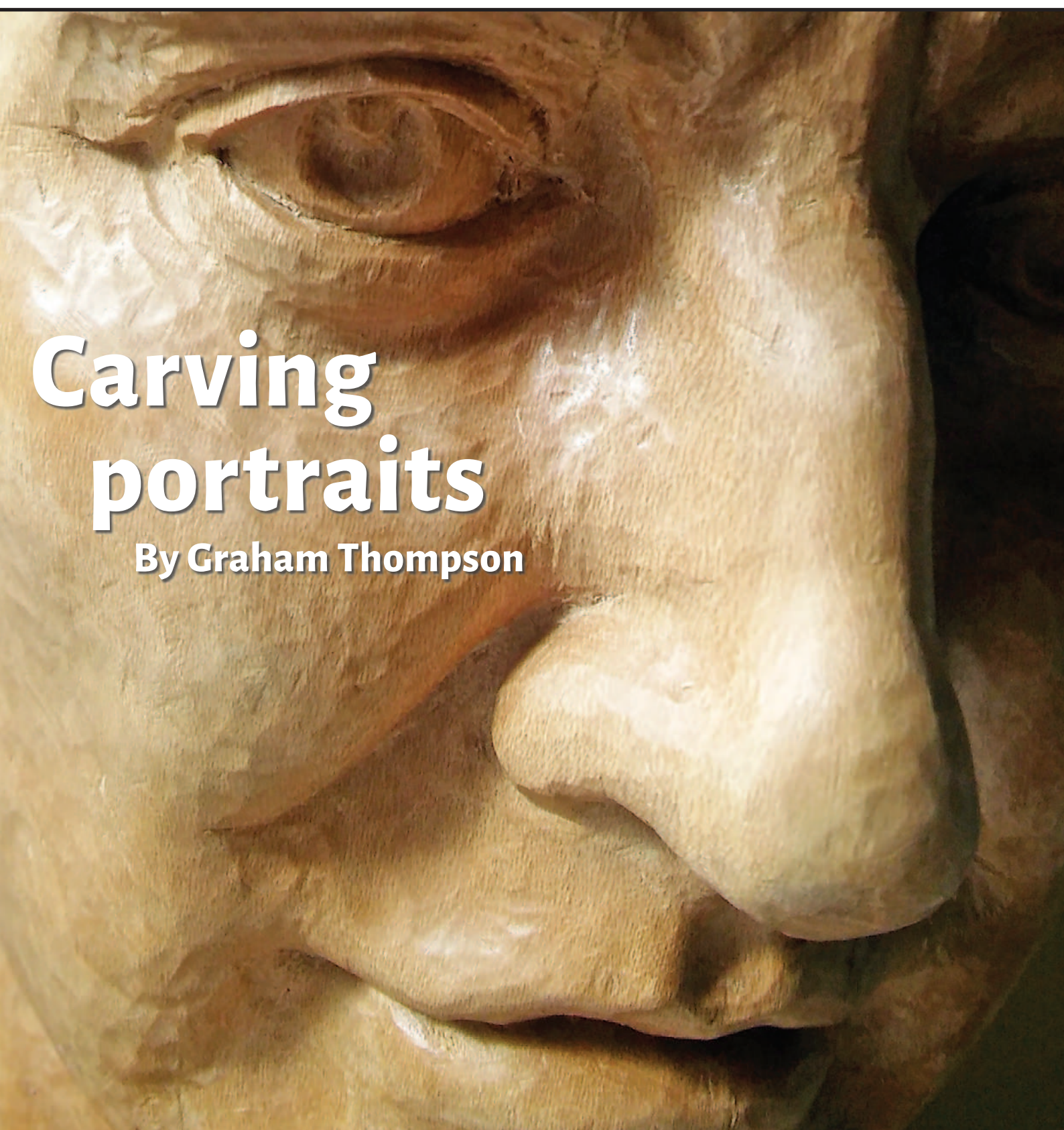


# WOOD CARVING



## Carving portraits

By Graham Thompson

**TECHNICAL ADVICE** Beginner's guide to carving tools • Relief carving  
**PROJECTS TO CARVE** Egyptian-style sunken relief • Briar rose • Bees and honeycomb • Anniversary spoon • Fox head walking stick • Kuksa bench



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# Welcome



PHOTOGRAPH BY KEVIN ALVITH

I have always considered carving the human form to be the most challenging. I have spent many hours trying to achieve a detailed and attractive carving only to be sadly disappointed by my lifeless examples. There are so many intricate details in a person's body, especially in the face, and there is a fine difference between getting the facial features to look the correct proportion and carving them to have character and life. Graham Thompson shows us how to identify these characteristics and, with just a few minutes' extra work, how to upgrade your carvings from just correct to amazingly lifelike.

