September 2021 at its normal venue, the Agricultural Centre in Bakewell, Derbyshire. We are really hoping that we will be able to go ahead, and have a good display of carvings to show, and we will keep updating our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/bdwcapage, and our website, www.bdwca.org.uk, with the latest situation.

Sadly, this year's Rutland Birdfair in August – where we normally have a stand in the Art Marquee – which has a large international attendance, has been cancelled. Hopefully we will be back there in 2022 with a great display of carvings.

The Birdfair is our big chance to introduce our art form to a large audience and we get a lot of interest during the three days of the show, and even sometimes new members for our association.

Continuing the trip down memory lane, we have been taking recently brought-back memories of the 2014 Birdfair when we won the Best Stand in the Art Marquee award. We were thrilled to receive it. We try to display as wide a variety of our bird carvings, both large and small and carved by as many different carvers, as possible, from novice through to the top advanced carver. It is important to let the public see how carving skills develop with practice, which can encourage them to try for themselves. We also try to include some smaller, 'fun' birds,

which the younger members of our audience are always taken with.

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.

Diary items – we hope

Saturday and Sunday 11 and 12 September 2021

The National Bird Carving Championships, The Festival of Bird Art, in Bakewell, Derbyshire.

Featuring the BDWCA Annual Competitions for members and the British Bird Carving Championship 2019, which is open to all.

A wide variety of bird and wildfowl carvings at Youth, Novice, Intermediate and Advanced levels.

Demonstrations of wildfowl carving, painting, stick making, and decorative techniques will take place during the weekend.

Stockists of carving supplies, books, equipment, paints and wood for carving will also be present.

See www.bdwca.org.uk for more details.



Some of the larger birds



Some of the smaller birds

Sharpening clinic – Mora in purgatory

Nic Westermann sharpens
a Mora hook knife

I am definitely within my comfort zone this issue, spoon carving blades being one of my most popular lines. I feel I should make full disclosure here though: I have not had any suitable blades offered by readers this issue, so selected this Mora hook knife. It was sent to me by a friend for sharpening a few years ago, but at the time I decided to upgrade them to one of my blades rather than sharpen it. Mora makes some very good tools, but this hook knife was not one of them – newer versions are, however, much improved. Jenny, the original owner, was so intimidated by this blade that she had never seriously tried to sharpen it. It has now been discarded for several years, hence the rust.

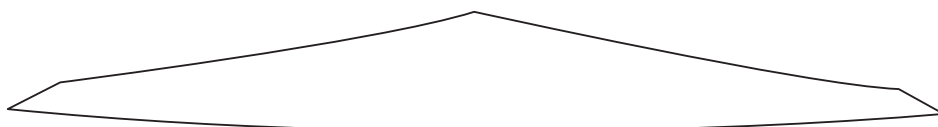
PHOTOGRAPHS BY NIC WESTERMANN



1

Unloved Mora outside bevel

Cross section of a double edged mora hook



Ideal cross section for a hook tool



Ideal bevel geometry vs the Mora

1 & 2 This Mora blade is actually double sided, but a common modification is to lose one of the edges, which makes the blade much safer to use. I decided to convert this to a right-hand blade.

But first the obligatory 'cuts' were made. As you can see, a lot of remedial work was needed, I couldn't do more than scratch the surface of my unforgiving end-grain test block. However, it is not just a question of sharpening the factory edge – improvements can be made to the overall bevel geometry.



2

Unloved Mora inside bevel and initial cut



Spine – in retrospect this is still a little thin, it's safe, but not that pleasant to push against

3 To start with I ground down the left edge. Rather than leave a crisp 90° spine I slightly rounded it. This makes it much more comfortable to use when pushing on the spine when taking a cut.

4 & 5 Next, I cleaned up the inside bevel. It would be better if this was flat, but we can only work with what we have, typically the worst of the rust was the edge that I needed to keep.

This work was completed with self-adhesive wet or dry paper on a rod, working down through the grits once a clean surface had been achieved. Theoretically I should have tried to flatten the inside bevel, but this is a large amount of steel to remove by hand, so I settled for flattish – I didn't consciously tip the rods up to hit the edge, but neither did I kid myself that I was removing the pronounced hump in the middle of the blade.

