

WOOD CARVING

Victorian fairground panel

BY STEVE BISCO



TECHNICAL ADVICE Moxon vice kit test • Sharpening clinic – Just Scraping By
PROJECTS TO CARVE Otters • Frog • Russian folk-style raven • Mirror frame
• Gardener's tool tote • Shrink cup • Hummingbird • Classic vehicle in relief

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Welcome



PHOTOGRAPH BY KEVIN ALVITI

With more freedom and excitement at the prospect of carving clubs and groups being able to meet again soon, this issue of *Woodcarving* magazine is embracing the summer season with the outdoor-themed VW 'Splitty' van by Zoë Gertner, and Steve Bischo's colourful Victorian fairground panel.

Lucky Dave Western recreates the hummingbird and flowers from his garden viewpoint as Peter Benson carves a sweet little frog on a lily leaf. We've practical projects for outdoor living as Kevin Alviti makes and carves a floral gardener's tote (above), and you can enjoy your picnics and barbecues with shrink cups and chip carved spoons.

Continuing our appreciation of nature, Alan Denham depicts an

aquatic scene of otters rounding on their prey in his pierced panel and John Samworth carves shells on a frame as part of his beach-inspired mirror.

President of the Royal Miniatures Society, Ray Winder, introduces the delicate delights of his tiny treasures and invites us to share in the work of the RMS at <http://royal-miniature-society.org.uk>.

We announce that the lucky winner of a Spencer Franklin Woodworking Hydraclamp Miniclamp with faceplate, from WDS Components, is Peter Collie from Derbyshire.

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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Victorian fairground panel

Steve Bisco brings us all the fun of the fair with this bright and cheerful carving



We all need cheering up from time to time, and nothing puts a spring in my step quite like the sound of a vintage fairground organ. It's impossible not to be happy when you hear the drums and cymbals banging out the rhythm and the organ pipes blasting out all the notes and orchestration of a complete marching band. All of it is driven by a steam-powered flywheel turning mechanical cogs and pumping mechanical bellows. And the tune has been programmed on the 19th-century version of a computer – a long strip of punched cards with accurately placed holes through which the bellows blow to activate the right note on the right instrument at the right time. Sheer magic!

Fairground equipment, and fairground organs in particular, are decorated in a style that is every bit as cheerful as the music – bright, brash, and loud. A fairground is not

a place for shrinking violets, or subtlety, so carvers who have an aversion to paint and gold lacquer on carvings should brace themselves.

The heyday of the fairground as we know it was in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and although the style of decoration went right up to Art Deco, the style that dominated most places of mass entertainment was Rococo. Whether in the gilded royal palaces of Europe, or the fun palaces of the seaside, Rococo was the most frivolous of styles, with its swirling acanthus and naturalistic flowers, and in the fairground there was an extra splash of colour to brighten up the lives of the workers enjoying a carefree day of fun.

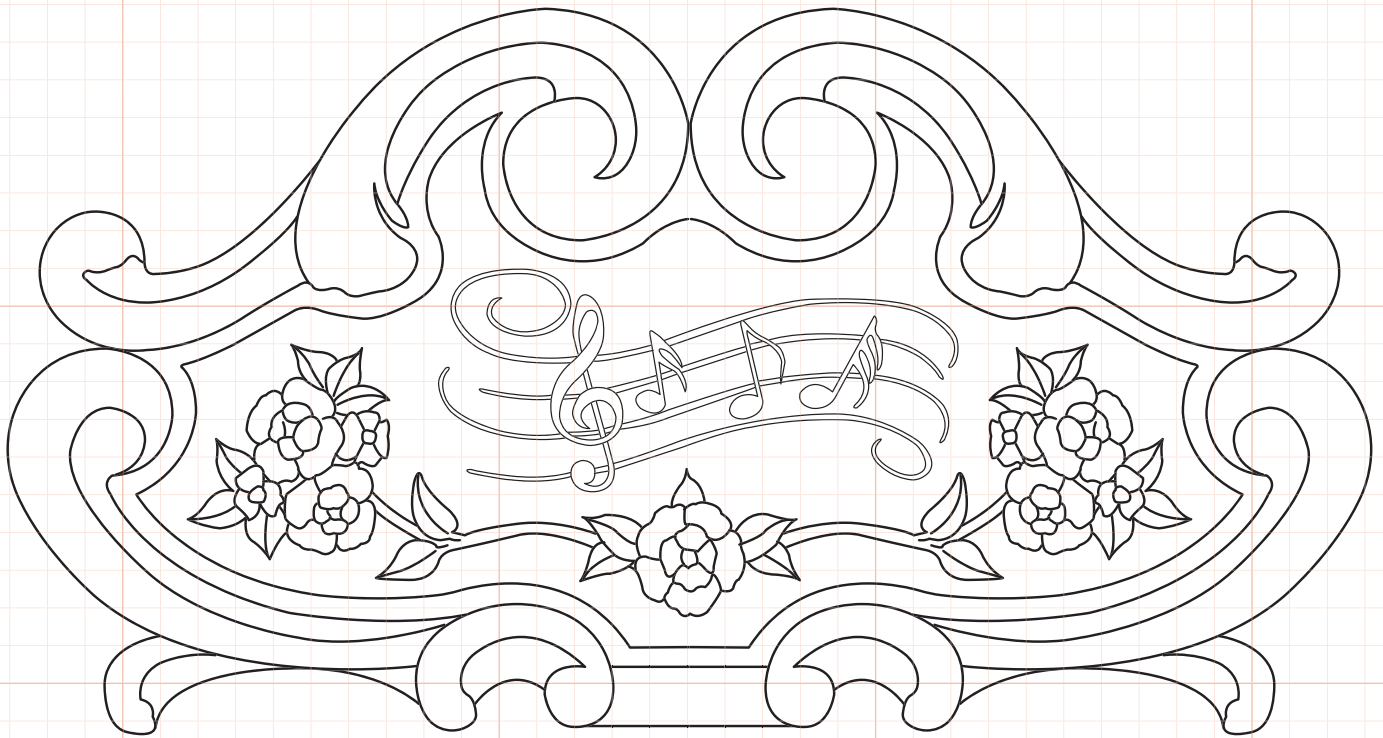
Woodcarvings were a key feature of fairground decoration and this project is inspired by a panel on a Victorian fairground organ dating from 1885. It is quite large, as it needs to be, so I have used cheap and cheerful pine, as would be normal for this work. I have

also used paint colours that were typical of the time, including plenty of gilded highlights in gold lacquer. What you do with the panel is up to you, but mine is going up in my workshop to bring a bit of fairground cheer to my carving days.

DID YOU KNOW?

Fairground art was greatly inspired by classical architectural styles and was intended to create a grand ambience in what were, by necessity, lightweight portable structures. Woodcarving played a central role in this, together with polychromatic paintwork and gilding. For portability and economy, softwoods carved in low relief were used to create three-dimensional features in fairly thin boards, aided by trompe l'oeil paint effects. Baroque and Rococo designs have been the dominant style from the 18th century to the present day.

SCALING UP THE DRAWING: You can get a drawing 760mm wide x 400mm high made up at a print shop by enlarging the drawing on this page, but a cheaper option would be to copy it by hand on to a large sheet of paper by 'scaling up' with a squared grid. Divide the large sheet up into a grid of squares of equal width and height, say 5cm squares, and mark where the ends, top and bottom of the panel will be. Now take the drawing from the magazine page and divide it into the same number of squares, starting and finishing at the same points. Number the vertical and horizontal lines of squares on the big sheet and the small drawing. Now just copy what you see in each small square into the corresponding big square. Tidy it up, and you will have your big version of the drawing. You can use this method to scale up or down any size of pattern.



Things you will need

Materials:

- Pine/Scandinavian redwood, overall size 760 x 400 x 50mm cut from a length 1520 x 200 x 50mm (5ft of 8x2in)
- uPVA wood adhesive (for lamination)
- Paints – white primer; cream; gold lacquer; acrylic blue, red, green, and several pastel shades
- French polish (or clear glaze if preferred)

Tools:

Gouges:

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

- V-tool – 6mm straight, 2mm straight

Chisels:

- Flat – 20mm, 6.5mm, 3mm
- Back-bent – 12mm
- Skew chisel – 10mm
- Hooked skew chisel – 16mm

Other:

- Jigsaw/bandsaw
- Flat cabinet scraper

PINE/SCANDINAVIAN REDWOOD: Pine is the wood that was most commonly used in Georgian and Victorian times for larger-scale carvings, mainly because it was cheap and stable for large pieces. *Pinus sylvestris* is commonly known in the UK as Scots pine, but timber suppliers use several different names related to its country of origin. The rate of summer growth of this softwood conifer tree varies considerably depending on the climate it is grown in, and this affects the width of the soft 'earlywood' and harder 'latewood' in the annual growth rings. Its source region can also affect the number of knots present and amount of resin found

in the wood. The better-quality pine grown in the cooler climates of Scandinavia is sold by timber merchants as Scandinavian redwood, although it is the same tree as Scots pine and is not related to the giant redwoods of North America. Scandinavian redwood's grain is straight and the wood is medium density and even-textured. Most examples will work easily with both hand and machine tools and its even texture gives a smooth, clean finish. It glues, stains, varnishes, and paints very well and can be screwed and nailed easily. It is easily obtainable at good timber merchants in the UK and elsewhere.

Preparing the panel

1 Make a full-size copy of the drawing 760mm wide (see box). Get a board of pine 1520 x 200 x 50mm (5ft of 8x2in) and cut the length in two to make up a panel 760 x 400mm (unless you are lucky enough to buy a plank 400mm wide). Planed board is preferable, but sawn board will probably be cheaper and is quite adequate.

2 To laminate the two halves of the board into a wider panel you need to join them along a clean, straight edge. Set out the two halves on battens or metal rails to make sure they can be clamped into a dead-flat surface with long clamps. Give both joining edges a thick coat of uPVA wood adhesive, put them together, and tighten the clamps so the joint is compressed and the glue squeezes out along the join. Leave it to set overnight.

3 Carefully trace the pattern from your full-scale drawing on to the panel using carbon paper (six sheets).

4 Cut round the outer edge of the pattern using a jigsaw with a blade long enough for the 50mm thickness. Make allowance for the blade flexing in the turns in this thickness. Alternatively, you could use a bandsaw if you have one big enough to manoeuvre a panel of this size.

Excavating the background

5 Screw a board to the back of the panel and screw or clamp that to your bench. Use a V-tool to mark all around the edges of the part of the panel that will form the background, right up to the acanthus swirl border and around the flower pattern.

6 Now excavate the background with No.9 gouges. Take great care not to let long splinters run off into the acanthus border or down into the background surface. It is best to work across the grain near the ends and wherever there is a risk of creating long splinters. Don't exceed the maximum depth of 32mm. To keep a check, make up a simple depth gauge from a piece of batten with a screw inserted through it that protrudes 32mm.

7 'Bost' down vertically around the flower pattern and acanthus edges, and use a broad No.2 gouge to pare away the 'floor' down towards its final level.

8 Rough out the levels of the flower pattern to give better access to the 'floor' all around the flowers. Bring the leaves and stems down to a suitable low-relief level, and rough out the flowers so they slope outwards towards the edges of the bunch.

TOP TIP 1

If you are a whizz with a router you can save some time and effort by using it to excavate the background area in Steps 5 to 8, but make sure your routing skills are up to the job or you can quickly wreck your panel.



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9 Work the background to its final level with the No.2 gouge and a flat chisel. Lay the batten across the borders and move it around so the screw scratches any areas not yet down to 32mm. Keep doing this until you have an even depth all over the background area. Use a flat cabinet scraper and flat chisels held vertically to scrape the surface to a dead-flat and smooth finish.

Carving the outer border

10 Carve the upper part of the acanthus border. Start by scooping out the concave sections on the inside of the curves, then round over the convex edges and the volutes. Make sure the concaves that will be painted have a sharp edge where they meet the gold sections. The acanthus swirls have a smooth finish.

11 Carve the lower half of the acanthus border. The outer ends use the full thickness of the board, but it becomes shallower towards the middle, with some C-scrolls and a more complex arrangement of leaves. In the bottom centre there is a dead-flat section just 10mm above the background.

12 Draw in the concave border around the central background, 13mm from the edge of the acanthus. Carve out the concave 5mm deep at the acanthus edge and bring the sides of the acanthus down to it. With a No.5 gouge give the side joining the 'floor' surface a definite concave edge that you can paint up to later.

13 On the outside of the panel, turn the board over and round over the outer edges of the acanthus into the underside to make it look less bulky from the front and sides.

Carving the flowers

14 Now carve the central rose with its leaves and stems. The petals on the outside of the rose curl downwards, while those in the inner circle cluster upwards around the hollow in the centre. Carve the leaves and stems in low relief, with plenty of flick and curl in the leaves. Carve leaf veins and shallow grooves between the veins, with indentations in the leaf edges.

15 Carve the flower bunches at the left and right ends. These each have two roses, two smaller flowers and some leaves. The roses are similar to the central rose, but they slope away from the middle of the bunch.

Carving the music

16 Make sure the panel surface is smooth and clean, then carefully fix the drawing of the music stave in its correct position and trace the pattern on to the wood.

TOP TIP 2

Pine timber tends to have knots, which are a nuisance when carving. Keep them to a minimum by selecting the best quality pine from a reliable supplier. When assembling your panel, try to avoid having knots in the carved area. Wear safety glasses when carving on knots as they are very hard and will send off flying chips when chiselled.

17 Cut the music pattern into the surface of the panel, like incised lettering but thinner and more curly. Start by cutting a V down the centre of each line with a 2mm V-tool, then deepen and widen the V in proportion to its width. A V-tool on its own will not give you a clean edge in the difficult grain of pine, so run along the side of each groove with a 16mm hooked skew chisel, working with the grain direction, to get a sharp edge.

Finishing and decorating

18 Use abrasives to bring the acanthus border and the board surface to a smooth finish. Use fine abrasives lightly on the flower detail to remove loose fibres. Here is the finished carving ready to receive its authentic fairground decoration.

19 Apply a suitable primer to the whole panel, front and back. When dry, smooth the primed surface with fine abrasives, then apply your choice of top coat to the whole panel. I have used cream emulsion paint as it gives a smooth silk finish. Avoid high gloss finishes as they show every irregularity.

20 Paint the blue and green highlights in the acanthus border with acrylic paints and smooth brushes, then paint the concave internal border in a crimson red. Make sure you get a neat finish to the edges, and touch up any wiggly edges with the background paint afterwards.

21 Paint inside the incised carving of the music stave in blue, using a very fine artist's brush. This is tricky, so expect to correct the edges with the background paint afterwards. Paint the leaves and stems in green, and mix a range of pastel shades for the flowers. You can mix acrylic paint with white water-based paint to create subtle colours.

22 Give the acanthus border a coat or two of a good quality gold lacquer. Take care to create neat edges up to the blue and green segments and the red internal border.

23 With the painting finished, it needs to be toned down a little for a period finish. A thin coat of French polish, applied over the whole panel with a smooth brush, will give it a soft glaze and an antique patina compatible with its Victorian provenance. If you prefer a new and bright finish, just use a clear glaze or varnish instead.

24 Here is the finished 'antique' panel, ready to bring all the fun of the fair to your home or workshop.

TOP TIP 3

When you paint a board, be sure to paint the back as well as the front otherwise it will warp. ▶



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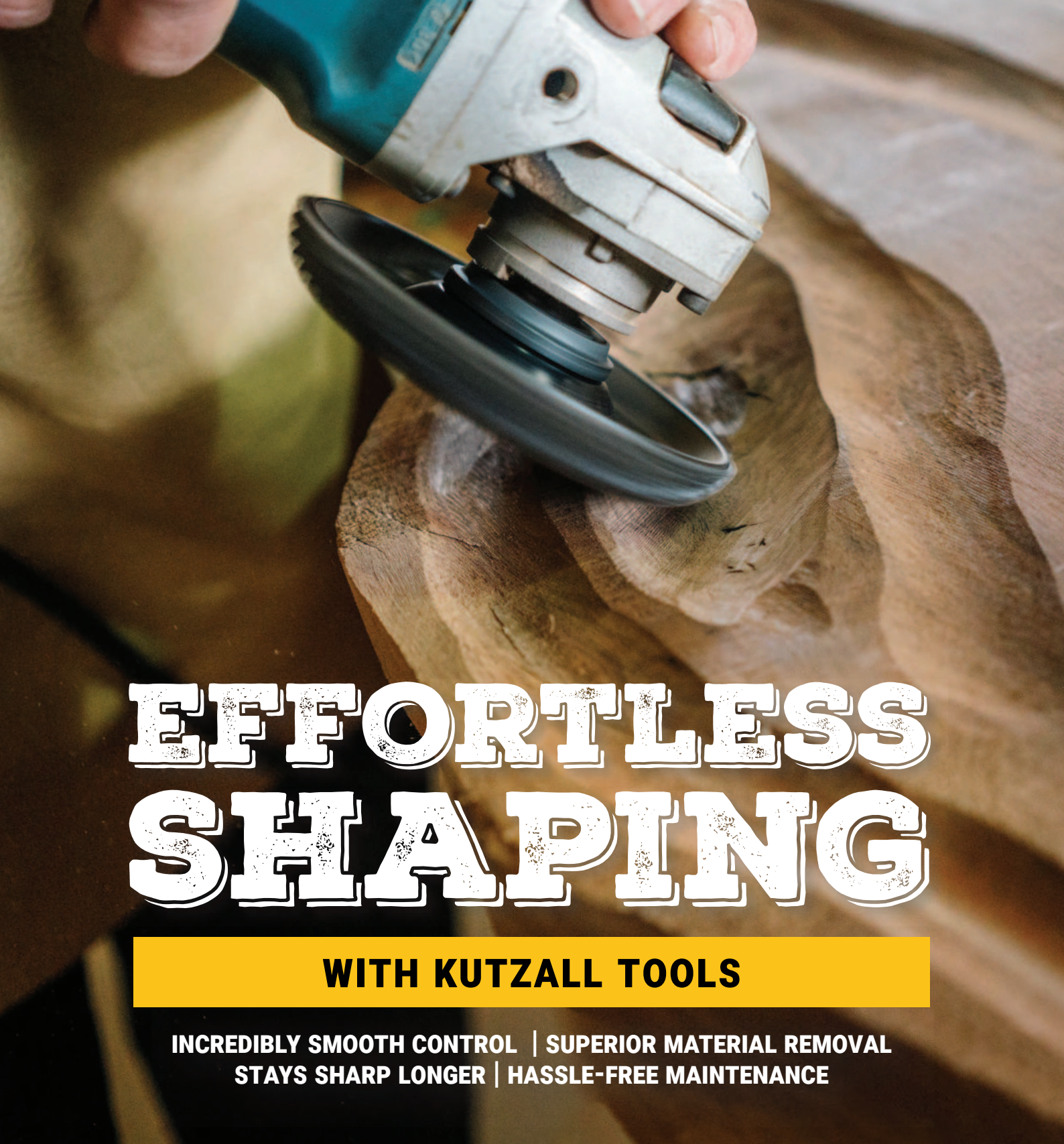
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The Hummingbird