For the beginner, woodcarving can be a daunting prospect and among the first questions they want answering are: what tools do I need? How much will it cost? In this issue, Peter Benson passes on his vast knowledge of the subject and helps guide the beginner to answer these questions. Armed with this knowledge, beginners will be able to make informed buying decisions and save money by only purchasing exactly what they need for the type of carving they want to start with.

For all you experienced woodcarvers we have a wealth of articles in this issue. Every woodworker will want to make the carved oil stone box, architectural carvers will love the Egyptian sunken relief carvings, and the anamorphic art carvings will continue to inspire with this revived artform. Creature lovers will get their fix with a fox head walking stick, the bees and honeycomb and the briar rose plaques, and will be amazed by the splendid creatures of the deep. I once carved a chain from a single piece of wood and that was a great challenge for me, but immensely satisfying, so imagine how pleased you will be with yourself when you complete the complex Celtic wedding anniversary spoon project.

Find this and so much more in this issue.

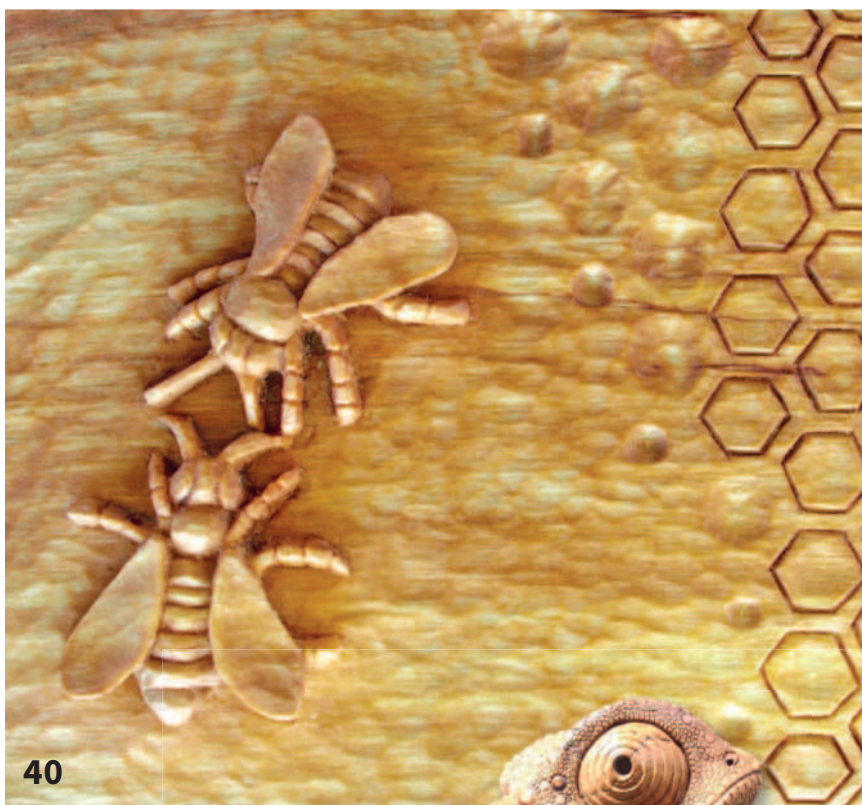
As always, we love to see what you've been carving, so please email photos of your work to [WCeditorial@thegmcgroup.com](mailto:WCeditorial@thegmcgroup.com).