6 & 7 The next thing to do was try to convex the outside bevel. There are two separate reasons you may want to convex a bevel, first to increase the edge angle to make the tool more robust, second to allow the tool to turn in a cut, which is essential for a hollowing tool such as this. When convexing a bevel for this reason you should try to leave the factory edge untouched – trusting that this is about right, and I have seen enough of these blades to know that it is. You should aim to smooth the back of the bevel, only blending this into the edge very gently on the final, finest grit. While it is possible to do this by hand with sandpaper, I used the ProEdge. This is very similar work to my 'day job' and using an unsupported part of the belt allowed it to wrap around and blend the bevel, I started with a coarser grit, then it is, as ever, just a question of removing scratches with finer grits and progressively working towards the edge.

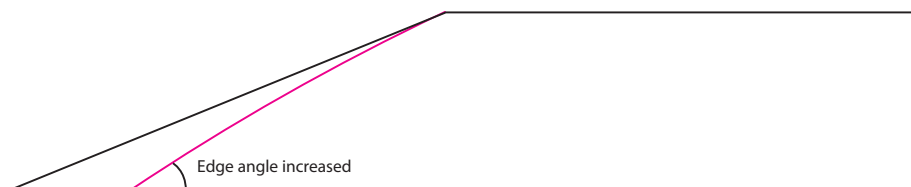


Cleaning up the inside bevel

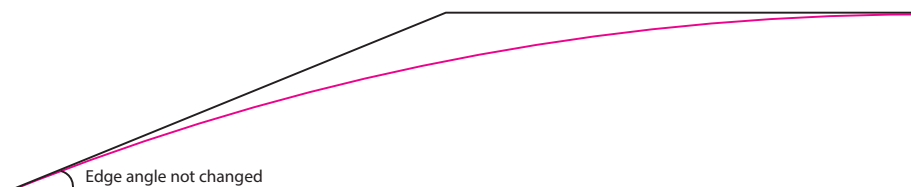


Bevel completed but not flattened

Convexing a bevel to increase edge holding



Convexing a bevel on a hollowing tool



The right and wrong way to convex a bevel on a hollowing tool



First grind, leaving the edge untouched



Final grind, blending all together



8

Polishing the outside on a bench grinder



9

Polishing the inside – using a marker pen to show me when I had reached the edge

8 & 9 A final polish was done by hand on the inside with polishing compound applied directly to a wooden rod to avoid any further rounding of this bevel. The outside was done on my bench grinder with a felt wheel loaded with compound.

10 Finally, I took some cuts in my test block, it was still pretty hard going and I couldn't take a really nice cut without some tear and chatter. It was, however, a vast improvement on the original, ineffectual scratching. I then tried on some softer, but still dry, wood and was able to take some more pleasing cuts.

There are many hook knives on the market now and this sequence of sharpening can be used on most of them. The majority have a flat bevel rather than the double (or quadruple if you count the two edges it originally had) bevel found on the Mora. This can still be improved by gentle convexing, but the amount that is needed is deceptively small – if you overdo it you will lose the support of the bevel, making the hook harder to engage smoothly. You need to do just enough convexing to stop the blade chattering in deeper hollows. If you overdo it, you can flatten out the bevel again, but this is not such an easy option and you are likely to end up reshaping the edge, often making it wavy, so small increments and frequent checking are the best way to go in this instance. ▶



10

The final cut

THE SHARPENING CLINIC IS OPEN

As the name suggests I would like to help carvers with sharpening problems - this will allow me to focus my articles on tools that are relevant to you, the readership.

What I am looking for is for readers to send a brief email with a description of the tool, the sharpening equipment they are using and 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



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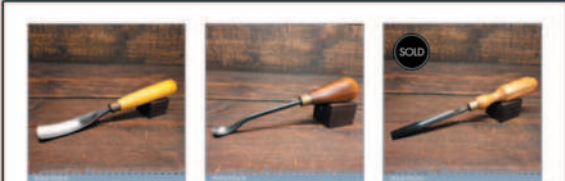
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Zoë Gertner relief carves her friend's 'Splitty' VW van

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Walrus

Cedric Boyns carves a stylised marine mammal from the Russian Far East



This project has been inspired by a visit that I made to Petropavlovsk, the main city on the Kamchatka Peninsula in the Russian Far East. I visited there as part of an expedition around the Pacific Ring of Fire a couple of years ago and was due to go back to the region in summer 2020 had the Covid crisis not intervened.