Dave Western takes
inspiration from
his garden guests

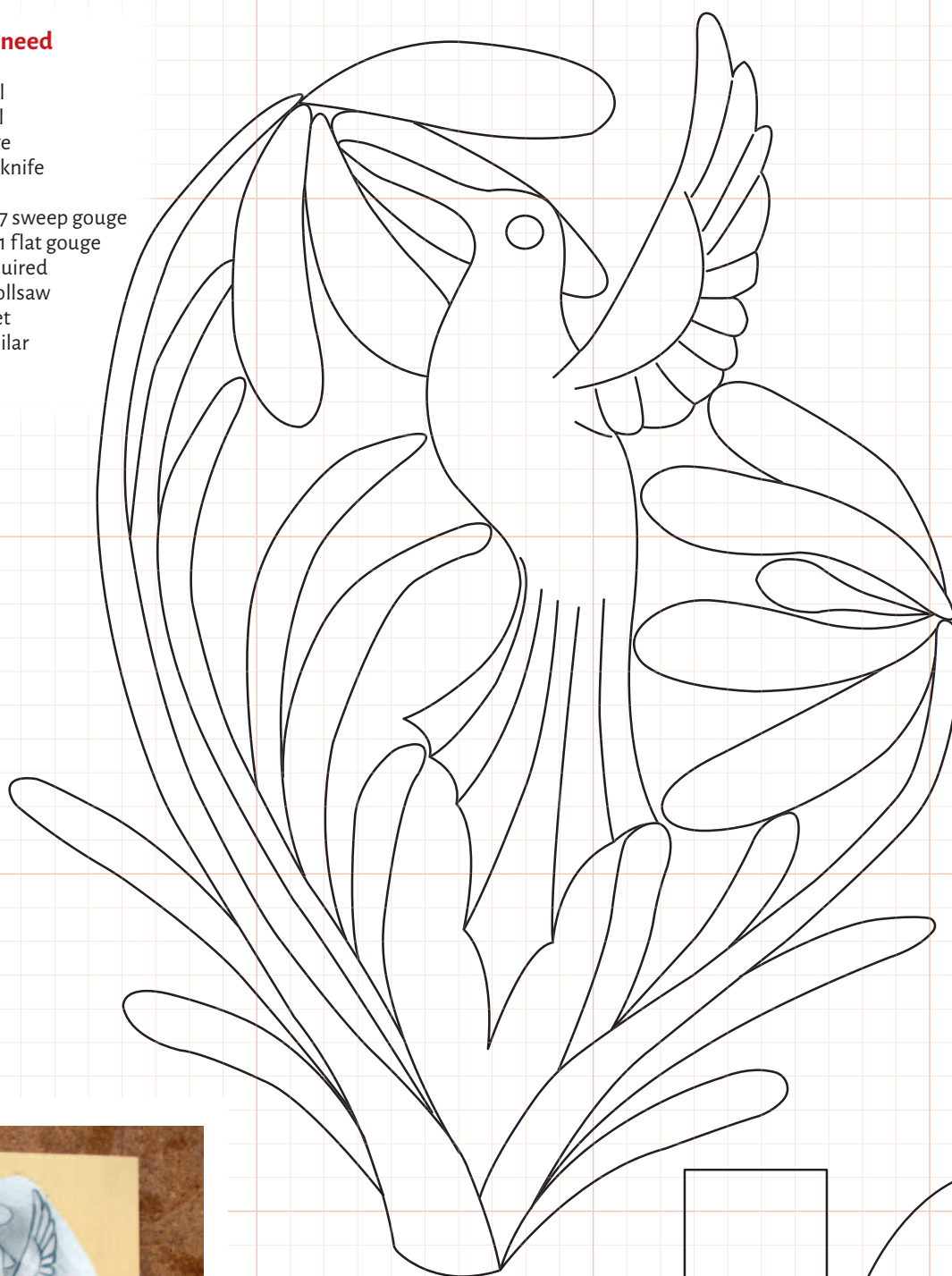
Along with warmer, sunnier weather, the hummingbirds have returned to my yard. Watching them whizz back and forth to the feeder and around the flowerbeds got me inspired to carve a hummingbird-themed panel in their honour. Because I also wanted to do the bulk of the carving sat in my favourite lawnchair in the shade of a backyard maple tree, I kept both the design and the tool requirements as basic as possible. This is an uncomplicated carving that can be carried out with literally a small handful of tools. Although, for clarity's sake, I took the detail photographs using my bench as a backdrop, most of the carving was done in my chair, with my feet up and the sound of buzzing hummingbirds and singing sparrows as a relaxing accompaniment.



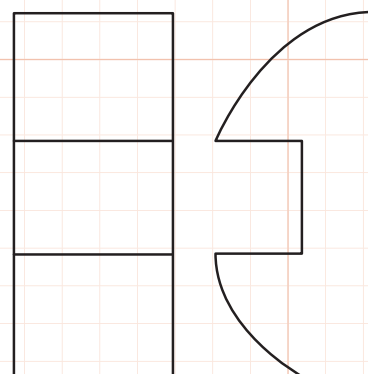
Things you will need

Tools:

- 3mm (1/8in) chisel
- 7mm (1/4in) chisel
- 6mm, No.9 gouge
- 3/4 or 1in straight knife
- Bent knife
- 14mm (1/2in), No.7 sweep gouge
- 14mm (1/2in), No.1 flat gouge
- Sandpaper if required
- Small saw or scrollsaw if making the feet
- Danish oil or similar
- Beeswax polish



Foot template



1 I began the project by gluing a photocopy of the included pattern on to a suitable piece of timber. In my case, I used a rectangular-shaped board (approximate dimensions 240mm x 115mm x 15mm (9.5in x 4.5in x 5/8in), because I had it in mind that I would make a little carving that could stand on a coffee table or shelf. I used a particularly straight-grained piece of yellow cedar that I knew would carve like butter. You can use any close-grained wood such as lime, birch, poplar, sycamore or alder. Really hard wood like cherry or maple will work too, but will give your wrists a workout. I would avoid highly grained wood like oak or elm as the figure will overwhelm the delicate design.

2 The next stage is to scribe all the exterior lines of the pattern using a $\frac{3}{4}$ or 1in straight knife. Make a light (1mm deep) pass to make sure your lines are straight and fair before committing to cutting to a greater depth of 5mm or so. Be aware of the changes in grain direction you will encounter, especially if you are using a less-forgiving wood than lime. I like to scribe the entire exterior of the pattern and will occasionally also line-in most of the interior sections before I start removing any material. Knowing the lines have all been scribed means I can worry less about accidental chip-outs when I start removing stock up toward my scribe lines.

3 I used a 14mm, No.7 sweep gouge to quickly and rather crudely remove stock around the outer edges of the carving. This helped to bring the bird and the foliage details 'forward' in the carving and let me get a good idea of how things were going to look. When cutting with the grain, you can get away with a slightly less than razor-sharp blade, but when you are cutting sections that are across grain, a dull blade will tear and pull the wood, so it is worth spending a few minutes at the sharpening station before you start cutting.

4 With the exterior roughed out and the main body of the design raised from the background, you can scribe the interior areas (if you haven't already done so) and begin preparing to remove the interior stock that will allow the bird and foliage to begin standing out. As with the exterior lines, there are a lot of areas where grain suddenly changes direction, so make your first cut a shallow, careful one. Cut the scribe lines down to about 5mm depth as with the exterior lines. The ultimate aim will be to clear the middle sections down to the same depth as the exterior sections.

5 A simple and efficient way to clear out the unwanted interior sections is to use a chip carving method, whereby a wedge-shaped slice is removed along the 'walls' of each section to be removed. This leaves a raised, pyramidal shape in the centre of each waste section, which can be left as is or can be further refined later. Initially, I had intended to leave each interior section with the pyramidal shape (as shown in the picture) but it was a bit too visually busy for my taste, so I opted to flatten each section instead.

6 Having marked and roughed out the interior segments, I used a 14mm, No.1 gouge to begin gently shaping the leaves of the foliage. I was careful to angle and slightly curve each leaf to make them more visually dynamic, but avoided taking too much material off with each pass. Again, be aware of both the grain direction and of neighbouring leaves that might be nicked by a careless pass with the gouge.

7 & 7A It's very easy to tear the wood with some of the tricky cross-grain leaves you will encounter, so keep the blade as sharp as possible and the cuts going in the correct direction. I also made use of the straight knife in certain sections where the No.1 gouge was a bit too big.



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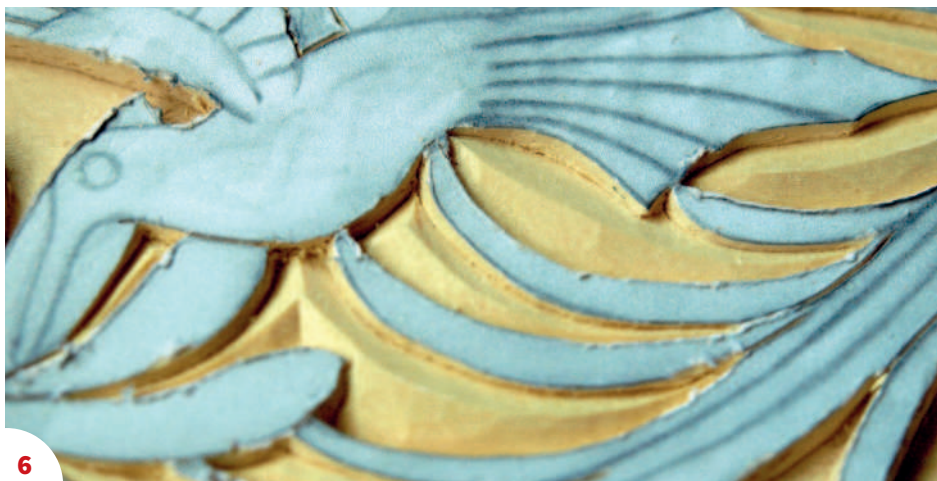
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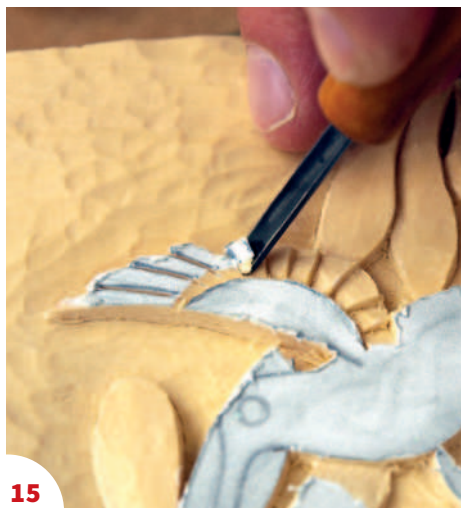
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8 I also used the same No.1 blade to refine the outer edge cuts that had been left behind by the No.7 gouge. I aimed to get the bumps and lumps cleaned up so that the surrounding 'ramp' was as fair and even as possible. I alternated between this shaping and the shaping of the foliage so that I wouldn't get tired and inattentive.

9 Although I had made a fairly tidy job of carving the spaces in between the interior segments of the design, I feel the overall look was too busy and detracted from the cleaner look I was hoping for. I decided to level the interior spaces by using a variety of chisels to plane the pyramidal shapes down to flat, level areas.

10 To break up the monotony of levelling the interior sections, I also began rounding over some of the flower stems using the tip of my straight knife. Using gentle chamfers, I formed a fair and flowing edge that I was able to gradually turn from a series of facets to a nice rounded surface. This is a job where following the grain becomes critical as it is remarkably easy to pull up the grain and cause a tear or chip. Cut slowly and not too deeply while being conscious of the tip of the knife blade. Don't let it cut into neighbouring areas or you will wind up with a series of scratches and chips that become difficult to remove.

11 This photo clearly shows the initial carving of several different areas of the design. The interior segments between details have been planed down to a level consistent with the depth of cut around the outer edge, the leaves have been rough shaved with the knife or No.7 gouge, the stem has had a rough rounding and the outer 'ramp' has had the gouge marks cleaned up and smoothed out.

12 At this point, I used the 14mm, No.1 gouge to start shaping the petals of the flower head. I worked gently to remove stock and endeavoured to slightly round each petal as I went. Getting a gently domed surface on each petal makes them appear more lifelike and lively than they would with a flat angled chamfer. Be cautious not to allow the lead edge of the chisel to dig into the neighbouring petals though as it is easy to mark, chip or cut them unnecessarily.

13 With the foliage largely completed, it's time to work on the body of the hummingbird. I began by scribing out the feather details along the wing and then using the tip of the straight knife or a chisel tip.

14 I cut a small ramp that will separate the individual feathers from the top section of the wing.

15 I then used a small 7mm chisel to begin shaping the individual feathers. Work from the body toward the furthest tip of the tail so that you are always cutting toward uncarved stock. The grain will change direction as you travel from feather to feather, so be aware of its orientation to your blade as you are cutting. Don't take too deep a cut when beginning each feather, just in case there are grain irregularities that cause you to cut too deep or to pull up a chip.

16 About midway through the carving, I decided the ramp I had cut around the exterior of the design just wasn't dramatic enough, so I used my bent knife to enlarge and texture the area. You could also use the No.7 gouge to achieve a similar effect, but the bent knife is absolutely perfect for this job. Work so that each 'dimple' you cut is as free of torn grain as possible and try to keep them as uniform as possible.



16

17 I find making an initial series of cuts then passing over the area a final time with shallow clean-up cuts results in a very attractive and refined finish. In this photo, you can see the rough-worked area in the foreground and the more smoothed and finished section in the background. Depending on the grain, you may have to work from both directions to get a nice, even texture.



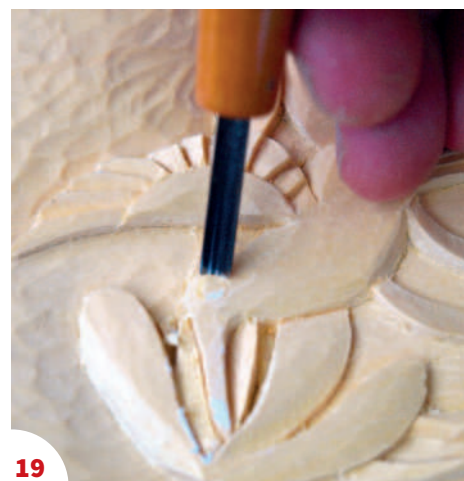
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18 With the foliage and the hummingbird's wing details all carved, begin rounding over the bird's body using the 14mm, No.1 and/or small chisels. As much as possible, aim to round the area enough that there are no flat spots left anywhere. You may need to re-shape some of the leaves to create the illusion they are dipping away behind the bird's body.



18

19 I used a small 6mm, No.9 gouge to form the bird's eye. To make a perfect circle, I gently spun the gouge, subtly increasing the downward pressure until I had scribed a circle about 1.5mm deep. I then used the tip of my straight knife to shape the eyeball before cleaning up the circular cut with the gouge. If you lack a small enough gouge for this task, the tip of the straight knife will work fine too.



19

20 Because I did very little sanding on this carving, I wasn't as worried about applying a penetrating oil finish as I usually am. I gave the entire carving a generous coating, let it sit for a half hour and then wiped off the excess. After the carving had dried for a day, I returned to it with the knife and chisels to clean up any fuzzy or bumpy areas. Once I was satisfied the carving was nice and tidy, I resumed oiling with two more coats and a finish buffing of beeswax polish.



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21 As mentioned earlier, I wanted the carving to be able to free-stand on a table or shelf, so to achieve that end, I fashioned a couple of very basic little 'feet' for the carving from some small blocks of walnut, which measured approximately 55mm long by 24mm wide and 24mm tall. I used a scrollsaw to shape them out, but you could also use a bandsaw or hand saws. If need be, you could even cut them out with a straight knife. Try to keep the slot fairly tight to fit your piece of timber, but not so much so that you have to force it on to the carving.



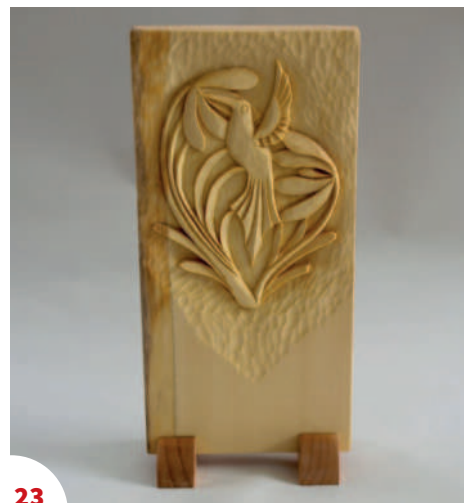
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22 Make sure the bottom of each foot is as flat as possible and keep the depth of the slot consistent (mine was about 13mm deep) so the carving doesn't lean. I made the feet nice and smooth, but a textured finish reminiscent of the area around the outer edge of the carving would also be very attractive.



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23 The finished piece shown on the feet. ▶



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The world in miniature

Ray Winder discusses his miniature carvings and
the Royal Society of Miniature Painters, Sculptors & Gravers



Figgy – This a straightforward portrait of a friend's horse, carved from boxwood and painted in acrylics. 5cm from nose to tip of ears



Dancing Butterflies – You will need to go back to 1966 and a song by Bob Lind to appreciate the inspiration for this piece.

Carved from boxwood and inset into walnut with watercolour details.

Backboard 15cm x 15cm

In December 2020 I was honoured to be elected the president of the Royal Society of Miniature Painters, Sculptors & Gravers. The Society is 125 years old this year and I am only the 11th president in all this time, but what I am particularly proud of is that I am the first predominately sculpture-based president. So how did this all come about?

Art and creating has always been my passion even from my primary school years where one school report said I was 'good with my hands'. They weren't impressed with me academically obviously. Despite being damned with this faint praise, my love of painting and drawing took me to Kingston Art College and a degree course in Graphic Design, yet by the final year I was back to painting and drawing, intent

on a career in commercial illustration. Within weeks of leaving college, I found an agent and suddenly became a professional commercial artist. With tight deadlines and producing art to order I had to learn fast. This was my life for some 20 years until I discovered woodcarving. I began exploring 3D illustration using carved wood with some success, but the times were changing and computers, with their ability to manipulate images, were now becoming widespread.

I was mainly concentrating on woodcarving by this time and those readers old enough may remember some of the many articles I did for *Woodcarving* magazine back in the early 1990s. I was also fortunate enough to start a great working relationship with the American Hardwood Export Council, producing carved pieces

and, later, wooden models for its trade shows and general promotion. All made from American hardwoods of course. This also led to creating bespoke hardwood trophies for the prestigious annual Wood Awards and the *Timber Trades Journal*.

Smaller carvings

It was in 2013 that I first visited the Royal Miniature Society annual exhibition in London. I had started to produce much smaller carvings by then but I was hugely impressed by the miniature paintings and sculptures on display. It also rekindled my love of painting, which had been largely forgotten for some years. To comply with entry rules a sculpture should not exceed 8in in any one direction, including the base, but most tend to be considerably smaller than





Of Flesh and Bone – Another unusual receptacle, this time carved from beech and then bleached. 15cm high



Primordial Splash – One of a series of unusual receptacle ideas I have been working on. Carved from boxwood and English walnut. 15cm high

this. One of the first pieces I was to enter the following year was a combination of carving and painting called *The Passage of Time*, a double portrait of my mother as a young woman and in old age. It is made from boxwood carved to resemble thin curling paper. This was awarded the Art Critics Award at the 2014 RMS exhibition and the President's Choice at the Hilliard Society of Miniaturists exhibition earlier in the same year. With my work being accepted and winning several awards in the annual RMS exhibitions for three years running I was first elected associate and two years later full member of the society. I was eventually invited to join the RMS Council before being elected president in December 2020.

Boxwood has always been the choice for small, intricate carving. With no discernible

grain but only available in relatively small sizes, it will hold the most astonishing detail, which is why it has been used by netsuke carvers for so long. Easier to work with and having much richer colours, I also love walnut and laburnum. I sometimes think it is rather more accurate to describe what I do as shaping wood rather than carving it as I no longer use conventional woodcarving chisels. I use a bandsaw when needed to reduce the wood to a rough size before using a range of burs, from coarse tungsten and diamond coated ones down to tiny dental ones to grind and shape the wood. I will often make an actual-size maquette from clay before starting a carving as an aid to getting the form correct before roughing out the shape. A specialist jeweller's dust extractor to suck

the dust away while I work is an expensive, but necessary, luxury. Carved details are refined, particularly on boxwood, with tiny scrapers and blades, which you simply have to make yourself as they are not commercially available. A perfect, crisp, scratch-free finish is possible but it does take a lot of time and patience. The new Tormek extra-fine diamond wheel is an excellent piece of equipment that I find perfect for making and sharpening the micro scrapers and blades.