Happy carving  
Alan Goodsell





64



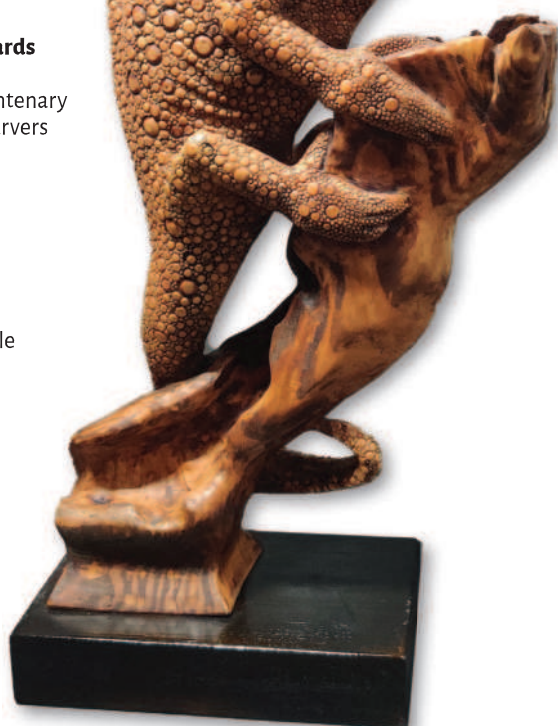
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# Briar rose

Steve Bisco tackles a thorny subject in this low relief project using green oak

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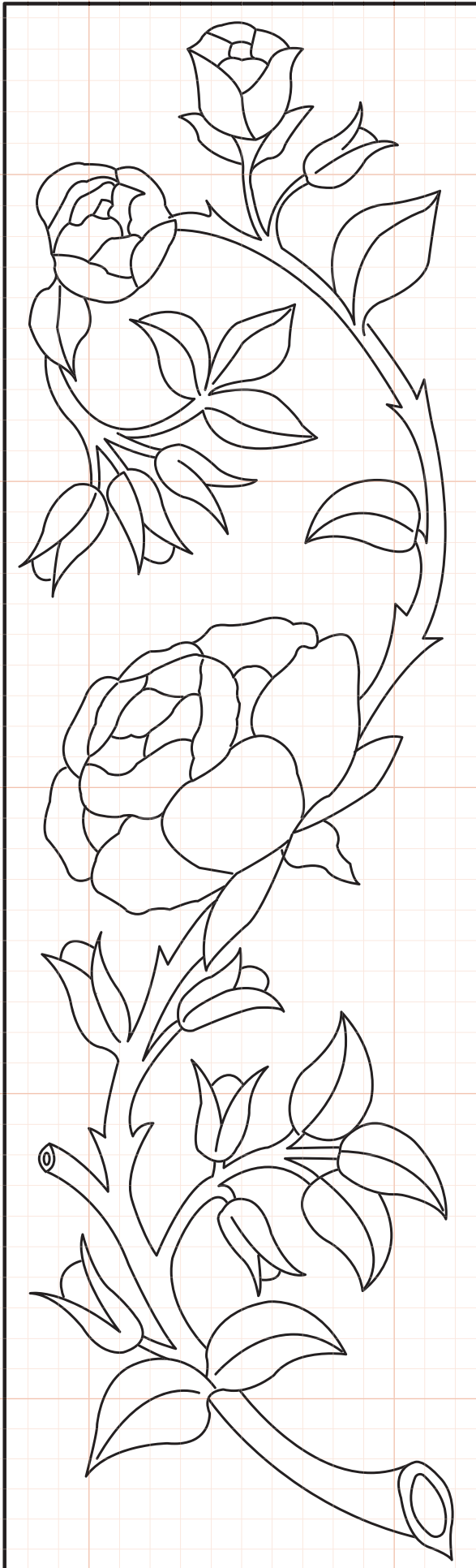
Roses are among the most beautiful flowers in nature, and have long been associated with love and romance, but they also have a more sinister side. The thorny stems they grow on, known as the briar, are associated in folklore with evil and danger. In many fairy tales, the pricking of a finger on a rose thorn leads to enchantment or even death at the hands of an evil witch. This legend has its origins in real life, as rose thorns can indeed pose a mortal danger from tetanus. We do not need to fear our carved thorns, but by focusing on the briar as well as the flowers, we can create a rather more edgy design that has the merest hint of menace among the beauty.

A briar rose design contains so many features to entertain the woodcarver – the slender, twisting stems, the menacing thorns, the curling serrated leaves, the nascent rosebuds promising beauty to come, and finally the fully-formed flowers spreading their open petals like the crescendo of a symphony. I have designed this example to be carved in low relief in oak, and in the Arts & Crafts style of the late 19th/early 20th century.

Oak is a lovely wood to carve, especially if you use 'green' oak that has been air-dried for about three years. Green oak is less hard and less brittle than kiln-dried oak, so it is easier to form the points on the thorns and rosebuds and carve the narrow stems. The only drawback of green oak is that it is liable to warp as it continues to dry out for up to eight years, but on a narrow board like this one that is not likely to be a great problem. Like the pricking of the thorns on a rose, we must balance the downside of using green oak with the benefits of its better suitability for carving.