This is an amazing place. It was totally closed off to the rest of the world (including most Soviet citizens) for military reasons until 1989/1990, and can still only be accessed by air or sea. Like the Inuit peoples of the North West Pacific, the local indigenous peoples

of the Russian Far East, such as the Koryaks and the Chukchi, have always worshipped the raven spirit, which they call Kutkh in these parts (pronounced 'koot-cha'). It appears in many of their legends as a key figure in creation, a fertile ancestor, a mighty shaman and a trickster. Kutkh is believed to have many interactions and altercations with other animals of the region, such as walrus and bears. It is said that Kutkh created the Kamchatka Peninsula by dropping a feather. Although Kutkh is supposed to have given mankind things like light, fire, language, fresh water and skills such as net weaving,

he is also often portrayed as a laughing stock, hungry, thieving and selfish. In its perceived contradictions, his character is similar to that of other trickster gods.

Images of Kutkh and the other animals, along with Peliken – a cheerful, big-bellied man smiling ear to ear and giving fortune, joy and wealth – remain popular and iconic today in Kamchatka, and their stylised carvings adorned with coloured beads and animal fur are made by local craftsmen out of aspen wood and sold as souvenirs. I was particularly fascinated by the walrus and wanted to make my own souvenir.



I have produced a number of my own designs, including this walrus. (Carvings are 7-10cm high)

Things you will need

Materials:

- Suitable PPE
- Copy of side and front templates
- Wood block (pear) 50mm x 50mm x 100mm
- Short length (about 80mm) of 6mm/¼in ash dowel
- Small, thin offcut of a dark wood (black walnut)

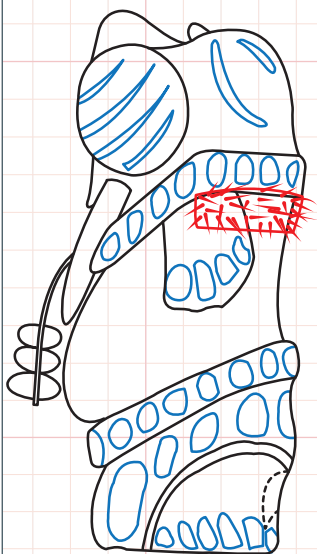
- Glues – hot melt, wood, contact and superglue
- Masking tape
- Offcuts of sheepskin
- Multi-coloured Czech seed beads, size 6/0 and 8/0
- Finish – sanding sealer and clear wax polish

Tools:

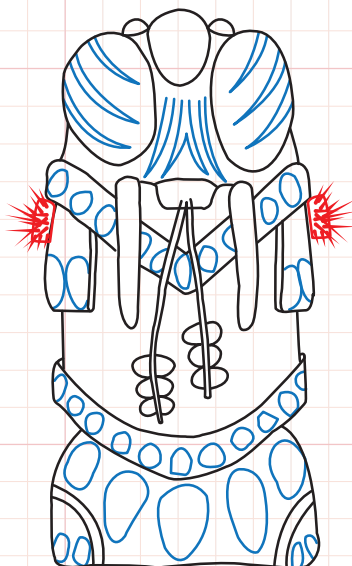
- Bandsaw

- Small gouges – No.3 and No.5, 3 and 6mm
- No.11 fluters – 0.5-5mm
- No.9 gouge, 12mm
- No.1 straight chisel, 6mm
- Detail carving knife
- Hand drill
- Twist drills 5mm, 3mm and 2mm
- Riffler – 'spoon and knife'
- Abrasives – 100-400 grit

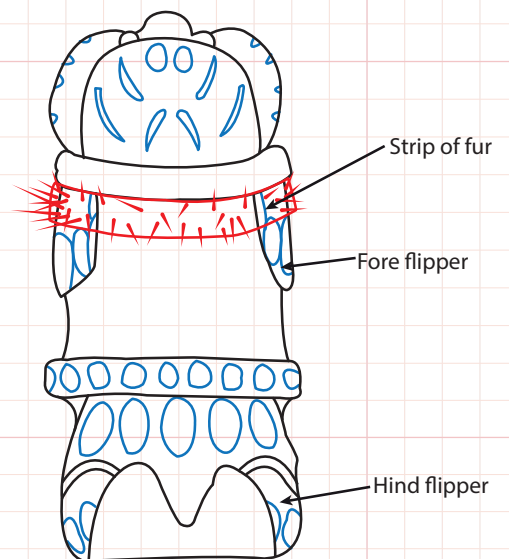
SIDE VIEW



FRONT VIEW



BACK VIEW



1 Make a copy of the front and side profile templates from the drawings and cut them out. Use these templates to draw the profiles on to the wood block. Cut out the side profile with the bandsaw and glue back the waste wood with blobs of hot-melt glue (or masking tape if you prefer).