Clear ideas

I occasionally allow the wood to dictate form, or at least parts of it, but generally when working on such a small scale it is essential to have a clear idea of exactly what you want and how to achieve it. Unlike



ABOVE: *Passage of Time* – Carved from boxwood mounted on walnut with watercolour paints. 13.5cm x 11cm.

BELOW: *Still Life in the Ocean?* – A comment on the pollution that sadly affects the wildlife in the sea. Carved from boxwood and mounted on walnut. It won the sculpture award in the 2019 RMS exhibition. Backboard 16cm high x 13cm wide.

BELOW RIGHT: *Slaying the Dragon* – A recent and topical carving paying tribute to all those dedicated people whose work is making such a difference in this terrible pandemic. Boxwood and walnut, around 14cm high excluding the base



clay modelling, if you take too much off you can't put it back or easily change it, so it can be a slow process always having to be mindful of what areas you have to leave until you are ready to carve.

My work is nowadays more ideas based than simple representations of things, although I recently carved and painted a tiny horse head in boxwood as a portrait as I was intrigued to see how realistic I could make it appear. This single head has now proved to be the inspiration for a bowl supported by three painted horse heads. Once you achieve a certain technical competence, I think it is necessary to push yourself and explore new ideas. I have always kept what is best described as a scribble book where I jot down anything that comes into my head. Many of the

drawings can be easily dismissed but often there is a germ of an idea that can be returned to and developed and worked up later. My inspiration for carvings can come from anywhere, the more unusual the better. For now, I probably have more ideas than I have time to carve them.

Although my work is generally representational and relies on traditional craftsmanship, I do admire some of the digital art created on computers, where apparently random images can be seamlessly woven and blended into each other. Art today is now so diverse and at times difficult to comprehend, I think you have to find something you are comfortable with and enjoy doing. In miniature art I have found just that. Although one foot appears to be firmly in the past with old-fashioned

technical ability needed, be it painting or sculpting, there is a growing interest in this most traditional of art forms. As for subject matter, there are no restrictions, it is only limited by your imagination – and perhaps how small you can carve or paint.

After cancelling last year, The Royal Miniature Society's 125th Anniversary Exhibition will now go ahead at the Mall Gallery in London from 25th November to 5th December. Entries from non members are welcome through our easy online submission process and I would encourage *Woodcarving* magazine readers to submit photos of their work for consideration. Details on our website: www.royal-miniature-society.org.uk. **D**

raywinder.co.uk instagram.com/winderart



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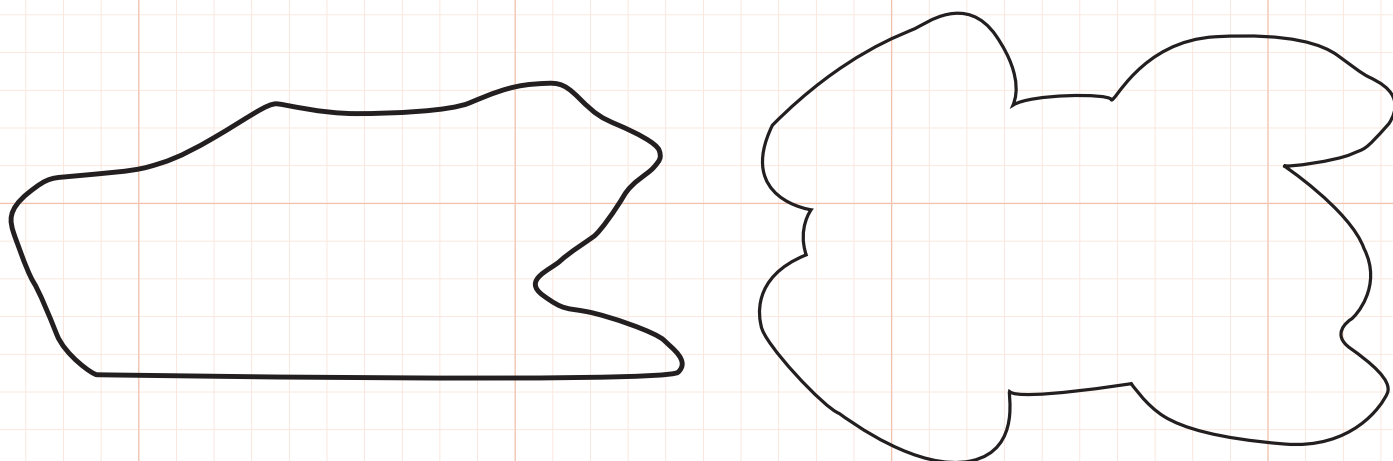
Frog

Peter Benson teaches you to carve his delightful frog design



Once you have mastered relief carving projects, it is only a small step to carving in the round. In many ways this is actually an easier undertaking than relief carving, as you are carving what is there rather than creating an impression of what is there.

The main obstacle to overcome is that, in general, we don't really see clearly what we are looking at, only taking 'snapshots' of what information we think we need, so it is important that you follow the steps carefully.





Making a model

1 Whenever you start on a new carving it is vitally important that you get the form of the subject right. Here you have a plasticine maquette of a frog. It's much easier to experiment with your design in clay or plasticine as you can add or remove material as you wish. As many carvers claim that they cannot draw, this is a useful alternative. It doesn't need to be very detailed, just enough to make a pattern to start your carving. I use my maquettes as working pieces and will go back several times during the carving process to try out ideas or sort out problems that might occur. The design and the maquette develop, therefore, along with the carving.

2 Transfer the top view on to a piece of suitable timber, 125mm square and 50mm thick – lime or jelutong are probably the easiest. Make sure you have the grain running along the length of the frog, or you will have problems with the feet.

3 There is no point in drawing the side view on, as you will cut it away very quickly. I am leaving a base on this, as you will find it much easier to carve the feet. If you wish, at the end, you can always cut off the base – it is up to you.

Start carving

4 Using the same techniques as for your last project, cut round your outline down to around 12mm from the bottom of the block.

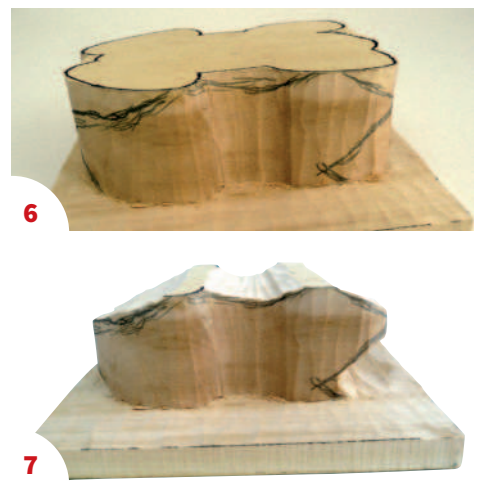
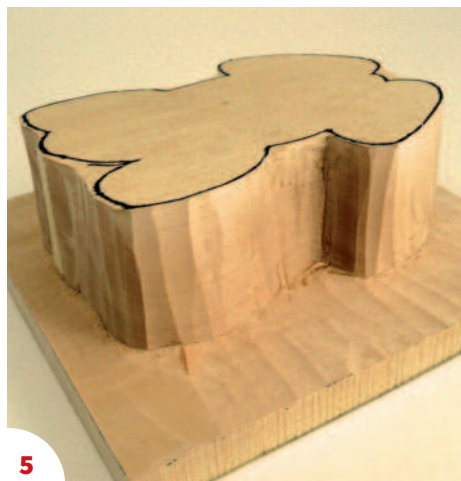
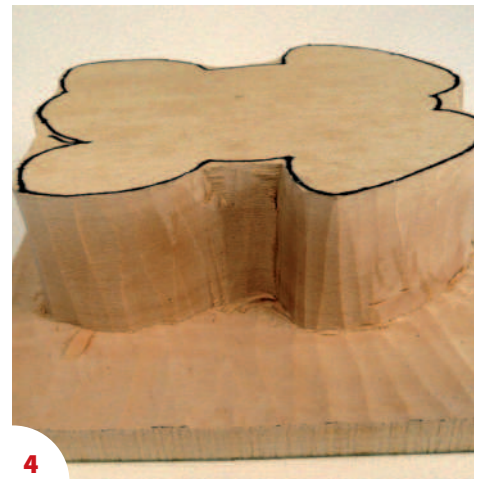
5 This will give you a small safety margin for any damage that might occur during the carving process. Try to make sure your sides are square and vertical or your frog will not end up the right size.

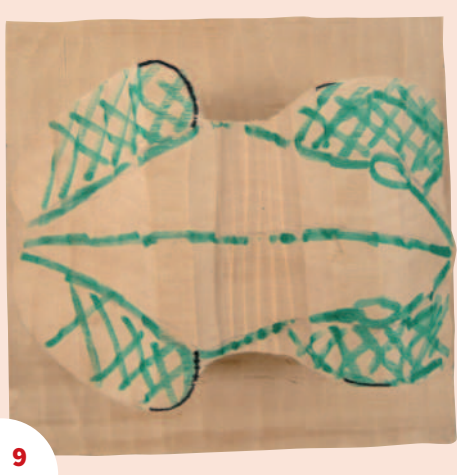
6 Once you are happy with this, you can draw on the side view. You might like to do this on both sides, but make sure they line up with each other. There is quite a bit of room for adjustment in the patterns so you don't have to worry too much.

7 Repeat the roughing out process on the top of the block until you have a fairly accurate outline of the side of your frog.

Shaping

8 The next step involves a bit of study. You need to look at the maquette and decide where you need to remove wood to get closer to the actual shape of the frog.

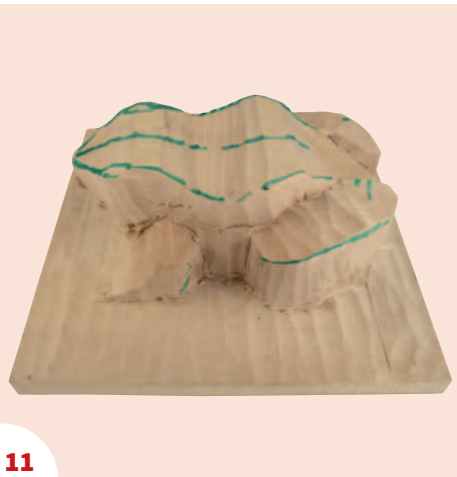




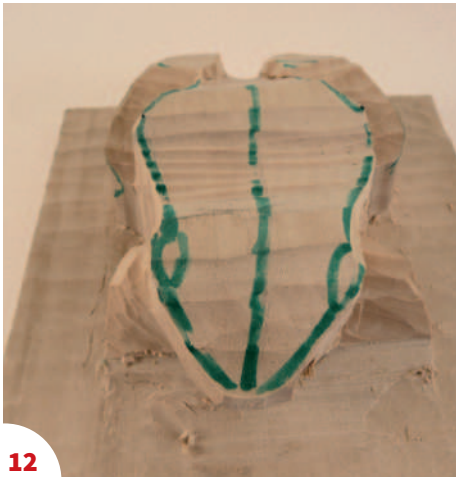
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9 Mark the obvious areas that need to be removed. You are aiming to make your carving as close to the required frog shape without including any detail. So often putting in detail at this stage will prevent you from getting the shape, or form, correct.

10 You might also find that good frog photos will help here. I always like to use photos for reference rather than drawings as artists so often leave out detail they think is unimportant or difficult.

Finishing the foundation

11 Using whichever tools you find suitable, remove the waste wood to the lines drawn.

12 Do not make any undercuts at this stage as that will reduce the amount you can adapt your design.

TOP TIP: Don't try to do all your reference work before you start carving – how do you know what information you need? I think it is better to have a sound idea of what you need to know to attain the general shape and to study the detail as it becomes necessary. You do, however, need to build in 'escape routes' so you can modify your design. When you collect together any reference material try to use clear photographs rather than drawings, or better still, take your own pictures if you can. You will at least get the right pictures for your requirements



13 Using the reference you have, draw in the outlines of the body shape as shown in black. At this stage we are really trying to get rid of the squareness that we got from roughing out and 'softening' the whole shape.

14 So often carvers omit this stage and you can always see the straight sides, even in the finished carving. In the main, animals do not have corners and it is important to achieve the natural feel of the subject as early as possible in the carving process.

15 These show the general shaping.

16 I have started with the back legs as these are probably the most important feature of a frog.

17 Define the knee...

18 ...before undercutting between the leg and foot.

19 Make sure you are clear which is the thigh, the calf, the heel and the foot. All too often carvers get very confused over animal anatomy.

20 Repeat this process with the front legs – again checking the anatomy – and do not be tempted to carve the feet on any of the legs at this stage. Just leave a rough shape for later, as it's relatively much finer detail work.

21 Now you can turn to the body. Again, this is largely just rounding off to get the shape you require. You can make your frog as fat or thin as you wish, but remember that, in general, chubby is cute and lean is mean.

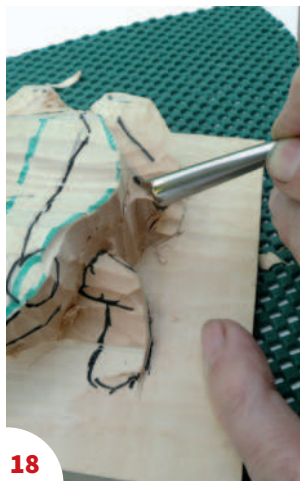
TOP TIP: You might like to consider buying yourself a good, fine saw. Something like a coping saw would do, but if you really want to splash out you could treat yourself to a power scrollsaw or small bandsaw. These are available from most good DIY stores at a pretty reasonable price, and they can save you an awful lot of time and effort in your future carvings.

22 I recommend that you make your frog, initially, on the fat side. You can always streamline him later if you wish.

23 You will probably need to draw on your carving (as shown) to help get the shape you want. Try to keep a centreline, a general outline and general location of legs and eyes whenever possible. These will be a constant reminder that you are carving a frog and maybe prevent you from redesigning nature – something that can so easily happen. Even in the final stages this can be a great help.



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20A



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21A



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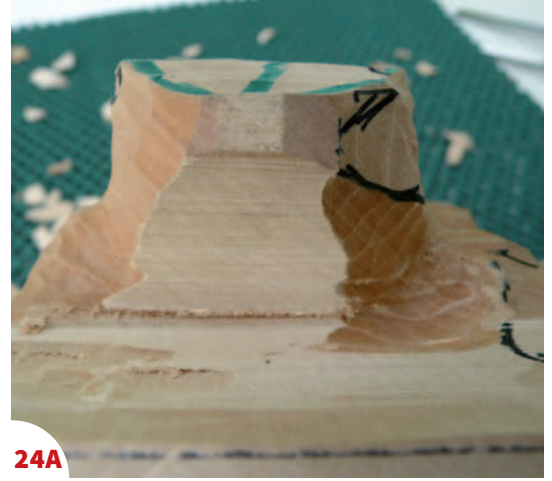
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23A



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24A



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HEALTH & SAFETY NOTE: If you are tempted to use any power tools for the sanding process it is most important that you wear a dust mask or respirator. The dust from any wood is harmful and that from many varieties is actually carcinogenic. Don't take chances.

24 During this stage you should check regularly with your reference material, even going back to modify your maquette if you are not sure of your accuracy. Before moving on you need to view your carving from different angles to ensure it is symmetrical. Arms, legs, eyes etc. come in matched pairs and so often this is not so in carvings, so check and check again.

25 Now continue with shaping the back – note that frogs have two ridges, one either side, down the back – and taper down to the tail.

26 Once this has been done we can go back to the hind legs and define the thigh as shown.

27 With a little rounding of the nose we should have a pretty good frog shape, ready for the final detail work.

28 I have turned the head slightly to add a bit of life to the pose. Don't overdo this as the overall shape will not match what you have done so far.



26A



26B



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29 Draw in the general outline of the eyes, checking that they are symmetrical before starting to cut them.

30 Viewing them from the front will help here.

31 Carve the eyes and shape the nose and mouth. This can vary a lot from frog to frog, so you don't have to be too fussy as long as the shape is symmetrical.

32 Now look at the front legs. You will need to undercut these to get the shape, but don't carve the feet yet. Draw them in once you are satisfied with the legs.

33 Finally detail the back legs. Note that the thigh is much thinner than the lower leg on a frog, and the foot is very long. Again, don't carve the foot yet.

TOP TIP: At around this stage of a carving I usually go over the whole piece making sure that any pencil marks and dirt are cleaned off. I then give the piece a coating of Danish oil, making sure I wipe off any surplus. This will help prevent it from getting dirty during the final stages. If there are any marks later on I can always give the carving a wash with soapy water – the oil will stop the wood from soaking up the water. The oil can also make any finishing cuts cleaner and neater and doesn't affect any chosen finish at the end. Now, using your small V-tool and veiner, outline the feet, taking care to match each pair carefully, and shape the lily pad around them.

34 Once you are happy with the general shape you can start to undercut the chest and belly, making sure that you achieve a nice rounded shape.

35 You now need to make a decision about the finished piece. You can simply leave it on the block, you could cut it off completely and mount it on another piece of wood, or you can fashion the base into something that complements the carving. I have chosen to shape the base into a small lily leaf. This will make the feet less likely to break and makes the carving and base one unit, which I prefer. At around this time I discovered that I had made the nose much too long and had to shorten it and re-carve the mouth.



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SAND IT:

- You will soon need to decide what sort of end result you require. You can make sure your tools are really sharp and then go all over the carving until the surface is smooth enough to polish, leaving a fine-tooled finish. Alternatively, you can sand it.
- Be aware, though, that once you start sanding you need to go through the grades of abrasive until you achieve a finish that has no scratches evident. This can take up to twice as long as the carving process.
- I have chosen to sand my carving and intend to do the bulk of this before I detail the feet. There is a very good range of abrasives on the market now called Abranet made by Mirka and it is very effective and much easier to use than others that I have tried. Obviously, any suitable abrasive will do – I suggest you start with something like 150 grit and go through the grades to the finest you can find. Abranet goes to 600 grit. Note here that if you want a really super-fine surface you can get an abrasive called Micromesh as fine as 12,000 grit. You can see your face in the finish you get, without any polish.

36 & 37 The lily pad is now carved allowing wood for the four feet to be defined later. You might like to draw the feet on at this stage.

38 The frog has been sanded down with 400 grit abrasive and another coat of Danish oil added to keep it clean and show up any defects. Now the details of the feet can be added before the final carving and sanding.

39 The feet can be finished along with the final sanding. As the feet are attached to the lily pad these two stages need to be done together. When this is completed your frog is ready for a final oiling and polishing. I recommend two or three coats of oil rubbed well in and any surplus wiped off with a lint-free cloth. If you anticipate that your frog will get a lot of handling I would advise against treating it with wax polish, as it probably will get very dirty. If it is staying at home a final polishing with a white wax should improve its appearance considerably.

40 Frog finished, sanded and polished. Obviously, there are still several things that could be done to improve the end product – you could inlay eyes, add bumps to the body etc. or even paint it. These are skills that will be covered in future issues, as we can't possibly cover everything here. If you really want some information on these techniques, contact me through the magazine and I will try to help. ▶



40

Kutkh

Cedric Boyns carves a stylised raven spirit from the Russian Far East



This project has been inspired by a visit that I made to Petropavlovsk, the main city on the Kamchatka peninsular 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 area of the world 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 peninsular of Kamchatka 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.