### CARVING OAK:

Oak has been used for centuries as the principal carving wood in Britain and Europe because of its endurance, attractive colour, and ability to take fine detail. Its hardness and brittle grain, however, do present some challenges to the carver. Most cuts need to be made with the aid of a mallet, and you must always keep your eye on the grain direction. When carving thin sections across the grain, like the thin stems, take great care to avoid breaking out the short grain sections. When carving horizontally, like on the background surface, remember that the grain may go up or down as well as left and right. Carving into a downward sloping grain may cause splinters to break out from the surface you wanted to keep, so look at the side of your panel to see how the grain runs in relation to the surface.

### Things you will need

#### Materials:

- Oak 440 x 130 x 38mm
- Wax polish (Antiquax Original)

#### Tools:

- PPE and RPE

#### Gouges:

- No.2, 25mm
- No.3, 10mm, 5mm bent
- No.3 fishtail, 18mm, 10mm
- No.4 fishtail, 6mm
- No.5, 7mm, 5mm, 3mm
- No.7, 10mm
- No.8, 8mm, 8mm curved

- No.9, 20mm, 3mm, 16mm curved
- Skewed spoon, 10mm L&R
- Back-bent, 12mm
- V-tool, 6mm straight, 2mm straight

#### Chisels:

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

#### Other:

- Plane (for edge chamfer)

### FORESHORTENING AND PERSPECTIVE:

When carving in low relief it is easy to depict shallow elements – such as the stems, leaves and rosebuds – in their natural thickness, but for the larger items like the rose flowers we use a technique called ‘foreshortening’ to create the illusion of a depth much greater than the actual thickness of the carving. By using a shallow curve at the edges of the upper surface, and then increasing it to a steep curve that curls around and under the back to create a disappearing edge, the eye sees the resulting oval cross-section as a much thicker and more rounded object than it really is. On the roses we can also make the petals at the front larger than those at the back to create a perspective of distance. In photo 17 you can see how these effects make the large rose look circular even though it is only 20mm from front to back.



## Preparations

**1** Get a piece of green oak, 440 x 130 x 38mm, and plane all the surfaces. Make a full-size copy of the drawing to fit the wood, and get some carbon paper for tracing.

**2** Fix the drawing securely in place with masking tape, with the carbon paper under it, and trace the pattern on to the wood.

**3** Draw, or scribe with a marking gauge, a depth line all around the sides of the block 20mm from the front face. This level will be the background surface for the carved pattern.

## Blocking out

**4** Set up the work on your bench, with strips of wood screwed to the bench to hold it still. Cut all round the edges of the pattern, and along the 20mm depth line, with a V-tool. This gives you a clear, visible edge to work up to and reduces the risk of splinters running off into the pattern area.

**5** Use deep gouges (Nos. 7 to 9) to excavate the bulk of the surplus wood from around the pattern. Work down towards the background level, but don't go beyond the 20mm maximum depth. Make a depth gauge by inserting a screw through a flat piece of wood, with the point protruding 20mm. You can also drill out some of the internal areas, but fix a piece of tape on the drill bit to make sure you don't exceed the 20mm depth.

**6** Use a V-tool to remove most of the wood around where the pattern areas meet the background, then with the surplus wood removed you can safely 'bost' downwards along the edges. Create a clean vertical edge so the pattern lines are carried down to their final level without spreading outwards. Be careful not to break off the thin points of the rosebuds and leaves.

**7** Level off the background to the 20mm level all over, using shallow gouges and flat chisels. Lay the batten of the screw depth gauge on the pattern surface and move it around so the screw scratches any part of the background that is not 20mm deep. Keep levelling until the screw leaves no more scratches.

## Roughing out

**8** Roughing out makes the detail carving easier by getting the various elements at the right level first. Leaving the rose flowers untouched for now, reduce the level of the stems, leaves and rosebuds nearer to their final level. Leave enough wood to give the leaves plenty of twist and curl.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVE BISCO



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**9** Round over the sides of the two half-open roses at the top of the carving so they sit in a natural position on the stem. The top one faces upwards, and the left-side one faces towards the upper left corner and slopes towards the foreground.

**10** Shape the large central rose so it faces towards the upper left, and the stem sits underneath the lower right. Use the 'foreshortening' technique (see box) to make it appear deeper by rounding over the outer edges.