2 Cut out the front profile with the bandsaw and remove all the waste wood.

3 Use the templates to draw the features of the walrus back on to the block as required.

4 Use a suitable small, shallow gouge to cut out and shape the main facial features of the nose and jowls, and round over the top of the head region.

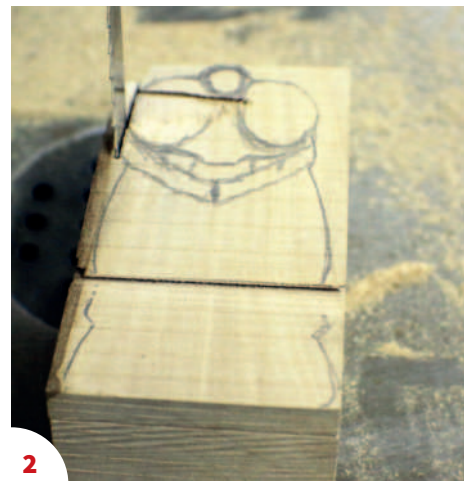
5 & 6 Pare down the square edges of the body of the carving to achieve a rounded shape.

7 Cut in the lower decorative band with stop cuts, using a 6mm straight chisel (or suitable shallow gouge if you prefer). Remove the wood from around the band to make it stand proud from the rest of the body as shown. At the front it should be positioned to sit below the belly of the walrus, which should protrude beyond it slightly.

8, 9 & 10 Repeat this procedure with the upper band, having first cut out the detail of the mouth region between the tusks as shown in photo 8. Check that the bands are about the same thickness and depth all the way round and make suitable adjustments where necessary.



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11 Mark and cut in the fore flippers on both sides. Isolate them with stop cuts (or by using a veiner if you prefer), and then pare away enough wood from around them to leave them proud of the surface as shown.

12 & 13 Use a No.11, 2mm fluter or similar veiner tool to cut in the lower flippers and shape in the tail at the back using a 4 or 5mm No.11 fluter (or suitable small, deep gouge).

14 The carving can now be rough sanded with 100 grit. The riffler can be used where needed.



12



13

15 & 16 The holes to take the tusks were marked and then drilled with a 5mm drill, and likewise the holes to take the eyes with a 3mm drill. The eye holes should be 12-15mm apart.

17 & 18 Small dowels were whittled from a slither of black walnut, cut to length, and then glued into the eye holes with wood glue so that they projected a short distance above the surface.



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19 Once dry they were pared down with a detail knife to leave them as small domes on the surface of the head.

20 At some stage two tusks 30mm long and tapered to a blunt point need to be whittled from the length of 6mm $\frac{1}{4}$ in ash dowel, sanded, and glued into the drilled holes.

Decorations

The detail of all the decoration is shown in the drawings.

21 & 22 The decorations around the bands and the hind flippers were cut in with a No.11, 5mm fluter, and those on the fore flippers and the base of the body with a No.9, 10mm gouge.

23 The facial features can now be marked on and cut out with a No.11, 2mm fluter or similar veiner/V-tool.

24 The carving can now be sanded through the grits to 400 grit and given a coat of sanding sealer. I also used a riffler to smooth the less accessible parts. I masked off the area where the fur collar was to be glued on beforehand to help ensure a better bond.

25 I imagine the fur used to adorn these carvings would normally be something like seal, sea otter or arctic fox, but I considered a reasonable substitute to be sheepskin as this was available to me.



21



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26 & 27 A small strip was cut to size from an offcut of the sheepskin and glued around the collar using contact adhesive.

28 The decorative coloured beads used were Czech seed beads, obtained from a hobby centre.

29 They were strung on to a short length of thin leather thong, cut from a bare section of the sheepskin offcut, after a simple knot was put in one end. Two thongs were produced, each with three beads.

30 A small (2mm) hole was drilled centrally under the chin of the walrus and the thongs glued in with superglue. They were left as different lengths and extended nearly down to the lower decorative band as shown in the final photo.

31 The final finish can now be applied. I used two coats of clear wax polish buffed up with a soft cloth. The final carving should look something like this. ▶



28



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30



31

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Variety Of Rasps



What legal requirements are there for using a chainsaw?

Geoffrey Laycock looks at the safety issues and legal aspects of chainsaw use

This is an interesting question as almost anyone can buy one. The choice is vast and, other than being asked if you are over 18, there are no checks on whether you may be competent to use your new purchase – although there is one exception for what are termed top-handled chainsaws, which are strictly for professional use. So, is that legal? Yes, if you are not at work. In a work situation, no person can use a chainsaw unless they have had recognised training or, for tree-related work, also have a recognised qualification and relevant insurance in place. Outside of work you are free to hack yourself to pieces.