Things you will need

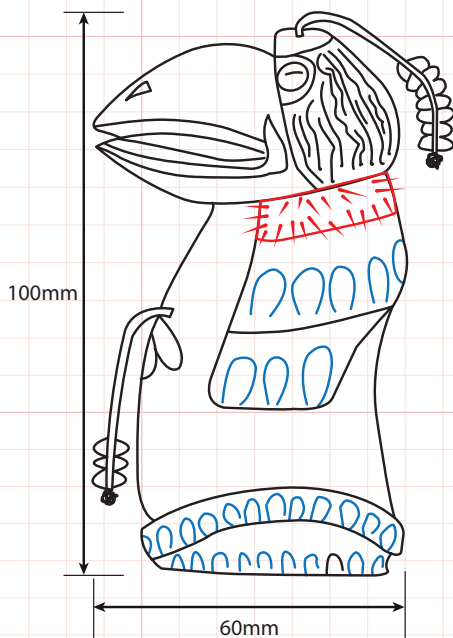
Materials:

- Suitable PPE
- Copy of side and front templates
- Wood block (pear) 60 x 55 x 100mm
- Glues: hot-melt, contact and superglues
- Masking tape
- Offcuts of sheepskin
- Multi-coloured Czech seed beads, size 6/0
- Finish – sanding sealer and clear wax polish

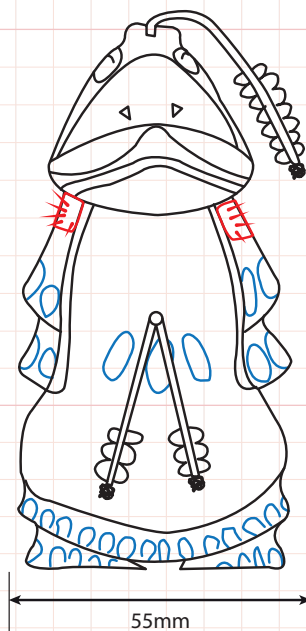
Tools:

- Bandsaw
- Small gouges – No.3 and No.5, 3 and 6mm
- No.11 fluters, 0.5- 5mm
- No.9, 10mm, gouge
- No.1, 6mm, straight chisel
- Small V-tool
- Detail carving knife
- Hand drill
- Twist drill – 2mm
- Riffler – ‘spoon and knife’
- Abrasives – 100 grit down to 400 grit

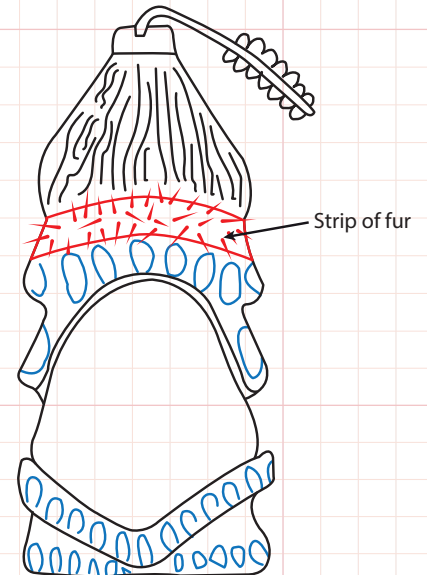
SIDE VIEW



FRONT VIEW



BACK VIEW



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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 Starting with the head, use a suitable small shallow gouge (No.3, 6mm) to shape the main facial features of the beak as well as the top and back of the head region.

4 Use a No.3, 10mm gouge to make appropriate stop cuts to isolate the sides of the beak from the back of the face.

5 Pare away and round down the top and sides of the beak to leave it as shown.



6, 7 & 8 Pare down the square edges of the body of the carving to achieve a rounded shape. The back is hollowed leaving the wings joined across the upper back as shown.

9 & 10 Mark and cut in the wings 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.





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11 & 12 Mark the position of, and then cut in, the bottom decorative band with stop cuts using a 6mm straight chisel (or suitable shallow gouge if you prefer). Then 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 raven, which should protrude beyond it slightly.

13 The wood remaining below the band can now be shaped to form the feet. Sufficient wood is removed from the region in the middle at both front and back to separate the two feet.

Adding the detailed features and decorations

14 Using a V-tool, carve in the gape of the beak.

15 Separate the tongue from the lower mandible using a No.11, 2mm fluter.

16 Finish off the base of the beak with a vertical cut with a No.2, 2mm fluter as shown.

17 Cut in the eye sockets and round over the eyeballs using a No.5, 3mm gouge. A horizontal groove across the upper part of the eyeball conveys the desired sinister expression on the raven's face. This was done with a No.2, 0.5mm fluter. Cut in the nostrils as shown using a V-tool or suitable small veiner/fluter.

18 Add some 'feather' texturing to the back of the head with a No.11, 2mm fluter.



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19 & 20 The decorations in the centre of the breast and around the band and the feet were cut in with a No.11, 5mm fluter, and those on the wings with a No.9, 10mm gouge.

21 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.



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22 A small strip was cut to size from an offcut of the sheepskin and glued around the collar using contact adhesive. The decorative coloured beads used were Czech seed beads obtained from a hobby centre. They were strung on to a short length of thin leather thong cut from a bare section of the sheepskin offcut, after which a simple knot was put in one end. Two thongs were produced for the breast, each with three beads, and a single thong for the head, which had seven beads.



23

23 A small (2mm) hole was drilled centrally in the top of the head as well as just above the breast decoration.

24 The thongs were then glued in with a small drop of superglue. Their positioning can be seen in the final photo.



24

25 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. ▶



25

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A classic vehicle

Zoë Gertner relief carves 'Simon's Splitty'



Although I have previously carved my own beloved Morris Minor in the same way, iconic of the 1950s and '60s, the VW Transporter is now more popular than ever, with no other vehicle eliciting so much affection and care from its owners. An eclectic mix of all ages and backgrounds, VW enthusiasts just love their vans. Could it be that the VW evokes a feeling of freedom, adventure, sun and surfing; a harking back to the time when driving was simple and fun, with places to go and people to meet, perhaps?

Immediately recognisable and bursting

with retro appeal, the best known VW bus is the split-screen, affectionately called 'the Splitty', with its unusual divided front windscreen and its V-shaped front panel in all colours of the rainbow. Add to this the distinctive putt-putt sound of its air-cooled engine and it's easy to see how the 'Splitty' (1950-1967) ranks so highly in the pecking order at any VW van enthusiast's gatherings and rallies.

The 'Splitty' being much favoured by surfers, I'm off to nearby Bude in Cornwall with my sketchbook and pencil

to meet my surfing friend Simon and draw his cherished van for this carving.

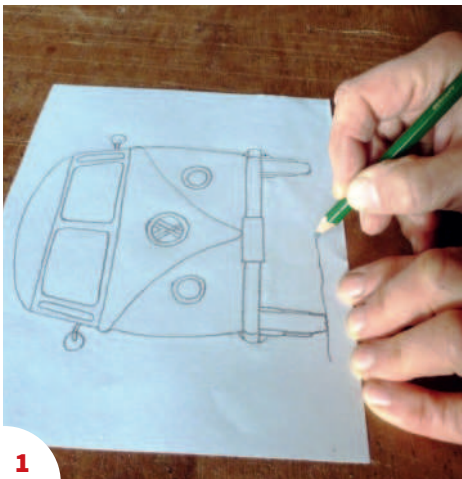
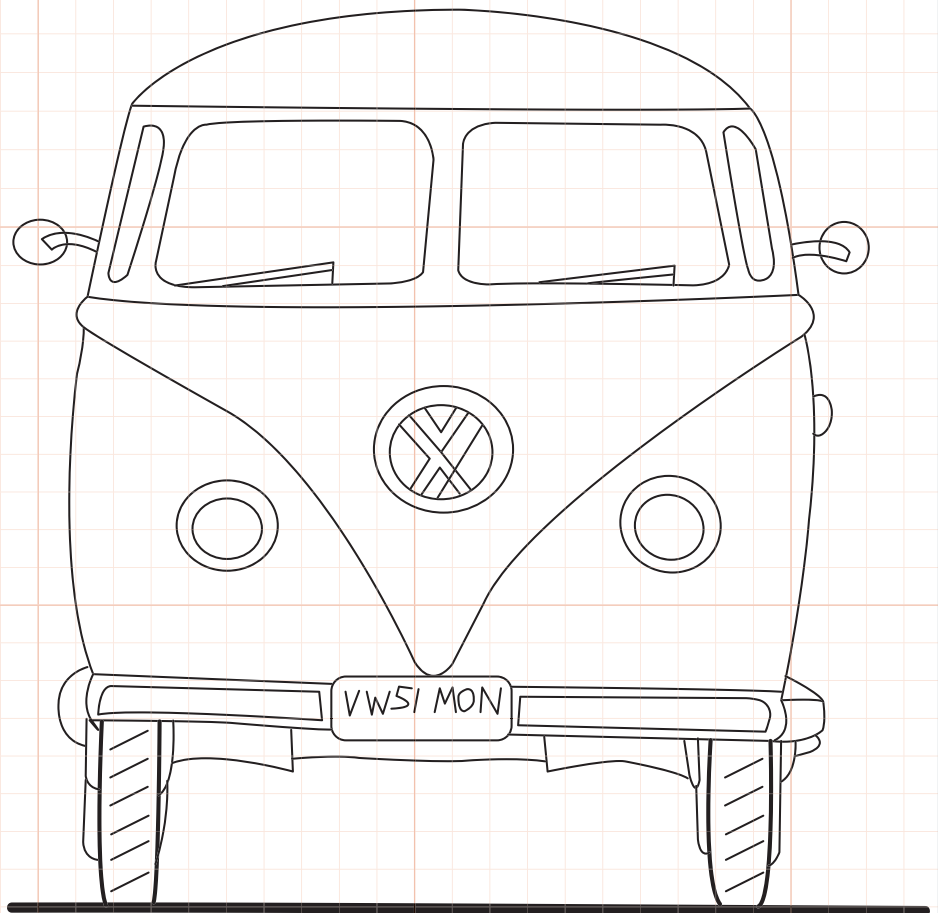
Preparation

This is a very shallow carving, no more than 3mm ($\frac{1}{8}$ in) at its deepest, for which I used lime wood approx 6in x 8in x $\frac{1}{2}$ in, lime being bland in colour to show up the details. Alternatives could be sycamore, beech or any other timber that is fine grained, preferably light in colour and without much patterning. The surface was planed smooth ready for drawing on.

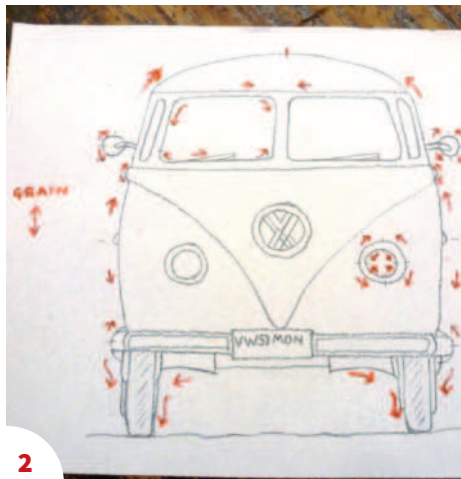
Things you will need

Tools:

- 1/8in 60° V-tool (No.39)
- Selection of straight chisels/ No.1s, including 15mm, 10mm, 6mm, 4mm & 3mm. Selection of No.3 (Swiss No.2) gouges including 1/2in, 3/8in, 1/4in, 1/8in
- 1/4in No.2 (skew/ corner) chisel (Swiss No.1)
- Punch and hammer
- Tracing and carbon paper



1



2



3



4

1 Enlarge or reduce my drawing to the size of your timber, adding a border if you wish. The grain direction of your timber can lie either vertical as shown or horizontal. Transfer the outline on to your timber by tracing my drawing, having placed carbon paper beneath it. If necessary, redefine any faint lines on the timber surface ready for marking the outline using a V-tool.

2 Mark the correct direction in which to cut with the V-tool – if the grain direction is vertical as in my carving, follow the red arrows to cut in the correct direction.

3 If the grain direction is horizontal, then cut in the directions shown in green.

Starting the carving

4 Cut round the outline with the V-tool. For best control, use a mallet with the V-tool – it is important to be accurate and to ensure that the tool does not slip away from the drawn lines.



5 Using the appropriate width No.3 gouge and turning it to correspond with the curves, and straight (No.1) chisels along the straight edges, cut around the outline. Align the tool cutting edges along the inner edge of the channel cut by the V-tool so your cuts are always angling away from the outline, not vertically downwards.

6 Around the outline carefully pare towards the previous cuts using a No.3 gouge with its bevel down and reduce the area adjacent to the outline, making very shallow cuts until the van stands out from its background.

The windscreen

7 Cut V-channels around the curved corners of the windscreen with the V-tool or use a narrow No.3 gouge with opposing cuts to make the channels.

8 Make opposing cuts with a chisel along the straight edges and finish cutting the V-channels around the windscreen, taking care that the corners of the chisel do not tear the surface as you cut.

9 Starting close to the lower edge of the windscreen, using a wide No.3 gouge with its bevel down and paring with shallow cuts, carefully reduce the surface within the lower half of the windscreen. Turn the carving and, starting from the upper edge, continue thus until the full area of the windscreen glass area is fractionally lower than its edges and as smooth as possible.

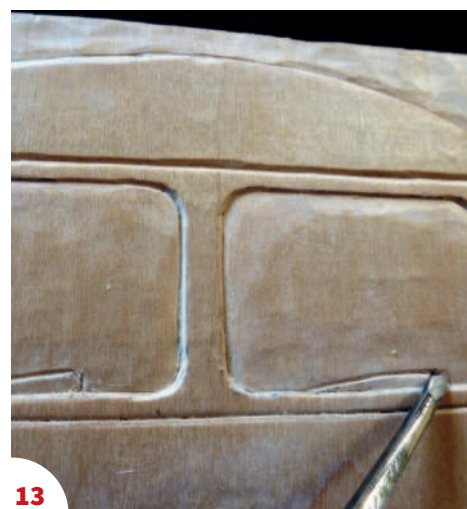
The wing mirrors

10 Making opposing cuts with a narrow chisel, cut a V-channel along each side of the arm of the wing mirror within the mirror, then reduce the surface of the mirror each side of it, leaving the arm raised above the mirror. Repeat for the other wing mirror.

11 Below the windscreen use a wide chisel to mark the line beneath it. It is better not to use a V-tool because when cutting across the grain it may tear, and also if cutting along the grain it may wander off the line.

12 Make steeply angled opposing cuts with the chisel, cutting a narrow V-channel to denote the line beneath the windscreen. Cut in the two curving lines, marking the V-shaped panel on the bonnet in the same way, using the widest No.3 gouge that corresponds with its curves.

13 Mark in the wipers along the lower edge of the windscreen as an incised line with the V-tool or straight chisel.



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

14 With the appropriate width No.3 gouge, cut round the end of each bumper then reduce the surface of the wheel hub adjacent to the wheel.

15 Round over the ends of the bumpers, so wrapping them round the sides of the van. Then round over the outer edges of the wheel hubs.

16 With a chisel, cut along each side of the tyre and reduce both sides of the wheel leaving the tyres slightly raised. Then round over both top and bottom of the tyres to make them appear circular. Smooth them ready for texturing the tread later on.

**17****18**

The headlamps

17 Using the V-tool in the directions shown before, or by using opposing cuts with a narrow No.3 gouge that corresponds with the curve, mark the outer edges of the headlamp rims. If you use a No.3 gouge, cut in the order shown to prevent the timber splitting along the grain. Then reduce the adjacent surface of the bonnet so the rims stand proud.

18 With a narrow No.3 gouge cut around the inner edge of the rims, then invert the gouge and round over the edges of the lenses into the rim, keeping their surfaces as smooth as possible.

19 Carefully paring with the No.3 gouge, reduce the surface of the bonnet adjacent to the headlamps so they stand proud. Above the headlamps you can add other lights in the same way.

**19****20**

The badge

20 Cut round the badge as described above, then using narrow chisels or the skew (No.2) chisel impress a version of the logo within it.

21 Mark out the rectangular areas each side of the numberplate with a narrow chisel and reduce them; then with the appropriate width chisels/gouges mark out the numberplate. Alternatively, you could use appropriate sized letter/number punches. Then reduce the suspension plates beneath the bumper. Finally, using a punch and hammer, texture the tyres to show their treads, then use a chisel to cut a narrow V-channel as the ground line beneath the wheels.

**21****22**

Finishing

22 With an eraser clean off any remaining pencil marks, smooth and remove any deep tool marks on the van. In more confined areas a surplus No.3 gouge with a burr honed along its cutting edge can be used as a miniature scraper. Cut all meeting edges clean and remove any errant digs or deep gouge cuts, but do not use abrasives as you may spoil the carving by blurring its detail. When finished the carving was given several coats of wax polish, buffed with a lint-free duster and given to Simon for his 40th birthday present. ▶

From the community

A collection of letters and news from the woodcarving community



Announcing the winner of the prize draw in WC181: A Spencer Franklin Woodworking Hydraclamp Miniclamp with faceplate, from WDS Components – Peter Collie from Derbyshire

Equine elegance



Not being able to go to the weekly meeting of the Exeter Woodcarvers club here in Devon, I have found that working in my workshop at home has been a wonderful way to keep me busy during the last Covid lockdown.

Having studied with Andrew Thomas I decided to have a try at the Horse Head designed by Andrew and published in *Woodcarving* magazine numbers 152 Sept/Oct 2016 and 153 Nov/Dec 2016.

I have used European lime and finished my carving with several thin layers of Danish oil. It has taken me three months to carve as I only carve for two hours in the morning. Also, the piece of lime that I used was not the correct width, and as I did not have the means of cutting the piece of wood to the correct width I had to remove the excess wood with my trusty chisel.

I am hoping that it will not be too long before I can meet up with my fellow members at our club.

Joan Mackintosh (treasurer at Exeter Woodcarvers)



Heavenly carving

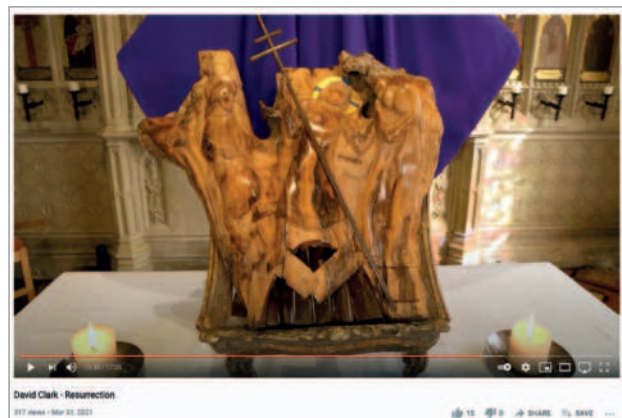
Here are two links to recent videos I have made with the videomaker John Davey. They show my carvings with my commentary. Readers of *Woodcarving* can type these links into their browsers to find the videos or simply click on the links below if using the digital version.

- youtu.be/ewTcD4YyhSoANGELS
- youtu.be/dCsbDluQiMsPASSIONTIDEANDRESURRECTION

In the first video there is a carving of an Angel and a Young Woman, which was featured in an edition of *Woodcarving* in the mid 1990s.

The carving of the Resurrection (or Descent into Hell) was my major work of the Covid period.

I hope you enjoy them. Revd David Clark



Carvings from the deep



I live in Oban (west coast of Scotland). I settled here about 20 years ago. I'm a big fan of your magazine and thanks to it I took up woodcarving as a hobby/mid-life crisis cure three years ago and I think made good enough progress to share some of my work with you. I mix power carving with hand carving. www.facebook.com/SimonRex20/

Kind regards, Simon (Szymon Mlynarczyk)



BDWCA NEWS & EVENTS



Maggie Port –
Flying Mallard Hen

© MAGGIE PORT FOR THE BDWCA

As I write this (in mid-June) we are still hoping that our annual show and competition – the Festival of Bird Art – will be held on the weekend of 11 and 12 September 2021 at its normal venue, the Agricultural Centre in Bakewell, Derbyshire. We will keep updating our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/bdwcapage) and our website (www.bdwca.org.uk) with the latest details, so if you are thinking of coming to see the show please check first.

In April this year a new international competition was launched – the Wildfowl Carving Championships. This is a brand new wildfowl carving competition, virtual in nature, not related to any other wildfowl carving competitions, and designed to be an active promoter of the art of wildfowl carving and to keep this art form alive.

As this was the first instance of this competition, entry was open to carvings that had been completed at any time and 22 of the 92 entries were from BDWCA members, the majority of them carved in previous years. Carvers uploaded eight photographs of each carving and, for the floating categories such as Decoys, a short video proving that they floated correctly.