### Detail carving

**11** Shape the lower part of the stem below the central rose. Give it a bit of rise and fall as far as the low relief allows, and scoop out the broader section at the base to make it look like it has been torn from the branch. Carve the thin side shoots, and the small pointed thorns that spring from the sides of the stem. Take care not to break out the short grain sections.

**12** Now carve the rosebuds with their overlapping husks, or sepals, covering the embryonic flower bud. Curve the points outwards and carve a 'waist' in the middle. Be careful not to break up the points that extend across the grain.

**13** Carve the leaves so they have plenty of rise and fall. Use a fine V-tool to carve a central vein and several side veins in each leaf, then scoop a hollow between each side vein with an 8mm No.8 gouge. Use the gouge and the V-tool again to cut scallops and serrations in the leaf edges. Where the leaf edge is furthest from the background, undercut it to make it look detached.

**14** Repeat the same processes on the stem, rosebuds and leaves in the upper part of the carving.

**15** Carve the half-open rose at the very top. This faces upwards and presents itself almost side-on to the viewer. The large petals on the outside encase most of the flower. In the top, carve a hole in the centre and layer the smaller petals around it. At the stem end of the rose, the sepals (remains of the husk) spread both sides of the stem.

**16** Now carve the other small rose in the upper left. This is more open and rounded. Again, layer the petals around the centre hole. The hole is positioned to indicate that the flower is facing to the upper left and slightly forwards.

### TOP TIP 1

After roughing out you will need to redraw some of the features before the detail carving. Use a fine wax pencil of a colour that will just show up on the oak. This will scrape off easily in the carving process. Avoid graphite pencils as the graphite gets ground into the oak and makes it grubby. Never use felt-tip pens as the ink will soak into the wood.



## TOP TIP 2

A good woodcarving is a combination of woodworking and artistry. In a low relief carving, working within such a confined depth can lead to the elements looking a bit flat unless you apply some artistry to prevent it. Give each element an extra flourish of rise and fall, twist and curl, and general exaggeration to amplify the features that will draw the eye and lead it around the pattern. In nature, flat surfaces and straight lines do not exist, so when carving from nature take your inspiration from the living plant – and think like an artist as well as a woodworker.

**17** Now it's time to tackle the big open rose that is the centrepiece of the carving. First mark out the three large petals that form the front of the rose, then layer the other petals around the outside so that the ones at the back of the rose are just above the background. Make a hole in the centre to show that it is facing upwards to the left, then layer the middle petals to wrap around this hole.

**18** Carve the individual petals, and the sepals where it sits on the stem. Use a deep gouge to create hollows around the edges of the petals and shallow channels running down towards their bases. Give the edges a few crinkles to create a natural-looking rose. Note the effect of foreshortening and perspective (see box) to create an illusion of depth.

## Finishing

**19** Use a small V-tool to undercut all the edges of the roses, stems, leaves and rosebuds so they appear to be three-dimensional objects slightly detached from the background.

**20** With a naturalistic carving like this, a textured background gives the impression of grass or foliage and makes the carved pattern stand out more. Use an 8mm No.8 curved gouge to take little scooping cuts out of the background surface, working upwards from the bottom so you are always cleaning up the rough upper edge of the previous cut. In the very tight spots you can use a smaller bent gouge.

**21** With the carving finished, plane a 45° chamfer along the sides and ends of the panel to give a neater finish to the edges.

**22** Give the whole panel – front and back – two coats of a good wax polish. I use Antiquax Original for light oak. Use a stiff brush to work the wax into all the crevices and, when it has been absorbed into the wood, use a dry cloth to buff it up to a soft sheen.

**23** Hang the carving in a place where the light will strike it sideways to enhance the shadows on the low relief. ▶



17



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# 3D human portraits

Graham Thompson discusses why a portrait is so much more than a face

**A** confession. My ears are not a matching pair. There, I've said it and it's in print. Despite many ears carved over many years I still hadn't realised, until recently, that mine are individual in orientation and in detail. Discovering after all this time that my helix (it's at the top) is slightly more curled over on one ear than the other was quite a revelation and a vindication of my exhortation to keep looking and eventually you will see (note to self). Also, while we are in the confessional, I have become convinced that my right eye is slightly higher than the other one. So what, you may think, but these small details are part of my individual – dare I say unique – appearance. I promise not to bore you with any more of my oddities but I would like to encourage you to have a go at carving not just a head but someone's head.