Chainsaws are dangerous, simple as that. One slip and what is designed for fast cutting of tough wood makes easy progress through whatever body part it contacts. Surprisingly, there is an almost total absence of deals where you get the appropriate protective gear with the saw. So, having spent your cash on a cheap chainsaw and with no protection, information or training, you can get cutting, hacking, chopping bits off yourself.

Now, using a chainsaw safely can be done but risks change depending on the activity. Felling a 'hung' tree is a much higher risk than simply cutting small-diameter logs. Knowing the correct techniques, for instance, makes a big difference in the likelihood of having a kick-back where the chain bar, with sharp chain whizzing around it, decides to aim for your head – especially if you are not using the correct stance with the saw for right-handed users off to your right side. One of the photos shows using a metal trestle with an electric chainsaw and this is probably as safe as you can get without asking someone else to do the cutting for you. It does still depend on sensible methods of holding the timber.

Protective equipment is vital. Correct boots and trousers ensure that contact with the moving chain is hopefully a minor injury – the chain is stopped almost immediately by the fabric fibres. Gloves are similarly made with hard elements in the left one. The helmet carries visor and ear defenders. Jackets are available but at significant cost and rarely used outside of aerial tree work. I also wear protective safety spectacles as secondary defence against small wood chips, which do seem to find their way into your eyes.

So, back to the legal question and using at home. There is no requirement for training but we would always urge you to get some from an accredited person. Think about your various insurance policies and ask yourself



if you think your insurer would pay out for a personal injury claim if they could show you were not competent and had taken no steps to become so. What if you are a self-employed woodturner using a chainsaw to process timber? If you work in a way that puts no other person at risk then you are in the same legal position. But if you work with others who may be put at risk by your chainsaw work you should have at least evidence of training, preferably with a qualification. A key point for all is never use one alone.



This system has the chainsaw bar securely clamped and guarded until cutting through timber. If the left hand is kept within the trestle area it cannot contact the chain

Whoever you may be, many estates and organisations will only allow people to use chainsaws on their land if they have a recognised relevant and current qualification.

Further information

We strongly advise reading the Health & Safety Executive publication INDG 317 (rev2) Chainsaws at Work on www.hse.gov.uk, or take advice from the safety regulatory body for the country you live in. Specific information on safe use can also be found on www.stihl.co.uk ▶

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GEOFFREY LAYCOCK

Notre-Dame Basilica of Montreal

We take a closer look at Canada's Gothic Revival masterpiece



The Notre-Dame Basilica of Montreal is renowned for its dramatic interior, featuring rich colours and elaborate wooden carvings and statues. The church was the first in Canada to be built in the Gothic Revival style. It was built in the mid-19th century on the site of the original 17th-century church and was designed by the American architect James O'Donnell. He had been inspired by the Gothic Revival that was then popular in Europe and the US and designed the Basilica's two towers to resemble Paris' Notre-Dame and Saint-Sulpice. A local architect, Victor Bourgeau, developed the interior design,

which was also influenced by Saint-Sulpice. The extensive use of blue, richly painted columns and an abundance of gold leaf gives the interior its dramatic impact. The decorative woodwork motifs were made from black walnut; there are also pine statues by the French artist Henri Bouriché, a wooden recreation of Da Vinci's Last Supper, bas relief carvings of angels and saints and painted statues of the Apostles. The pulpit is one of the church's artistic highlights and is decorated with ornaments by the sculptor Louis-Philippe Hébert. For more information about the church, visit www.basiliquenotredame.ca/en/.



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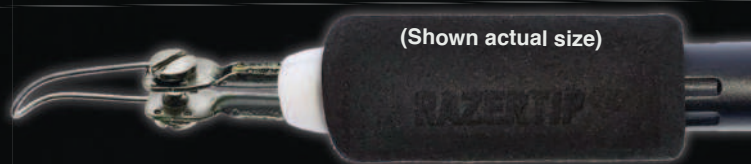
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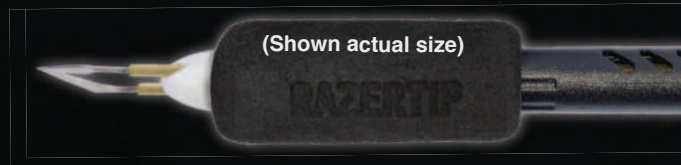
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