We are very pleased to report that 12 of the BDWCA entries were placed:-

- Steve Toher took 1st with his Eurasian Dotterel and David Askew took 3rd with his Ringed Plover in the Master Level Shorebird Decoys category.
- Chriss Rose took 1st place with her Northern Lapwing and 3rd place with her Long-tailed Duck (Oldsquaw) in the Apprentice Level Contemporary Antique Decoy – Pristine category.
- Steve Toher took 1st with his Dunlin in the Open Decorative Lifesize Wildfowl, Shorebirds sub-category.
- Maggie Port took 3rd with her Flying Mallard Hen in the Intermediate Decorative Lifesize Wildfowl category.
- Pam Wilson 'swept the board' in the Intermediate Wildfowl Sculpture category with her Peacock, Courting Grebes and Harpy Eagle Head.

The BDWCA also 'swept the board' in the Novice Interpretive Wildfowl Sculpture category – Jan Bartlett took 1st with her Tern, and Yvonne Langford took 2nd with her Cardinal and 3rd with her Eurasian Nuthatch.

Nineteen of the winning entries from the Master and Open level divisions then competed for the 2021 Ashley Gray Memorial People's Choice Award. The entry with the most public votes won – a beautiful Western Grebe Decorative Decoy carved by Joe Tamborra of Canada. All the winners can be seen on the competition website, <https://wildfowlcarvingchampionships.com>

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 item – 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 2021, 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.



© STEVE TOHER FOR THE BDWCA

Steve Toher – Eurasian Dotterel



© JOE TAMBORRA FOR THE BDWCA

Joe Tamborra – Western Grebe



© CHRISS ROSE FOR THE BDWCA

Chriss Rose – Northern Lapwing



© JAN BARTLETT FOR THE BDWCA

Jan Bartlett – Tern



© PAM WILSON FOR THE BDWCA

Pam Wilson – Peacock



WDS Components Moxon Vice Hardware Kit

Mitch Peacock used WDS's Moxon Vice Hardware Kit with Ball Handles to build his new twin-screw vice

The bench-top, double screw vice, often called a Moxon vice, after Joseph Moxon referred to one in his book *Mechanick Exercises*, has found popularity in recent years. With numerous ways to use them, especially for the unplugged woodworker, this should be of no surprise. Equally so, the emergence of hardware kits to build your own, of which WDS Components is one source. I've just built my vice using a double ball handled kit it supplied, and also tried out its alternative handwheel.

What you get

The kit is comprehensive, with all the hardware needed to make a Moxon vice. All you need to add are the wooden jaws and optional leather linings.

The hardware comprises:

- Two M20 cast iron double ball handles
- Two M20 mild steel threaded rods (either 500mm or 1000mm)
- Four M20 surface hardened mild steel washers
- Four M20 mild steel nuts

The handles are of rustic design, and all external surfaces were free of sharp edges. The threads still held a little swarf from thread cutting, which cleared as the handles were run up the rods. Both handles had arms of slightly different lengths, measured from the centre of the threaded hole, although they appeared balanced when spun on the rods (essential for ease of use in the vice).

The rods, nuts, and handles all have general-purpose screw threads, where I



PHOTOGRAPHS BY MITCH PEACOCK

would prefer to see acme threads which are more suitable for vices in general. I do believe, though, that these M20 sets are plenty strong enough for this style of woodworking vice.

All the parts require a good clean, to avoid staining your hands and anything else they come into contact with. A light application of camellia oil should ensure ease of action.



What you don't get

You'll need to add a couple of hefty boards to make a Moxon vice, and have access to a spanner for fitting the hardware (I used a 1-3/16in socket spanner).

Facing the jaws with leather is a good idea to increase grip and provide protection to the material being clamped, so factor that in too.

Other tools required are likely to be on hand in most workshops.

There are no instructions, either supplied or available on the WDS Components website at the time of writing.

Building the vice

Don't be daunted by the thought of building a Moxon vice. With all the hardware supplied, you only need to saw two thick boards, one 4-6in longer than the other, bore through holes for the threaded rods (elongating those in the front jaw to allow raking), and chop two mortises to hold nuts in the rear jaw. Once that's done, you secure the rods through the rear jaw, pop the front jaw on, and spin on the handles.

Reducing the height of the rear jaw at its ends will ensure clamp heads don't interfere in the work area, while chamfers, round-overs, coves and quirks can dress it up a little.



Handles or handwheels?

In use, I found the double ball handles much easier to spin up the bars, making vice adjustment quicker, not to mention more attractive. The handwheel worked just fine though, easily applying sufficient clamping pressure.



Pricing

The WDS Components kits, with 500mm rods, are priced at £69.66 (inc. VAT) for double ball handles and £135.71 (inc. VAT) for handwheels. (Kits with longer, 1000mm rods are also available.)

CONCLUSION

I'm very happy with the completed vice, which, despite my initial reservations over the general purpose screw thread, operates quickly and smoothly.

If you wish to make a Moxon vice, a bench-top bench, or indeed incorporate a double screw vice in your next workbench, it is worth considering one of WDS Components' kits alongside the others on the market. If you struggle with rust in your workshop though, you would be better trying to find a kit with stainless steel screws. ▀

Make a shrink cup

Paul Adamson shows us how to make one of his favourite drinking vessels



PHOTOGRAPHY BY PAUL ADAMSON

This article introduces the basic shrink pot, but with a twist. Making little pots for holding pens or change, or lidded versions for dry foodstuffs or whatever else you can think of storing, such as crafting materials, is a fun, easy, green woodworking project. If you are new to these items, then the general idea is that you use the movement of green wood as an advantage and combine this with the stability of seasoned dry wood.

After felling a silver birch tree as part of a thinning operation a couple of years ago, I eyed up all the potential wooden-ware projects

on the floor before me for the coming months. One section grabbed my attention as it had the perfect diameter, length of clean, knot-free wood and a side branch at just the right size and angle which shouted 'tankard'.

Sealing wood for cold liquids is really easy, and shrink cups are straightforward to make, so I started to experiment with these as an alternative to kuksas for larger drinking vessels, and they are proving to work very well indeed. The following tutorial will guide you through the process of making one.



1 First off, we need to find that perfect piece of wood, which is the tricky bit, but after a while you get your eye in. The best places to go are broadleaf plantations that are in need of thinning works. Volunteering for a local conservation charity or coppicing group will provide plenty of tree work and material.

2 Next up is the first batch of tools needed to get working. I use a Silky Gomtaro 300 for all my sawing in the woods and at home. They are brilliant, and my favourite for tree surgery work too. If I'm removing the bark and shaping the outside of the cup, then I use a drawknife and a shave horse. A straight woodcarving knife is handy throughout the project – I use a Mora (Frost) 106 laminated blade knife.



3-5 Saw the top of the cup and handle roughly as you would like it to look when finished, but leave the rest of the length of wood as we need this for improved grip in a shave horse and vice later on. Start working the external shape of the cup, taking more off to get the desired diameter in proportion to the length. You might want a small cup for the kids' juice or a pint-sized container. You need to choose based on the wood you can get.

6-8 Once the outside and the top are all sorted, we need to drill a large hole all the way through the piece that will form the cup. I use 'eyed' augers for this in combination with a vice for holding the wood. If you are finding them hard to get hold of, then modern auger bits for power drills and a mate handy with a welder is the way to make up the shafts and tubes for the wooden handle. Once the bit has been sharpened it goes through the wood well but does burn a few calories in the process.



9-11 The next stage in the process is to widen the hole, aiming for a wall thickness of around 5mm. A straight gouge with a medium sweep really speeds up the job, in combination with a mallet. Aim to make small corrections with the hand holding the gouge to remove nice, long, parallel sections. Curved spoon-type knives then take over when the majority of the material is removed to refine the inside surface and generate the required final thickness.

Creating a V-cut

12 Continuing on from the first part of this tutorial on what are often called shrink pots but in this case is a shrink cup. We need to thin the walls of the cup down with a curved knife. Aim for around 5mm thickness.

13 Once this has been completed, the next job is to make a groove around the inside edge of the base, approximately 5-7mm up from the very bottom. I use a small Flexcut scorp for this job, but you could use the tip of a knife to create a V-shaped section. You only need to make this groove shallow, as it is just to help with the location of the base insert piece in combination with the shrinking effect of the green wood.

Making the base insert

I try to make all the sections of the work that I do, so the wood for this section was an old board of lime that I had been saving for fire-lighting demonstrations. The long section of log had been split into a rough board, and then refined and thinned to 5-7mm using an axe, followed by a drawknife and shave horse. This section of wood was fully seasoned and dry before fitting. This is so that it moves very little as the green wood of the hollowed log shrinks around it when drying, locking it into position.

14 Place the cup on to the board and draw a pencil line around the inside of the inner edge.

15 Cut close to but not along this pencil line using a coping saw.

16 Offer this section up to the bottom of the cup and work out where it needs to be trimmed down so as to fit snugly into the hollowed cup. I do the trimming with a simple Mora woodcarving knife, using the veg peeler grip.



9



10



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16

**17****18****19****20**

17 The base should only require a couple of gentle taps with the base of the knife handle to locate it into the groove. Once located in the groove it needs to be slightly loose, as the walls of the cup will shrink a little more than the space that is there. Too tight and the walls will split. The cup will be dry and the base locked in tight after a couple of weeks at room temperature. Check the progress every now and then by looking for light gaps and monitor how they are closing up. Finish off in a warmer place by the fire or radiator, to make sure it's fully dry.

18 To fully seal the join of the insert I use beeswax. Simply melt in a saucepan, then pour a small amount inside the cup and swirl it around the inside joint.

19 Repeat on the other side of the joint once the inner wax has set hard.

20 The only thing left to do now is to add a finish of some sort. Just a wipe over with food-grade curing oils such as flaxseed or walnut will be fine, but for this cup I'll introduce you to non-toxic natural milk paints. I make these up from basic ingredients all easy to find on the internet. The white powder in the picture is a slaked lime mixed with casein, which is obtained from milk curds. This gives the adhesive and strength qualities any paint requires. The only remaining requirements are pigment and water for application. The colours are natural ochres in powder form. Mix a similar quantity of pigment to the white powder and add a small amount of water to form a paste. Thin with more water to form a paint. I normally add one coat of just the white first followed by one or two coats of colour.

21 Leave to dry, and then add some oil or wax to bring it all to life. All done and ready to use.

I hope you enjoyed this simple woodcarving project, and that you might find time to give it a go. These practical cups last for years and make an interesting display and talking point for guests in the kitchen once several are made. ▶

**21**

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Our contributors



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



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



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



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



Kevin Alviti is a professional carpenter joiner of 20 years who is completely obsessed with his trade. It has always been his ambition to carve wood and to continue to learn. www.sawdustinmysocks.com



Mitch Peacock is a self-taught woodworker from East Sussex, England, with a passion for mainly unplugged woodworking. Mitch now mostly creates small character pieces of furniture, and has a woodworking YouTube channel inspiring others to try the craft. WOMadeOD.co.uk youtube.com/c/WOMadeOD



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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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Carved mirror frame

John Samworth carves a seaside themed mirror frame

Our guest room has recently been decorated with a seaside theme, but was lacking a mirror. I had been waiting for an opportunity to carve a piece of furniture in a classical style but lack the woodworking skills to build a suitable piece; however, a picture frame would be within my skill level. I decided to design my own mirror frame for the room. A standard egg and dart pattern has been adapted to evoke the sea, replacing the egg with a shell and the dart with a crescent. The crescent is used to embed the shells into the wood as sand might embed the shell to the sea bed, while

hinting at the shape of a crashing wave.

When designing a frame such as this, there is a necessity to join four lengths of carvings together. I prefer a mitre joint, where the sides of the frame meet at a cut 45° angle (marked XX on the diagram). If the shell and wave design were to be continued completely around the frame, it will be near impossible to cut the mitre and join the two pieces so that a sensible shape is maintained at the corners. The traditional solution is to avoid the issue by presenting a separate design element at the corners. The acanthus leaf has been popular for this very purpose. In this design the leaf is used to

symbolise seaweed and will not follow the strict classical rules but accept a little licence variation for the seaside theme. Note the orientation of the corner where the seaweed organically 'grows' from the inside of the frame outwards.

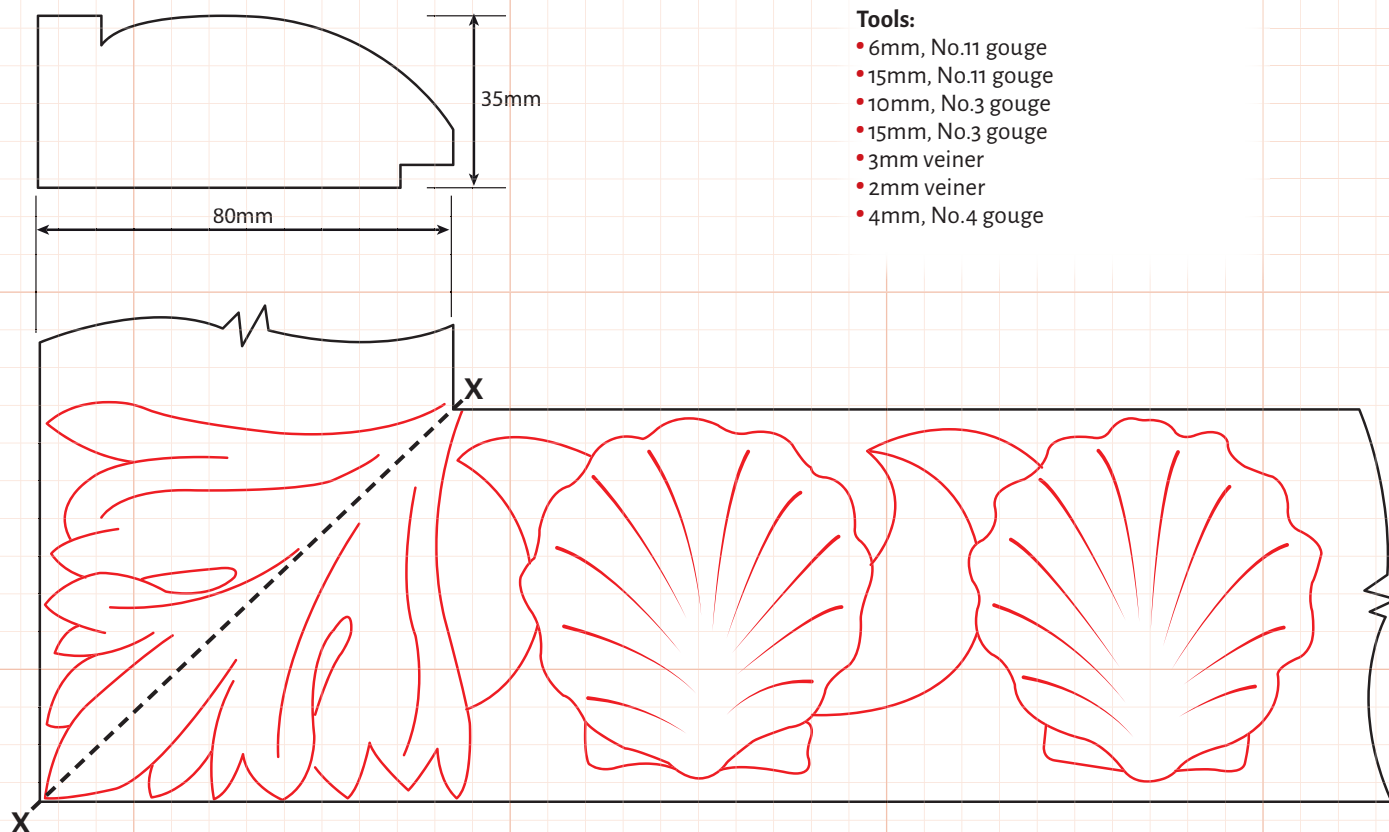
I used lime for this project because of its excellent carving characteristic and because the lack of visible grain pattern emphasises the carving rather than the wood. I began with some basic wood preparation. I am fortunate to live close to a specialist hardwood supplier where I could obtain the wood planed with square edges to the correct thickness and width. But there are online suppliers who will fulfil your needs too.

Things you will need**Materials:**

- Lime 35 x 80mm cross section; two lengths 500mm and two lengths 600mm (finished sizes)

Tools:

- 6mm, No.11 gouge
- 15mm, No.11 gouge
- 10mm, No.3 gouge
- 15mm, No.3 gouge
- 3mm veiner
- 2mm veiner
- 4mm, No.4 gouge

**1****2**

1 Start by cutting a rebate 6mm deep and 10mm wide into the back of the frame. This rebate will take the 6mm-thick mirror glass; or cut to suit your own glass. Round over the entire length of the wood to form the basic cross-section of the frame. This will aid all the carving's symmetry, creating greater harmony within the piece.

2 Cut the four sides to your required sizes. Here I have cut the outside lengths as 500mm and 600mm. Mirror glass is available either cut to size or certain set sizes. You may prefer to size your frame based on pre-set sizes and measure on the inside (allowing for the rebate). Unless you possess an extremely accurate mitre cutting saw, then like me you should cut the pieces slightly over size by 1-2mm and plane back to an accurate 45° angle with a shooting block.



3 Arrange your four pieces into a frame. Check and recheck the accuracy of your mitre cuts. Turn the frame over, reassemble and mark each joint. Simple dash marks across the mitre – cut one dash on the first corner, two on the second and so on – will quickly identify which pieces form which corner and if they are aligned accurately.

4 Transfer the design to a piece of stiff card to form a template. Align the corner and trace around the template. Next, align the corner and trace out the corner. If it overlaps the shell pattern that is fine.

5 Holding the lengths firm while carving is vital. Simple 'dog' blocks will make a flexible, cheap and secure fixing system. INSET: I shall keep these dogs, they will no doubt come in useful for holding many other projects.

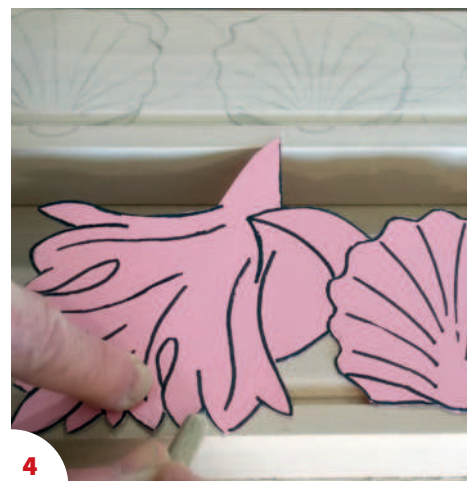
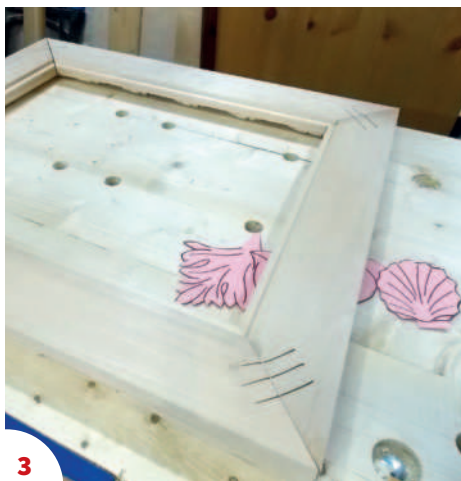
6 Start the carving by removing the waste wood between shells to about half the final depth, using a deep sweep such as a 6mm, No.9 ($\frac{1}{4}$ in). Tidy the edges and surfaces with a broad, flat sweep gouge such as a 10mm No.3 ($\frac{1}{2}$ in). Invert the No.3 gouge and begin to round off the shell's edges to form a domed surface. Keep the line a smooth curve at this stage. The scalloped lines will form naturally and in the correct location when the back of a shell is formed. Two black line are marked to show where to stop carving at this stage. The corners will be carved after the frame has been assembled together.

7 Reverse the piece and rough out the heel of the shells. Use a guide line along the vertical edge to mark the final depth and keep the carving consistent. Carve the back of the shell using a deep sweep gouge 6mm, No.9. Five channels sweeping to the right and five to the left keep a pleasing appearance. Deepen each channel with a 3mm veiner. Keeping each channel the same width for their length is an easier option than keeping the ridges the same width. Start to round the tops of the ridges along their lengths using an inverted gouge – a 4mm, No.4 works well. Use small slicing cuts. As the channels reach the background the familiar scallop profile will form naturally and in the correct location.