Not My Ear – beech



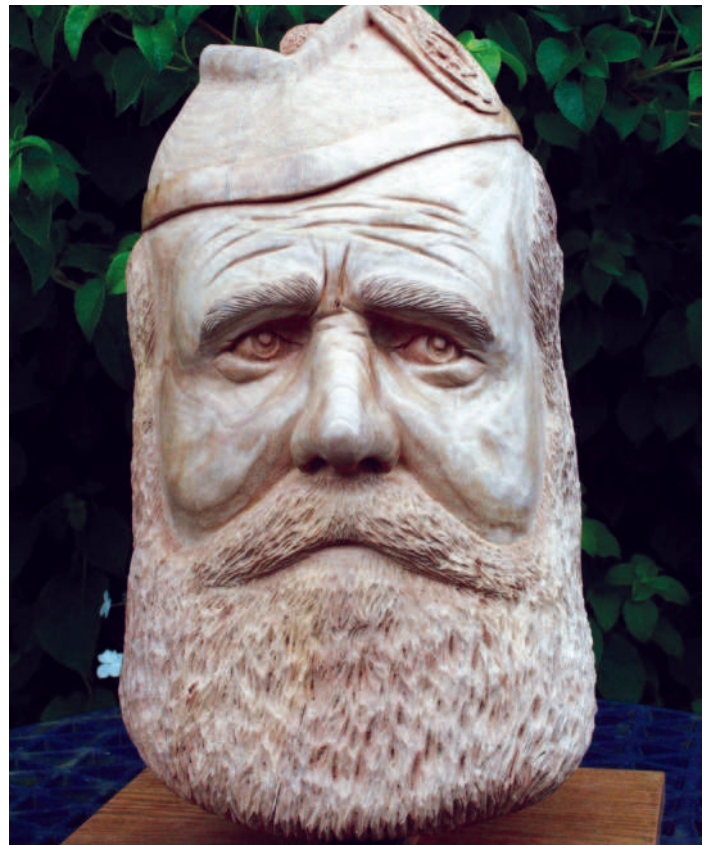
PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF GRAHAM THOMPSON





ABOVE: A made-up likeness for a fictional character – painted elm

ABOVE RIGHT: Churchill – painted with acrylics RIGHT: Good image for measurements



## The third dimension

It's time to explore the third dimension – or what I call, depth. I'm not suggesting that you discard all you know about relief-carved images. In fact, most of what you know is still valuable, it's just that you go about it in a different manner. Quite simply a 3D portrait (or anything) requires a back as well as a front and, while we're at it, two sides as well. There we are then, that's all you need to know. Off you go and good luck...

Or read on and maybe pick up a few more tips and I hope some inspiration too.

## Sources

Depending on your chosen subject there are potentially many ways to gain the information needed to create an image in the round. Use as many sources as you can, even if just getting ideas for ears (here we go again). Many of my lesser-known subjects end up with something resembling my ears if extant portraits have the ears covered, so why not use my own – they're handy after all. I don't even need to worry about recreating my differences, no one will ever know. Alternatively, why not invent your own 'likeness' of (say) a character from a book?

Historical characters are good and often have one pose that defines them. What you are trying to avoid is making it difficult for the viewer to identify the subject simply because you have chosen an atypical photograph. Why not make your task easier and choose a contemporary and co-operative subject and take your own photos. Start with square-on shots from four sides, plus straight down and under the chin. All the time in the same pose and at a consistent distance from camera to subject avoiding distortion. All very useful for marking out and measuring proportions.

## Get ahead

I find it useful to take notes as I work my way through the subject's images. You can refer back to your notes frequently during the carving process. This is particularly useful if you reach a stage where you can't decide what to do next or something is wrong but you're not sure what. The notes may just remind you of a particular feature that you had forgotten or misrepresented.

## Data

Imagine your subject as a silhouette, first from the front then from the side. This will help you to understand and record the subject's stance and their proportions. If possible, take back-lit photos with the flash turned off, keeping the same settings and distance from the subject so as to standardise images, thereby avoiding scale problems.



## Here are some typical notes I would make before starting carving

### Stance:

Viewed from a distance, the way someone holds their head is the main way that you would recognise them. Look around at other people – they are all different. You need to find out what makes your subject special.

### Proportions:

It's very important to get this right.

### Skull:

Examine the bone structure and shape.

### Forehead:

Furrowed brow, vertical or sloping back, hairline.