8 To carve the crescents mark the centreline and keep the grain direction firmly fixed in your mind. Carve away from the centreline in the directions marked. The convex curve is carved using a large flat sweep gouge 15mm, No.3; sloping away from the high point centreline towards the background. Leave about 1mm clear from the back ground.

9 The concave curve should be carved with a large mid-sweep gouge 10mm, No.5. Again, carve away from the high point centreline towards the edge. The edge is left about 1mm from the background. Use a shallow sweep gouge, No.3, to tidy the edge against the shell.

10 The small part of the background between the crescent and the shell may prove difficult to remove tidily, but if you have lowered the crescent sufficiently access with a skew gouge is possible.




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11 Reverse the piece to form the heel end of the shell. A wise carver once told me to always use the largest gouge for the job. I used a 15mm No.11 gouge and with one cut shaped both the top of the shell hinge and its vertical edge, leaving a clean, single flowing curve. Not only does a large gouge leave a cleaner finish, it proved quicker too.

12 With all four edges roughed out to their final design, except the corners, it is time to assemble and fix the frame. There are many jigs and clamps on the market to fix mitred joints. Here I have used PVA glue and two sets of sash clamps. Note the presence to the set squares. I constantly checked and rechecked the accuracy of the corners as I slowly tightened the clamps. Tightening both sides together reduces the movement. Tighten until the glue begins to ooze out of the joints. Not too much, there must be some glue left in the joint for it to stick. The quick-drying glue, firm fix in 30 minutes, was left to cure over night to acquire full strength.

13 Now the mitred joints are fixed we can carve the corner seaweed. Begin by roughing out the basic shape using a 15mm, No.11 gouge. Stay aware of the grain direction, which will alter at the joint. The high outside edge has been kept so the seaweed can curve upwards to add variation and movement to the carving.

14 Allowing one stem of weed to overlap the next will create a cleaner design, avoiding awkward spaces between stems. Clean lines may be achieved by trimming the edges with a vertical slicing cut rather than a downwards chop cut.

15 As with the acanthus design, extra depth and movement to the seaweed can be achieved by carving 'eyes' between sections of the weed. Drill vertically down with a 3mm veneer sufficiently deep for the hole core to pull cleanly out. Then run the veneer into the back of the hole. Re-cut this groove with a smaller, 2mm veneer.

16 For a final touch, tap a nail punch into the base of the eye. A suitably sized nail will suffice. This will compress and hide any loose fibres deep within the shadows of the eye.

17 Measure the diagonals to ensure the frame is square, if need be, cut away a little extra to enlarge a part of the rebate. We can do this; we are carvers after all. Measure the two inside dimensions for the maximum size of glass and subtract 3mm from each measurement. The glass should now fit snugly.

SAFETY TIP: Make sure the glass is held securely into the frame. I used four metal plates, one across each corner.

18 While the glass was on order, I chose to apply a light sand with 180 grit paper before applying a finish of my choice to the frame. Because the wood used for the four sides has a noticeable variation in colour, I used a varnish with a light oak tint to soften the colour variations. Paint, gilding, oil or wax will all make suitable finishes. Finally, hang on the wall and enjoy. ▶

The background of the entire advertisement is a light-colored wood grain. On the right side, there is a vertical, curved wooden element featuring intricate carvings of flowers and scrolling vines. The text is overlaid on the left side of the wood grain.

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Gardener's tote

Kevin Alviti makes and carves a charming box for gardening tools

Earlier in the year I set myself the challenge of making sure I did some carving each week of 2021. I started the year strong, by making my eldest daughter a tool box and carving a Victorian-inspired piece on to it for her ninth birthday. With this I also got her a small collection of tools as she had been showing such an interest in woodworking and I was keen to encourage her.

The trouble is, when you have three children what you do with the first sets the precedent with the rest! The other two often mention how they'd like a tool box...

My younger daughter is seven and she is equally as keen to help me, either in the workshop, kitchen or garden. They're at that beautiful age where I can seem to do no wrong and they actually want to spend time with me – something I take full advantage of before they become sulking teenagers. She often spends hours in the garden picking flowers and arranging them beautifully. So, I thought it might be nice to make her a gardener's tote with flowers on the side, like she often wears in her hair.

Being a carpenter joiner by trade, and somewhat of a hoarder when it comes to wood, I'm never short of offcuts that want using up, so for this piece I've used a small length of tulip for the sides, as it's very easy to carve and not too heavy, and some wide 230mm (9in) pine for the ends, although having the ends to be tulip would probably be better. I also used 9mm (3/8in) birch ply for the base, but any fair-faced ply would do – I certainly wouldn't recommend buying a sheet of it for this project. This makes quite a wide tote, having the ends narrower might make be better for some as it would make it far lighter.

Things you will need

Materials:

- Tulip 2x 500mm (19 3/4in) x 125mm (5in)
- Pine 2x 320mm (12 1/2in) x 220mm (8 3/4in)
- 9mm (3/8in) ply
- 28mm (1 1/8in) dowel
- 12mm (1/2in) dowel
- Linseed oil
- 35mm panel pins

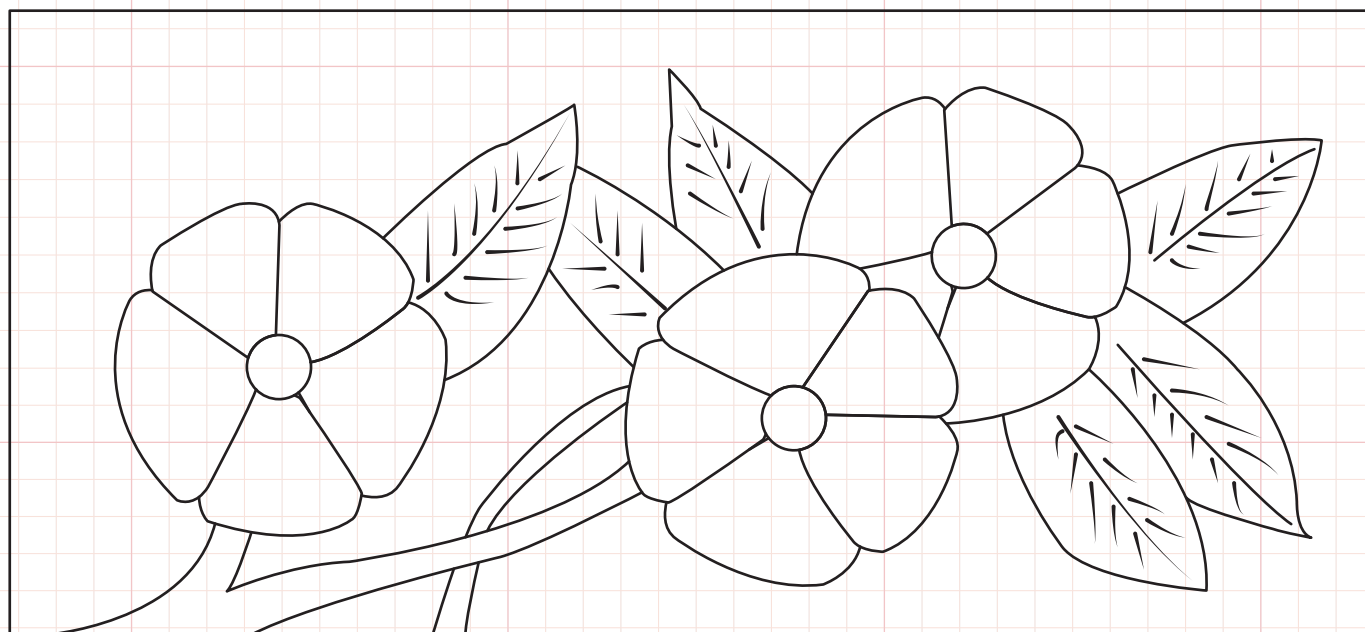
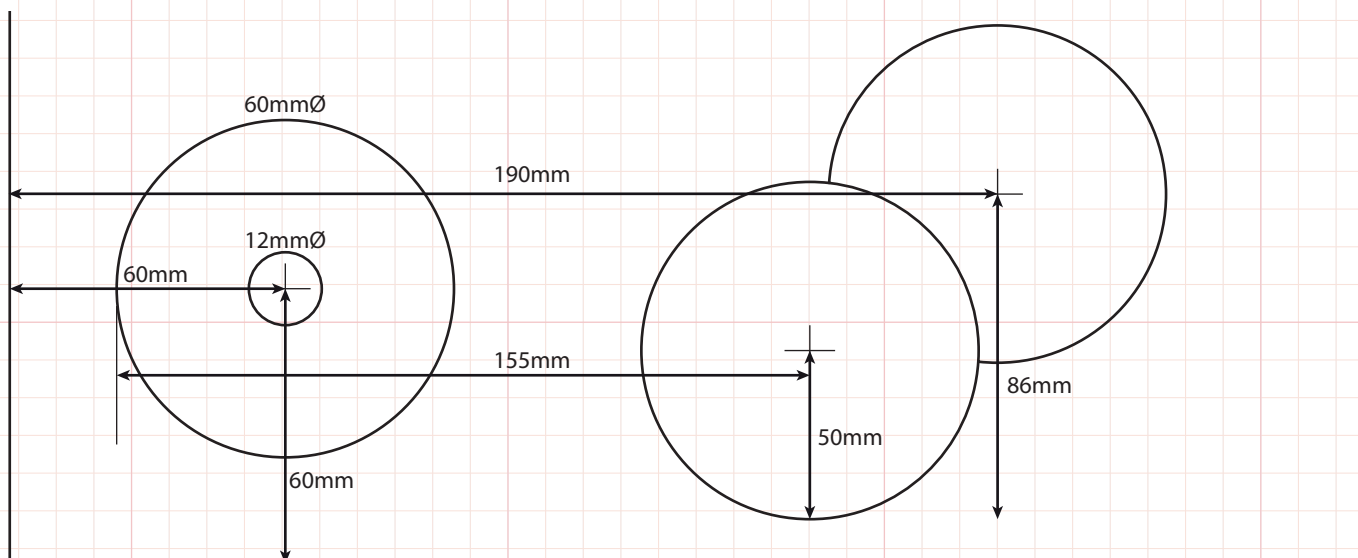
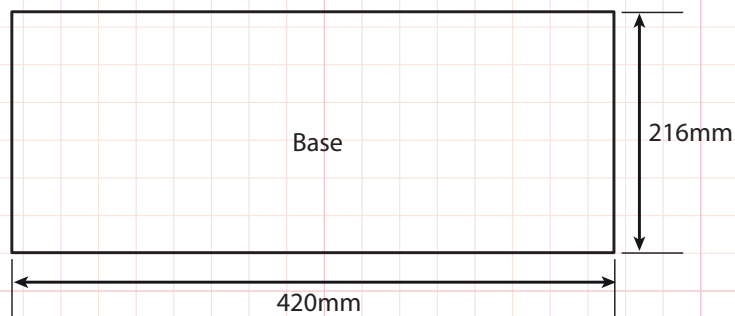
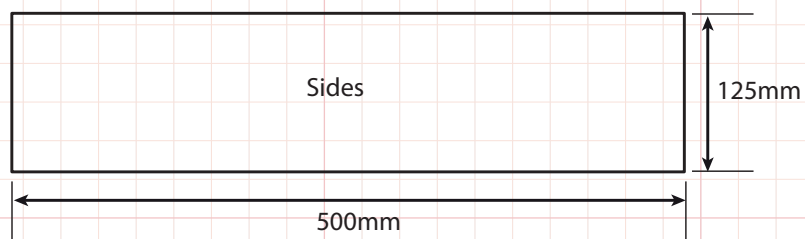
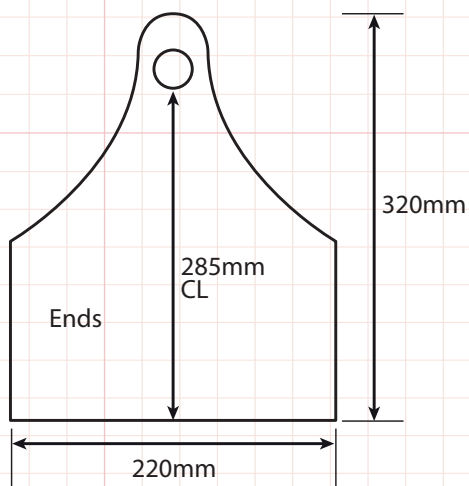
Tools for making the box

- Tablesaw (optional)
- Planer (optional)
- Chopsaw (optional)
- Router table with flat bit for rebating (optional)
- Drill with 28mm bit and 12mm bit
- Brad gun
- Sander (80 grit and 120 grit)
- Pair of compasses

Tools for the carving

- Carving mallet
- 60 degree V-tool, 13mm
- 60 degree V-tool, 6mm
- Skew chisel
- 3-sided punch
- No.6 gouge, 13mm
- No.6 gouge, 9mm
- No.6 gouge, 6mm
- No.8 gouge, 13mm
- No.2 gouge, 16mm
- No.3 gouge, 8mm
- No.4 gouge, 3mm
- No.3 gouge, 13mm
- No.9 gouge, 4mm







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1 Start by dimensioning all the timber. Try to make sure that the pieces you choose for carving are as knot-free as possible. All the pieces should be planed so it is square all round, this makes everything else easier. I planed the wood to 21mm (7/8in) thick to give extra depth for carving, but 18mm (3/4in) would be fine as well.

2 With everything the right thickness, cut it all to length and then cut the shape of the two ends of the tote. I used the bandsaw but a jigsaw or coping saw would work equally as well. Sand all pieces up and smooth out the curves.

3 This tote is held together with simple rebate joinery. Set the router cutter on the router table (or rebate plane if doing it by hand) to the depth of the ply you are using for the bottom and set to approximately half the thickness of the wood. I used 9mm ply as it's still strong but not too heavy. Take care when routing the end grain on the end pieces, clamp a scrap piece of wood against the back edge to prevent tear-out. Then set the fence to remove more for the two sides and, in stages, rebate the ends of the side piece so the rebate will sit over the end panels. Keep both sets of rebates the same depth.

4 Now is a good time to do a dry assembly of the piece, cut the plywood base now as well. It's sometimes a good idea to clamp it together so it's easier to measure the size of the base – no guess work or maths involved.

5 I still maintain that once you've figured out how to hold the piece of wood you're working on you're halfway to having it done. For carving I clamp mine simply by using some offcuts of ply to create a base that I can clamp to my workbench, then the workpiece is held in place by a couple of wedges against a fence. This means I can easily turn the workpiece round or swap it for the other side piece when I'm working on that one, but it stays firm when I want it to.

6 Although this article has drawings supplied, I treat this carving a bit like 'doodling' only with carving chisels instead of a pencil, making it up as I go along, adding different layers. First, I sketch out a boarder, to help keep the deeper parts of the carving away from the rebate and to give a nice finish to where we're working to. I only run this boarder 3/4 of the way across the bottom so it looks like it fades out. I also use a pair of compasses to give the outline to the first flower with a diameter of 60mm. Draw too much on at this stage and it'll get carved away anyway.

7 Using the larger V-tool, line in the outline of the flower, it doesn't need to be perfect as the outline will be undercut later. Then, using the same tool, add cut in the boarder, trying to keep as straight as you can.

8 Lower the background around the flower. Make lots of shallow, even cuts with your No.6, 13mm (1/2in) gouge, up to where you have lined in. For this I use hand pressure, with both hands on the tool for control, keeping the tool almost in tension so it's easy to stop as you get to the line.

9 Start to carve the middle of the flower. Using the No.8, 13mm (½in) gouge make scooping cuts that create a trumpet shape, starting shallow, going deeper then levelling off. Do this all round and you should be able to scoop out the middle piece. Remember not to go too deep as we still need to make the centre of the flower.



10 Using a smaller gouge, a No.6, 9mm, mark the centre part of the flower. Make small strikes with the mallet then move it round and strike again until you have made the circle. Trying to leave this centre bit untouched, use a chisel to enlarge the gap around it and tidy it up.



11 Divide the flower up into petals. I've chose to do five, don't worry too much about getting them too even, remember this is just a stylised flower so nothing has to be perfect. Then, using the smaller V-tool 6mm (¼in), create a groove for each petal going down to the centre, without touching the middle of the flower if you can help it.



12 With the lines in, now shape the middle of the flower, using the gouge the other way up. You may need to use a smaller gouge than you used to mark it out. Try to make it an even small dome, but as it is textured later it doesn't need to be super smooth.



13 Using a flatter gouge, a No.2, 16mm, cut along between each petal. Cut from both sides to remove a small sliver of wood between to help create the illusion of depth and define each petal.



14 Using the No.6, 13mm (½in), gouge cut in the curved corners to the petals. Use a stab cut to make the shape on either side then use the corner of the chip of waste.



15 Spend some time shaping the petals, using different gouges, try to make them all slightly different. Add some small flutes using the No.6, 6mm gouge, heading towards the centre from the top of the trumpet shape.



16 Using a sharp punch (or the point of a nail if you don't have one) add some texture to the middle of the flower. Just hand pressure is fine here I find – no need to reach for the mallet.



**17****18**

17 Use the skew chisel to define between the petals more, stabbing it in and pushing back with the tool. This helps to create a heavier shadow.

18 Undercut the petals at an angle of about 15° (roughly) – use gouges to match the curves you have. I found a No.3, 13mm (½in), gouge worked well for the straighter parts of the tops of the petals, removing the waste as you go. Use the punch to add some definition. Punch where petals meet to define deeper points.

19 Now it's time to add some more flowers. Draw their outline and line out with the larger V-tool. It looks good to have them overlapping, so draw one over the other.

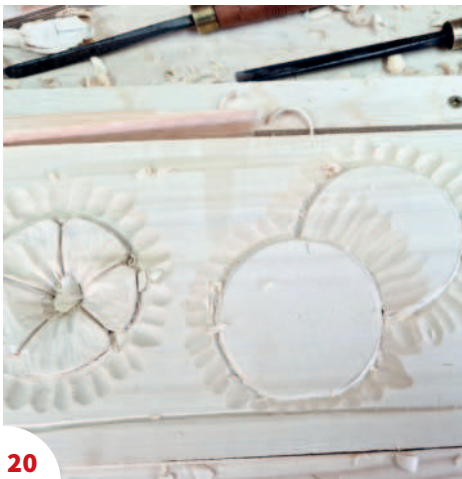
**19**

20 To make the flowers overlap, lower the background of the one behind, tapering the lowering out to meet the underside of the other.

21 Carve the flowers as you did before. But finish the top flower first, undercutting that one then finish the second one in much the same way. It's surprising how fast this is compared to carving the first flower.

22 With all the flowers carved it's time to sketch on some leaves. Having these overlapping looks great. If you work out the layers, you'll be able to carve the outline of the top ones first.

23 Outline all the leaves with the V-tool, allowing for the overlapping parts. Then roughly carve the leaves one at a time, lowering the ones around them and the background. You don't need to remove much to give a sense of depth. Then go back and add shape and detail to them all, try to make them undulate and not uniform. Undercut these the same as the petals. Add veins on the topside of the leaves using the small V-tool.

**20****21**

24 It's not essential to have branches, but it can help tie the piece together. Carve them much the same as the leaves but then add some heavy texture using a fine gouge to give the impression of bark. Here you can make one branch go behind enough to add some depth. Also finish any background that needs it, just texturing it with a No.4, 9mm, gouge.

**22****23****24**

25 There is no need for both sides to be the same when it comes to this piece, although I would recommend that they take up roughly the same amount of space on the workpiece so it feels balanced. I added more leaves the second time I carved it. If I wanted them to match then I would probably carve them both at the same time, performing one sequence on both before moving on to the next step, using a template to make sure the layout was the same.

26 Lay out the pieces for assembly and do a dry run first. I used an 18g brad gun and a good exterior wood glue for the assembly. Make sure you use a brush and get glue into every bit of the rebates, then hold together and nail in place. Alternatively, you could glue and clamp, negating the need for brads, making sure you add protection around your carvings before you clamp.

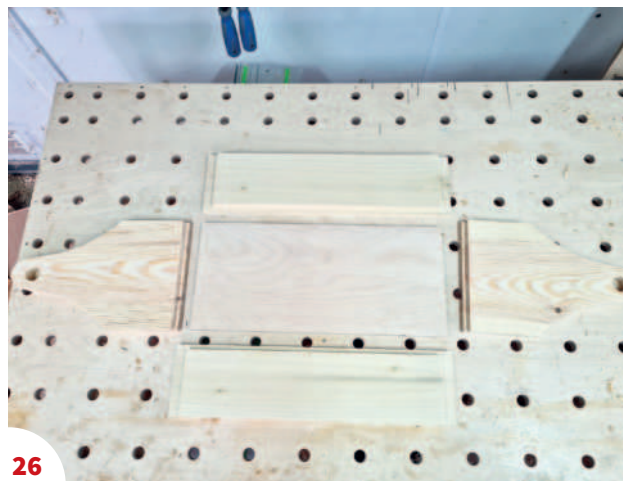
27 The handle is simply a length of large diameter (28mm or 1 1/8 in) dowel or broom handle pushed through the holes. To stop it slipping out, I drilled in a 12mm (1/2 in) dowel perpendicular to this, which is also a nice feature.

28 Apply a finish as this is something that might get knocked and bumped around, I tend to go for just a simple boiled linseed oil finish that can easily be reapplied. I use a rag on all the flat bits and a brush to get into the detailed areas of the carving. I try to build it in a few thin layers, making sure it has dried between coats.

29 Your finished tote. ▶



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SAFETY: A word of safety; when using boiled linseed oil make sure you dispose of your rags safely, never leave them screwed up in your workshop as they can spontaneously combust. Dry them out flat outside (away from anything combustible) then dispose of them safely.

Carve Steve Bisco's...



...Arts & Crafts-style
briar rose



Cedric Boyns
creates a
personalised
anniversary spoon



John Samworth
introduces us to
anamorphic art in
relief carving

Hunting otters

Alan Denham carves an aquatic scene

I do quite a lot of low-relief carving, and pierced work is an obvious 'next step'. It means an awful lot of scrollsaw work before the actual carving can get properly started – but nothing's perfect, and all that preparation before actually setting mallet to gouge handle can be quite rewarding in the end.

I took bits of numerous pictures – of otters, of weed, of fish, of small piles of stones, etc., and patched them together and re-sketched those bits that hadn't quite worked – and eventually came up with this design.

Be aware: This design, like most pierced work, is neither relief carving nor full 3D carving 'in the round' – it is in that rarely visited and therefore unfamiliar territory somewhere in between.

Design

The weed is what holds the whole thing together, but the weed stems are fairly thin, so the grain must run vertically. That, unfortunately, means that the fish are going to be on the short grain – so where possible I have run them across two weed stems, for strength. The otters are chunky enough to have their own strength, provided the thinner parts are kept close to aligned with the grain.

Don't fret over too much detail. I have not tried for an identifiable fish species, or the toes on the otters, but I have used a fairly naturalistic outline for anything alive, and for the stones.

That cannot be said of the water surface. Artistic carvings 'in the round' of this or a similar subject often have a layer of glass or clear acrylic to mark the water surface. That would simply be wrong here, so the surface is represented by symbolic ripples. It is also worth taking note that a nice thick stem goes up to the surface near the middle to give a place where a screw can be driven to hold a concealed D-ring for hanging it.

Choose your wood... and find a sensible-size piece

For this article I am carving this in an offcut of London plane, 40cm long, 24mm thick, and varying 15-17 cm wide, but the pattern can easily be scaled – though less than 15mm thick might cause problems. Note, however, that 24mm caused problems of its own. The temptation to try for full 3D in some areas was quite strong, and needed to be resisted.

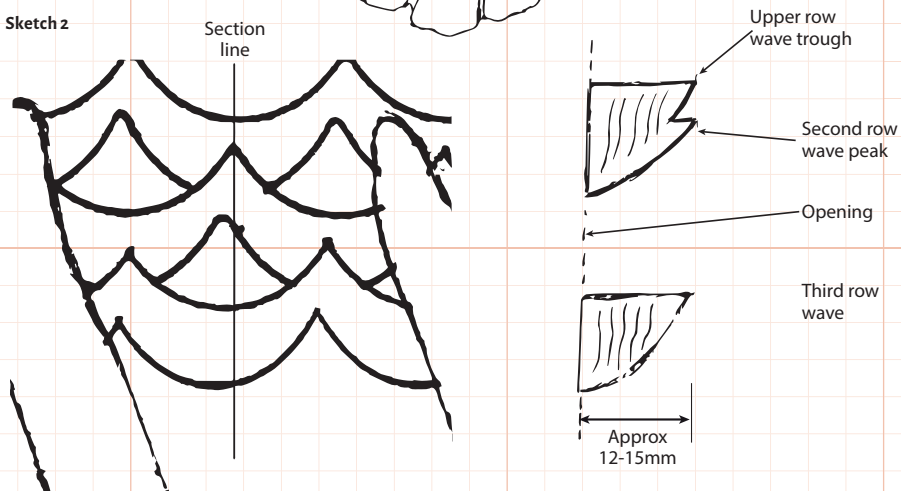
The first time I cut this pattern I used a piece of old shelf that I think was one of the lower-quality mahogany substitutes, and it seemed to work pretty well. I later cut a version in olive wood, only 27cm long but I found the wood rather hard and brittle. It could be done in almost any wood – but something like oak might not be a best choice. I would recommend lime or something similarly soft and/or fine grained.



Sketch 1



Sketch 2

**Things you will need****Tools:**

- Drill
- Bandsaw
- V-tool – 3 or 4mm
(1mm could also be useful)
- U-gouge – 2mm
- No.3 sweep gouge – 7 or 10mm
- A selection of burs
- Craft knife

**Begin**

1 You will need access to a scrollsaw. The cutting out can be done with a coping saw – but I wouldn't. Remember though – most scrollsaws are intended for thinner wood than this, so work slowly and carefully, ideally with a skip-tooth blade which clears dust better than a fully toothed blade. Even so, expect some blade breakages. Also be aware that with this thickness of wood, the blades will bend within the cut, so when you try a sharp turn, the machine will have a mind of its own. And wear good dust protection.

2 Draw the outline of the sketch on to your wood, or (my preference) take a paper copy and glue it on. Cut the outside first. That might show up knots or shakes, and at this stage you might be able to tweak the design to go round them.

Then drill the openings and cut out the two large spaces at the top and the three smaller ones at the bottom. Don't drill or cut the surface ripples yet – they will be easier when thinner, which comes soon.

3 The larger spaces are drilled and some of them cut. I have not yet drilled the smaller spaces, I will do them when needed. The large solid block has been left in the middle to provide somewhere to place a clamp.

4 Now: I have an inch (2.4 cm) thickness of wood – but for the ripples I need much less. Cut away the front surface between the weed stems until you have only about 7-12mm thickness remaining.

There is a dilemma here – thinner looks much better, but this area has delicate corners on short grain, and thicker is stronger. Find a compromise, according to the type of wood you are using.

5 Mark up again, or use the paper again. Drill the spaces, but if you go further at the moment, the corners will be very delicate. Leave this part for now, and move on.

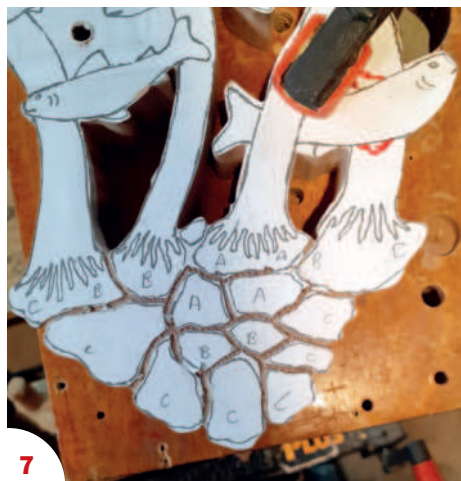
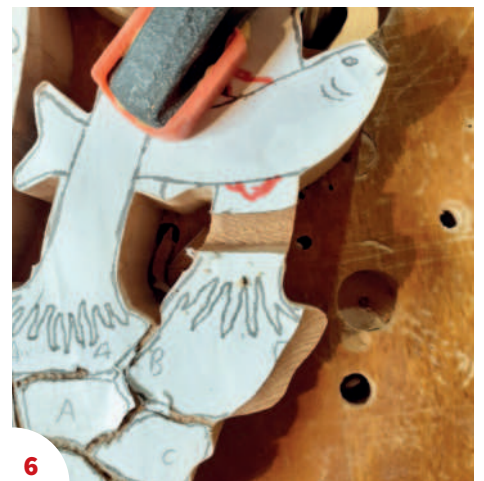
6 Start near the bottom. Consider the stones and the weed stems. The stones at the edge need to be set back, and so do some of the stems. Look at which stems go in front of or behind the first fish they encounter. Labelling the stems 1, 2, 3, 4 from left to right (and remembering that I have started with 2.4cm thickness, scale your work if necessary) cut the stems back about 1 cm up from the stones. Cut back number 1 by about 1cm, number 2 by about 6mm, number 3 by only 2 or 3mm, and number 4 by 15mm or more.

7 Then cut and round the stones. On picture 7 I have marked the stones A, B, C according to (very roughly) how far back to set them.

8 The backs of the stones also need to be rounded slightly at the edge of your carving.

9 & 10 Blend the stems to meet the stones they are attached to, and round off the front surfaces. With a small V-tool or thin-bladed craft knife mark the roots and remove a shallow groove from between them.

Maybe also check pictures of seaweed roots on the internet – don't try for too much realism, but make your ideas clear.





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11 The next job is the big fish – the one that is getting away. This is one of the difficult bits, because the fish is twisting between the stems to escape. Worse – it is not exactly relief carving, there is almost enough wood to carve the fish 'in the round'. Almost, but not quite.

Begin by marking the edge of your carving just above the fish, to show which stem goes in front, which behind. Then cut the waste away from the front. Also drill and scrollsaw to remove the small block of empty space just above this fish.

12 Then cut the fish's body from near the middle down towards the tail – you need to cut back enough to pass a stem in front of the tail. Cut the tail back to align with the body.



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13, 14 & 15 To get this right you will also have to do a bit of work on the back, cutting away the back of the stems where they might show, and establishing where the body of the fish will go. Round it off, leaving the fins as thin-edged as you can, and add a mouth, eye, and gill slits. This is where you have to make some decisions about the amount of detail on the rear of your carving. There is an old saying, that you can judge a craftsman by the amount of care and precision that he puts into parts of his work that will never be seen. I have no problem with that philosophy – in fact, I have a great deal of respect for it – but I have to admit that I rarely live up to it. So the care and detail you put on to the hidden side is your decision. I am in no position to sit in judgement.



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18

16 Get that fish right, then using similar techniques move to the fish on the lower left. This one has been left touching two stems, but even so, the final stages will be delicate. Saw away the waste immediately above the fish, but do not remove the whole of this space – you still need a good solid block for clamping.

17 & 18 Add some life and movement to the fish by curving the body. Begin this by finding a point between the middle of the body and the tail, and cutting this back roughly 7mm from the front of the carving, leaving tail and head towards the viewer. Pencil in a centreline on top and bottom, and round the front of the body.

19 Remove waste from the rear. This requires light, gentle cuts because of the short grain – if your wood is brittle you may even need to resort to burrs. Fortunately, it does not have to be accurately cut – round off the edges so it looks right from the front, but where possible (i.e. where not visible from the front) leave it thicker, for strength. When you are satisfied, move on to the first otter and the stems he is attached to.



19



20

20 Drill and scrollsaw the waste around the otter, and clear some waste from the thickest stem (number 3 in the scheme and refer to the main sketch). At this point this stem needs to drop back slightly to allow for the otter's foot to rest on it – but not too far, it will need to come forward again to cross the next stem (number 4) and then drop back again to allow stem 2 to terminate on top of it. Mark on the outside edge and remove some waste from the rear.



21



22

21 Run a small V-tool round the otter's outline where this has not been sawn, and begin to shape the body and left back foot. On the other feet, showing details of toes is not really necessary, but this foot is in an obvious position, it needs to have some toe-like markings, enough to satisfy a casual glance.

TOP TIP:

First familiarise yourself with photographs of actual otters.



22-25 Shaping the head can be tricky. Pictures from front and slanted angles lead one to expect a strong step above the nose and between the eyes, like a dog – but a good profile shot shows this is not actually very well-developed. Study photographs before putting gouge to wood. You will need to turn your work over repeatedly, shaping the front view and removing bulky waste from the back.



23



24

26 Now put some details on the face. Otter ears are small, but they need to be present. Mark a small crescent and cut away the wood around it, leaving the crescent standing just proud of the head – and be careful with the sandpaper when you get to it. Then add an eye. Mouth and nose will hardly show with an otter in this position. What you really need to complete the face are whiskers – but those are probably impossible, unless you settle for representing them with a few knife cuts in a light-coloured wood such as lime.



25



26



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34



35

27 Move on to the next otter – and basically, follow the same instructions. The thing to beware of here is that the otter's right front leg has part of its length on short grain – it will be delicate. Proceed with caution – and maybe with burrs for the later stages.

Waves, weeds and small fish

Three major jobs remain (plus an awful lot of trimming, sanding, finishing, etc.) and they have been left to now either so that there were places to use a clamp, or because they were very delicate.

28-30 First, the waves. Sketch 2 on page 63 shows the section you want to carve to. Notice that you are mostly cutting across the grain, so make sure your work is well supported, and strop your gouges frequently. The thought of taking a scrollsaw to all those tiny little openings is a bit off-putting, but it is the best way. I tried simply opening them up with a gouge, and soon went to the scrollsaw.

31 In cutting the waves you will have had to round off the tips of the weeds, and cut them to an appropriate thickness – so while doing this you might as well smooth off the rest of the weed stems. By now you have the fixed points where weeds, fish, and otters overlap (except for that final fish), so just carve some nice smooth curves to link them, removing a lot of waste from the rear. Mark first with pencil, then V-tool – then gouge. The awkward part comes where things actually meet and cross. A small undercut creates the appearance of depth and separation, but it need only be a small one in most cases. Start these undercuts with a small V-tool, but they will probably need finishing off with a thin-bladed craft knife.

32-34 And finally, the last fish. This has been left until now to provide an anchor point for clamping during other jobs, but the time has come... The instructions for this are basically as for the earlier fish, except to note that this one is on short grain, so work carefully, and where possible cut by pushing your gouge towards the point where the fish crosses the weed stem, so the delicate short grain is mostly compressed rather than sheared or twisted. And take very light cuts. Scrollsaw first, then round the front. Add a bit of a curve to give him some 'life', which he is trying to preserve by swimming away round the stem to escape from that otter. Then gouges and craft knife, and maybe burrs to cut away the waste from behind.

35 And now all that remains is to go over your work, checking the undercuts, then doing an awful lot of sanding and finishing. Choose your finish according to your wood, but I normally use Danish oil followed by wax polish. ▶

Chip carving a spoon handle

Part 3 – Lee Stoffer shows how a wooden spoon can be transformed using simple applied carving



This issue, I'm going to show you the techniques I use for chip carving details on to spoon handles. For the sake of continuity, I'm going to decorate the handle of the spoon that I finished in the last issue. The spoon itself was carved when the wood was still green, but the chip carving is best done when the wood has dried out but before oiling.

**1**

1 For this project, you will only need a couple of knives to get you started, a pencil and something to chip carve – it doesn't have to be a spoon handle but I intend to focus on this as I have developed my own technique for doing so. The tools pictured here are fairly generic and readily available. You will need the following: a sheep's foot (left) and detail knife with a nice, finely pointed tip (right).

**2**

2 This particular spoon is made from sycamore. Usually, I prefer to chip carve into silver birch as it is a bit softer and easier on the tools, but the sycamore should hold detail well. Fruit woods with a nice tight grain can also be good timbers to try – it depends what you have available. The tools pictured here are a 25mm clip point carver from Nic Westermann and three small sheep's foot-style blades I forged myself from silver steel, which are ground at various angles for use on different timbers.

3 To start, you need to mark out a basic outline using your finger on the edge of the spoon handle, which will act as a guide. Avoid drawing the whole design at this stage as you don't want excess pencil lines that may get smudged into the grain while carving the outline. These can be difficult to remove later.

4 Holding the detail knife – in my case, the clip point carver – like a pencil, cut the outside of the border. Starting on the outside edge of the pencil line with the blade tipped back at about 30° off vertical, make a shallow cut following the line. I find it helps to focus on a point about 5-10mm in front of the blade; this allows you to keep a nice fluid cut moving.

**3****4**

5 The next step is to make the inside cuts. Here I'm aiming to follow the same pencil line from the inside edge, effectively cutting the pencil line away by removing a tiny sliver of wood, triangular in section, again, with the blade around 30° off vertical.

6 With the outline completed, proceed to mark out for the chip pattern. Mark a line just inside the original cut line, then another one parallel to this 3mm inside it. The 3mm space between the lines is where the chips will be removed.

**5****6**



7 The next step is to divide the space between the lines into a triangular pattern. I usually start at the narrowest point of the design and work the size of the triangles out from there. To keep the carving as simple as possible, use equilateral triangles. The sheep's foot blade here is symmetrically ground from edge to spine at around 16° .

8 The aim now is to remove a tiny inverted pyramid of wood from each triangle marked in three cuts. Start with the inner row and cut from the outer point towards the middle of the handle, working to complete all the cuts down one side of the handle. An approach angle somewhere between 30° and 45° off vertical should work well here. With each cut you make, it is useful to try to visualise the tip of the blade reaching the centre of the marked triangle.

9 Next, it's time to make the opposite cut, this time working towards the outer edge of the spoon handle. Start with the point of the blade on the point of the triangle.

10 Pushing towards the centre of the triangle with the tip of the blade, aim towards the opposite point with the edge. Your finishing position should look something like this and the blade should drop nicely into position as it meets the cut from the previous direction.

11 Where possible, I usually take the last – release – cut with the grain as, this way I find the chips tend to come out easier and cleaner. This cut should be made with less pressure than the previous two, which were cut diagonally across the grain.

12 If all the cuts are made correctly, the chip should be released, leaving behind a nice, clean triangular void in the handle.

13 You can now continue up the handle until the row is complete, then repeat the process for the opposite side.





14



15

14 Using the same pencil lines as a reference, repeat the procedure for the outer row of chips. Care must be taken to complete but not overdo each cut. Retaining the wall between adjacent chips can be quite tricky to begin with.

15 When all the chips are released, use an eraser or fine abrasive to remove the residual pencil marks. With the pencil lines removed, you may find that some of the chips are slightly irregular. It's possible to tickle them up a bit with the detail knife, but take care, as you may end up making the chips too big or scruffy around the edges.



16



17

16 You should end up with this kind of result – a nice zigzag effect created by the opposing chips.

17 For comparison, here are my tools – centre – versus the generic ones. I found the larger generic tools harder to use on spoons but they will get the job done when properly honed. I use a small, fine ceramic stone to keep mine in good shape.

18 I also find that painting the handle after chip carving can help to accentuate the design and promote a more 3D appearance. I usually use artists' acrylic, but I've known other carvers to use oil, milk- and egg-based paints, depending on personal preference.