### Eyes:

Wide or narrow set, size varies and can be very distinctive.

### Eyebrows:

Prominent, bushy, thin or non-existent.

### Nose:

View from all angles available, measure and compare.

### Mouth:

Width, compare upper and lower lips.

### Chin:

Depth, projection, 'square' or rounded.

### Cheeks:

View from front and above.

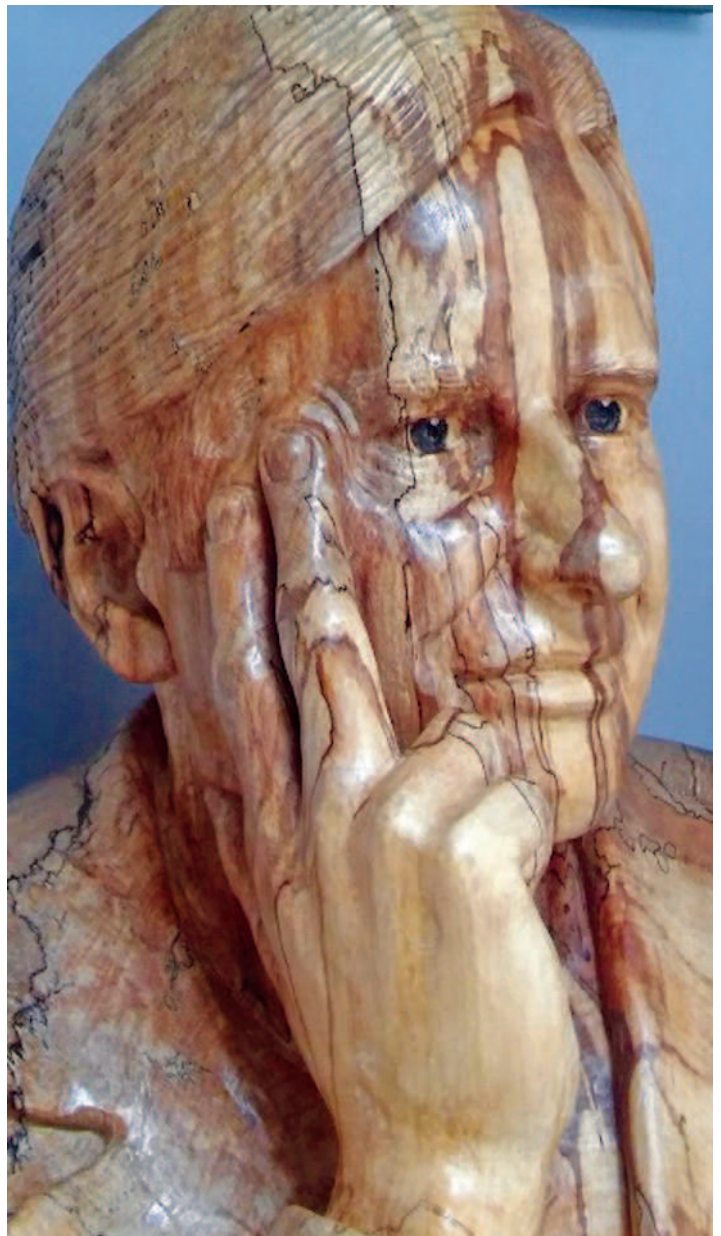
**Ears:** Size, relationship to jaw and cranium. Lobes vary a lot.

**Neck:** Thickness, defined Adam's apple?

**Hair:** Thickness, full head or receding, style, parting.

## Pose

Pick a pose that suits or even defines the subject but keep it simple and always remember that the head needs to be not quite straight. Slightly turned and probably angled down a little, to look natural.



Typical pose for the subject

## Before you start

Consider and match your ambition/ability to the subject and the piece. Source or make (glue together) a block to give plenty of material for the desired size of finished work. Perversely, I like to use simple round logs and enjoy working around all the splits, knots etc. that emerge as I carve. You may find it's easier to work on a lifesize 1:1 scale but if it is your first portrait then working to less than lifesize could be helpful simply because there is less material to remove.

## To work

My technique may not be the quickest way to create a portrait but it has developed over 20 years or so and is, I have found, a rewarding way to achieve a result. By concentrating the early work on the face alone, including its proportions and position as part of the head, I now know that the rest follows quickly after initial, confidence boosting, success.