18

19 One last tip that I can offer – not used on this spoon – is to break larger chips down into three sections for removal. I remove these in six cuts. First, find the centre of the marked triangle and scribe a line out from it to each point. Then, push the tip of the blade into the centre of the large triangle following each line, holding the edge at a 30°-45° angle to the face of the wood until the edge reaches the outer point. Repeat for each line, then take the three usual cuts. The initial cuts allow the wood to move slightly and offer less resistance to the blade. Three chips should be released from the one hole. ▶



19



The reredos crest by Grinling Gibbons pictured from below at St James' Piccadilly

© BOB EASTON

Grinling Gibbons 300

The Grinling Gibbons Society is planning a year-long celebration of the master carver's work

Grinling Gibbons 300, Carving a Place in History, is a year-long nationwide festival, organised by the Grinling Gibbons Society under the patronage of HRH The Prince of Wales, celebrating the tercentenary of the death of Britain's finest carver of wood. The festival will launch on 3 August – the anniversary of Gibbons' death – with a national exhibition, *Grinling Gibbons: Centuries in the Making*, at Bonhams 101 New Bond Street. The exhibition will run until 27 August, when it will transfer to Compton Verney in Warwickshire from 25 September 2021–30 January 2022 with additional exhibits. There will be events running until August 2022, including Baroque musical recitals

and commemorative services in churches, with Gibbons' decorative flourishes.

Centuries in the Making will explore the influences that shaped Gibbons' vision, skills and technique and the stylistic and cultural influences he brought to this country. Works are being assembled from national museums, regional collections, historic houses and some international lenders, and combined with contemporary artworks. Through sculpture and carving in wood and stone, drawings and sketches, portraits and documents, *Centuries in the Making* will bring a new perspective to Gibbons and his legacy. The exhibition will also examine how Gibbons' bold new direction changed the direction of British

carving, sculpture and interiors, and how his extraordinary creative output inspired both his contemporaries and makers across the succeeding 300 years. The influence of Gibbons will be traced to the present day, with works by contemporary artists and designers, and specially created artworks by talented emerging carvers.

Grinling Gibbons' life and work

Grinling Gibbons (born 4 April 1648, Rotterdam, died 3 August 1721, London) is the most celebrated British woodcarver of the 17th century. Gibbons was born in Rotterdam to English parents. He emigrated to England in the 1660s to work first in York and then London. After his arrival in



Sarah Davis – finalist in the Grinling Gibbons Tercentenary Award pictured starting work on her entry



Isaac Barrow Coat of Arms, Wren Library, exhibit in Centuries in the Making exhibition, Grinling Gibbons 300 festival



St Paul's Cathedral was one of Grinling Gibbons' most illustrious commissions and a defining symbol of professional triumph



Font cover by Grinling Gibbons, All Hallows Church. Exhibit in Grinling Gibbons Society's tercentenary exhibition Centuries in the Making

London Gibbons quickly attracted attention, and was given his first royal commission in 1675, when hired by Charles II to produce decorative carving for Windsor Castle. Over the next 25 years he completed important commissions for Whitehall Palace, St Paul's Cathedral, Hampton Court Palace and Blenheim Palace. In 1693 he was appointed as master sculptor and carver in wood by King William III.

Gibbons pioneered a highly distinctive style, carving in very high relief with exceptional naturalistic detail. His trademark was cascades of fruit, leaves, flowers, foliage, fish and birds. Gibbons worked primarily in lime wood – a material whose uniform but soft structure makes it particularly well suited to high-relief carving. Described as the 'Michelangelo of wood', Gibbons created masterpieces for Kensington, Hampton Court, Windsor and Whitehall palaces. His works are today

represented in the Royal Collection and Historic Royal Palaces, as well as across national and international museums, country houses, and churches, including St Paul's Cathedral and York Minster.

The Grinling Gibbons Society is a charity that was established in 2020 to plan and coordinate the Grinling Gibbons 300 Festival on behalf of all tercentenary partners. Its aim is to help the nation celebrate Gibbons' extraordinary impact on Britain's heritage across the passage of 300 years, inspire learning and debate, making and research, giving audiences the opportunity to see Gibbons' work either for the first time or in new ways.

Grinling Gibbons Tercentenary Award

The Society has organised an award for early career carvers and sculptors to

showcase the breadth of creativity and talent that flourishes in Britain's next generation of carvers. The winners will be announced in August and 11 brand new works will be exhibited at Grinling Gibbons: Centuries in the Making exhibitions.

As Dr Tristram Hunt, president of the Grinling Gibbons Society and director of the V&A commented: 'Grinling Gibbons is rightly revered as one of the greatest woodcarvers in the history of European sculpture. He helped to shape the aesthetic of the British Baroque and set the benchmark for craftsmanship, naturalism and technical proficiency. The V&A is delighted to help support the tercentenary of his death and honour Gibbons as such a signal figure in the history of British decorative art.'

For more information, visit:
Grinling-Gibbons.org

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Sharpening clinic – Just Scraping By

Nic Westermann
sharpens a scraper



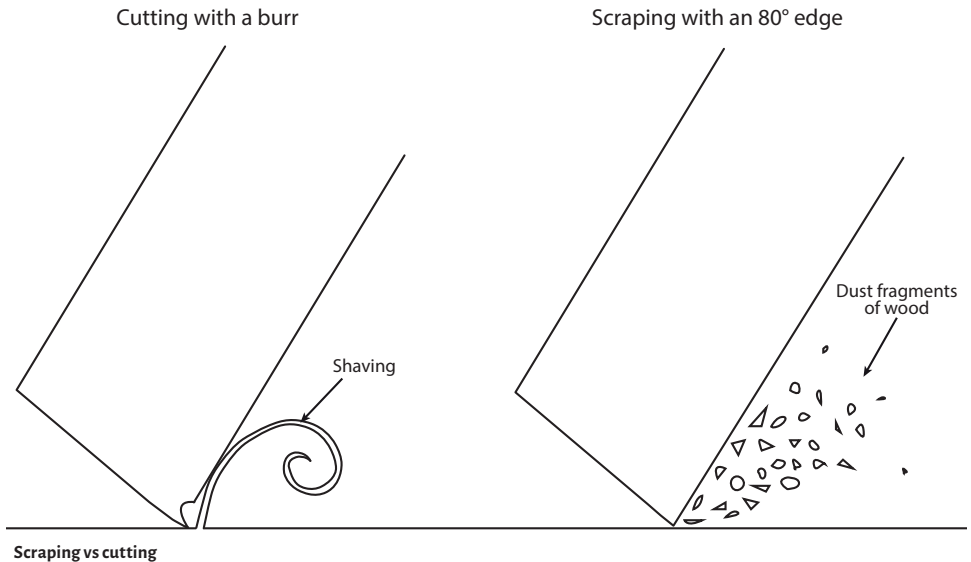
Some things never change – me being late with copy, just scraping in before the final deadline, and of course my lame puns. However, sharpening this scraper was a change, it was the first time I had creating an edge by deforming steel. The tools I make are heat treated, so under pressure they will flex and then regain their shape, or if too much pressure is applied, snap. My new workshop neighbour mentioned an intriguing handled scraper design that he makes with his students. I had to try sharpening it and for me it has been a very interesting lesson.

Scrapers do have their place in a carver's tool kit, I am reliably informed by Peter Benson – they deal very well with unruly grain and can smooth small areas discreetly without having to resort to sanding the whole piece. If hand held they can also get into tight areas that are hard to reach with sandpaper. I have been really impressed with this simple tool and will be including this and the simpler hand held version in my day-to-day working practices.

Scrapers can be sharpened in two ways, with no burr when a true scraping action occurs, or with a burr – if this is well formed then a cut is possible. This is the form I will be concentrating on.

Scrapers are made of thin strips of spring steel but tempered to be relatively soft so it will deform. This is how they are sharpened, a burr is raised on a sharpened corner using a hardened rod known as a burnisher or ticketer. This is the process I found so fascinating. Aled's scraper is a handled design and has a slightly different design and bevel profile to a standard card scraper, but the theory is essentially the same. Scrapers, being so soft, are easily damaged and below is a close-up of a burr I destroyed when trying to clean up a knife handle and hitting the edge.

My standard two-step sharpening procedure involves first cutting the bevel to the optimum profile and then refining the edge by working down through the grits. But in this case it doesn't really work, as the profile you start with is not the profile you finish with and rolling the burr can actually make the surface

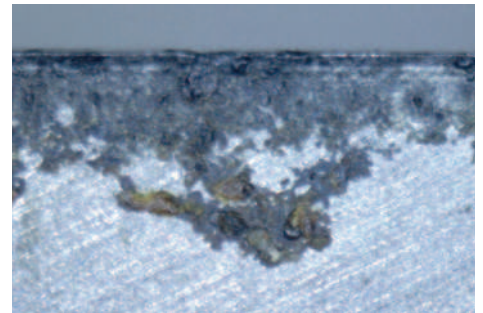


Aled's scraper and close-up inset

finish rougher, so there is little point in finishing to a really high grit.

First a few pictures of the blade – you can see it had rusted although the burr was originally well formed.

I cleaned up this face first – pits from rust can go very deep and this was no exception. It took a while to get them out on the ProEdge and I then worked down through the grits thinking that a good finish was essential on this face. I was wrong, as you will see later.



Close up 2: The blade was blunt due to rust rather than edge damage

Next I ground the top of the scraper. Mostly scrapers are ground at 90° so a burr can be raised on both sides, but this dedicated one was sided and ground at 80°, a simple job on the ProEdge. This was again taken to a fine grit and on this face it is more important.

The burr is then raised in the following sequence shown below.

Drawing out the corner, using hard downwards pressure and imperceptibly tipping the burnisher to concentrate all the force on the corner.



Flattening on the ProEdge

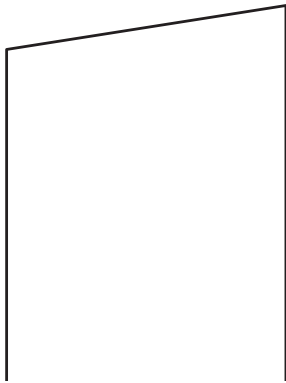


Grinding the bevel on the ProEdge

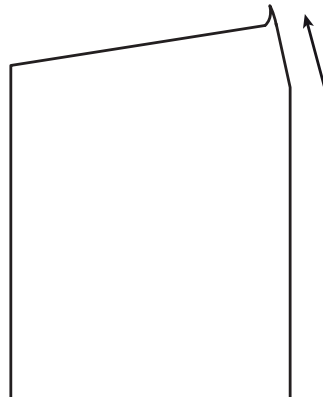


Drawing out the corner (the scraper needs to be held down with your other hand)

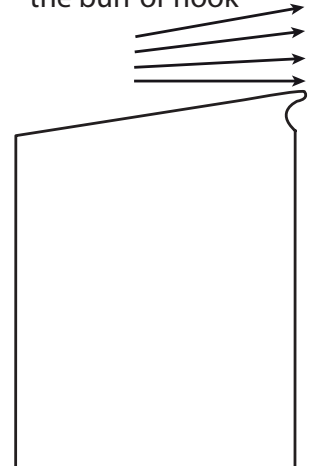
80° edge



Corner drawn out by burnishing the flat surface



Progressively burnishing downwards forms the burr or hook



Forming the burr or hook

Next the scraper is held in a vice and the burr gently rounded over in a series of strokes, starting parallel to the bevel and ending up horizontal, so putting a final burr angle of 10°. Deforming the steel messes up the surface finish as you will see in the close-up.

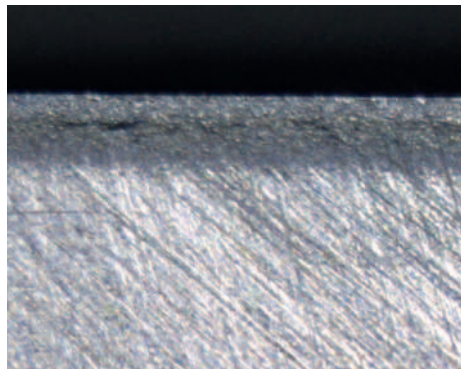


Hooking over the burr

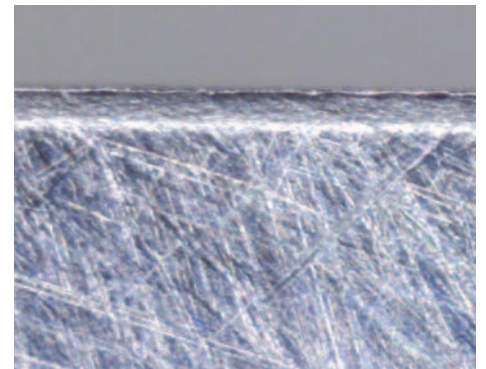
Resharpening

First, flatten the burr along the face with the burnisher and then gently regrind the 80° bevel to touch up the edge ready for the burr forming procedure previously mentioned. This can be done on a stone of course, some sort of jig, however simple, will help you keep everything true. However, if you want a gentler scraping action then the edge is ready to go as is. It really is that simple and quick.

This tool Aled makes is very simple. The



Burr part formed – notice the lumpy surface finish



Burr fully formed

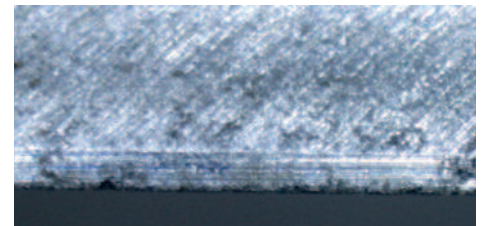
blade is clamped between the two halves of beech making up the body. For a long time, I was getting better results taking the blade out and using the scraper by hand. But I eventually realised that although you can put a giant burr and set the blade with a large overhang, this tool it is not meant for roughing out, but for refining the surface. Once it set up with a very small cut it is transformed, wispy shavings and no chatter – it would even cut up against the grain. So lesson learnt again, just because you can take a big cut it doesn't mean you should.

Top tips

1. Don't use a burnisher with scratches in it – they will be transferred to the scraper. Also, my preference is to use a skewing/slicing action to tease the burr out rather than going directly parallel to the edge

as has obviously been done here.

2. A very light smear of oil on the scraper and the burnisher makes the process a bit smoother as well.
3. It takes a bit of practice to get the results you are looking for and thinking bigger was better. I was able to get a huge burr that took such big shavings that it clogged the mouth of the tool. ▶



Scratches transferred from burnisher to the bevel on the blade

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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Bandsaws

Anthony Bailey discusses what you need to know about bandsaws and why

A stable and well set up bandsaw with a sharp blade can perform wonders, but one that shudders during use, has guides wrongly set, worn tyres and a blunt blade is no use to anyone. There are things to look out for if you are choosing a new

machine or are trying to decide if your current machine is up to the job. Modern bandsaws are generally well built, the cases are rigid and won't shake during use. Very small or certain older machines may have casings that flex.

Bandwheels need to run true (without any

waggle) and be in line with each other. They should have rubber or cork tyres which have a cambered profile, not flat. There will be a blade tensioning knob and possibly a quick tensioning lever so blade changing is easier and tension is removed when the machine is not being used. The upper bandwheel will also have a tracking knob to tilt it so the blade will run centrally on both wheels.

The most contentious matter is the blade guides. Properly set up, the blade will run without any guides but for actual cutting, guides are essential and must be set correctly. Usually there is a guide wheel behind, flat-on to the blade rear edge and about one millimetre behind it. Better machines have a second guide below the table surface usually running edge-on to the blade edge. This is more logical than the flat-on method above, as the wheel will rotate easily as well as having a hardened steel rim.

Next there are side guide blocks or wheels which must be set so as not to bend the path of the blade when running. These need to be in good condition so they can keep the blade facing straight forward to the user.

The table should be cast iron and may have a metal dowel that fits in the front edge where the blade slot is. Its function is to hold the cast iron level as it can bend slightly. There can be a bolted-on bar instead of the dowel; this performs the same function. There is usually a scale rod or bar that carries the fence mounting. The fence can be removed and should be adjustable. In the lower bandwheel casing are the pulley wheels and drive belt that turns the bandwheel. There is an idler wheel which can be moved to tension the drive belt. A brush head rubs on the bandwheel to try and keep it free from sawdust and one or two extraction outlets depending on the size of the machine.

At the rear of the machine will be found an induction motor, which is much quieter than a 'brush' motor. It needs to be powerful enough to deal with deep cutting and 'green' wood. The bandsaw should be firmly bolted down to a cabinet or stand so it can't move around and make it safer to balance long sections on the table for sawing.

The most critical items are the blades. The one supplied with the machine may not be the best quality or the correct type for your work. There are a wide variety of blades available to buy online or if you are lucky enough to have a really good tool dealer near you. Whatever types or sizes you decide are best for your work, you need to keep spare ones in stock because a machine which seems to be behaving poorly may just need a really sharp new blade. A blade can 'go off' very quickly when you least expect it and touching the tips of a static blade does not always give you the right information about its condition.



Deep cutting using a 4tpi (teeth per inch) skip tooth blade to clear the extra waste due to the deeper cut



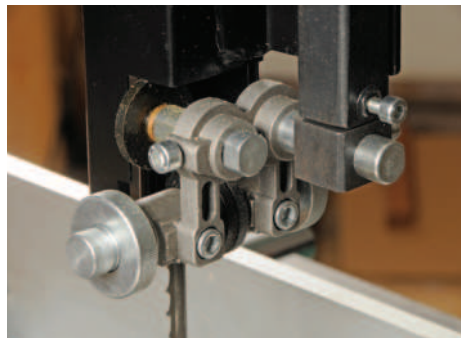
Typical bandsaw case interior design. The drive belt for the bottom wheel has a tensioning handle to ensure it is always running correctly. There are safety microswitches on both doors



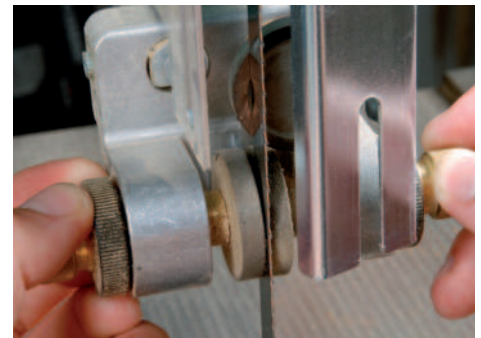
The rear of the case has the tilt and lock for blade tracking and a lock knob for the rise and fall blade guard. In addition there is a quick release lever for detensioning the blade



Blades come as standard tooth, skip-tooth with a gap between teeth as seen here or coarse cutting raker teeth. Skip-tooth is the standard type for all except for thin ply or very deep cutting; more on this in the next issue



The upper guides showing the rotating flat hardened wheel behind the blade and the two side guides. There are other methods on some machines



The guides must be set so the blade can move freely, but also set back behind the tooth line or they will get damaged



This more expensive machine uses roller bearing guides; some cheaper machines just use solid hardened blocks, although these may be substituted with replaceable hardwood blocks instead



The guides under the table are hidden by safety guards which make access to the guides rather restricted. Note the lockable table tilt trunnions behind



A narrow skip tooth blade is needed for cutting tight curves, although a wider blade can sometimes be used if relieving cuts are executed so the waste can come away in sections

The Palais Garnier

We take a closer look at Paris' opulent theatre

The Palais Garnier was built in the 1860s as part of Emperor Napoleon III and Baron Haussmann's extensive redevelopment of Paris. The then little-known architect Charles Garnier won the commission and designed the building in an eclectic style, mixing Baroque, Palladian and Renaissance elements; this became known as the Napoleon III style. Both the exterior and interior are highly decorated; the elaborate façade features gilded sculptures of figures representing harmony and poetry, and bronze busts of famous composers. The rich interior is

decorated with masses of velvet and gold leaf, including carvings of cherubim and nymphs. The Grand Staircase (shown here) is made from white, red and green marble, with sculptures of female torch bearers made by Albert-Ernest Carrier-Belleuse.

The Palais Garnier was the main theatre for the Paris Opera until 1989 when the company moved to the newly built Opera Bastille. The Garnier is now mainly used for ballet performances.

You can take a virtual tour of the building and see its masterpieces up close via artsandculture.google.com.



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75mm (3") Clamping Capacity / 10 - 180kg (25 - 400lb) Clamping Force

TRAA DPBC3
AUTOJAWS™ DRILL PRESS □ BENCH CLAMP



TRAA FC6
AUTOJAWS™ FACE CLAMP



150mm (6") Clamping Capacity / 25 - 250kg (25 - 250lb) Clamping Force

TRAA DPBC6
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