Mark the wood with a simple centreline, not forgetting to angle the line to left or right according to your chosen pose. It's also worth making a similar vertical line on the sides indicating a face-up or face-down rake. Depending on this head tilt, your subject's chin, nose or even forehead may be the frontal 'highpoint'. Then consult your notes and measurements to mark the main facial high points (tip of nose,



Roughing-out with an axe





Jane Eyre 'apparent'

mouth centre, chin and crown – not forgetting the hair – cheekbones and eyebrows) on the material. Most of these marks will need regular renewal after you start carving. Then add a horizontal line for eye centres. Most of these marks can continue round the side of the block so when you come to redraw on to fresh material you simply join up at the front.

Working left and right away from the nose, form a blunt wedge shape but only as far as the cheekbones' and eyebrows' outer edge. Looking down and from the front, the face is basically a triangle. Then, working away from the highest point (likely to be the tip of the nose) remove material to suggest the start of eyes, nose width and mouth shape. Note: at this stage all we are looking for is a vague shape suggesting a sleeping face covered by a thin material. Details can come later once you are sure of the overall proportions and positions. Keep checking from all frontal angles and gradually improve the look of the still sleeping face by constantly moving round the face. You will revisit each area and adjacent features many times before the look is appearing complete – but still asleep.

You can either start the details or move on to the sides of the head now. Assuming the latter, you can return to the triangle, which usually terminates at the ears' outer point – or possibly the hair (check your notes and measurements).

If your subject's ears are showing it's time to check and mark the position, angle of rake and overall dimensions. Keep looking, comparing, marking, checking and then removing material will result in the subject appearing to wear headphones which taper towards the front. In effect, a wedge within a wedge.

Returning to the jawline, start to form a chin to neck shape by carefully undercutting the area. A warning here: depending on the pose, expression and individual subject's characteristics, the chin to throat line can be very varied. Again, take a look in the mirror and tilt your head backwards and forwards and be amazed at just how much this area transforms. If in doubt, leave some material for later and return when you are better informed. Never use a saw to cut under the chin – you are sure to ruin the piece.

The hairline now needs defining, which means that the forehead also needs its correct angle and curves, which will be both convex and concave. Don't worry if you find that the hair is starting to look too high, leave the actual hairline vague and come back later.

Even if you added detail to eyes, nose, mouth etc. earlier there will be still some work to do to increase definition and possibly make extra cuts to, for example, the eyes, which are better set off-centre. Explore the many ways of creating a realistic iris and pupil. This stage can be very rewarding as you can make a big difference with just a few minutes work. Interestingly, the visible eyeball is actually a smooth, rounded



Osgood sculpture, part finished

surface, but the subject has much more personality if the iris and pupil are carved into the surface.

Complete the hair shape and add as much detail as you feel is necessary. Finally, make an overall check for too much perfection in flatness or even curve and slightly modify the lines to give a more realistic appearance. Remember; nature does not do straight lines or even perfect symmetry.



Anne Lister of Shibden Hall



That's it, your portrait is complete. Just add your favourite wood finish. Please refrain from too much sanding, it's all too easy to overdo it and remove a layer of character. Personally, I prefer a tooled finish with a little scraping for fine details followed by a coat of sanding sealer and two coats of a good wax polish.



ABOVE: Anne Lister – front right RIGHT: Jane Eyre nearly finished

### Tips

- Leave the rear alone until you are satisfied with the facial proportions
- Keep taking a sideways view
- Take regular breaks, it will look different when you return
- Keep looking for clues as to how the features fit together
- Constantly review the work and compare with notes and images
- Avoid creating straight lines they can be impossible to remove
- Most parts of the face are mobile so keep the subject's pose and expression constantly in mind as you carve
- Use your own image as a basis for comparison with the subject
- Keep looking in the mirror to remind yourself how things work ▶





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# Carved oil stone box

Kevin Alviti takes a trip down memory lane to carve a long wished for decorative box for his oil stone



I was a lucky apprentice when I learnt to be a carpenter. Every day I spent with a man who, as well as being my mentor, became one of my best friends. His old Ford Escort van was a jam-packed treasure trove, first with his tools, then with mine as well as time went on.

A place for everything and everything in its place was his maxim, and it's an important one when your tools are your livelihood. He was very particular about this, even wrapping up the rope for the roof rack wrong would have him tutting...

And even though it was 20 years ago, I can still remember where everything was in that van. He was very protective over his tools and particularly edged ones – he kept them like razors (he still does in fact). His oil stone for

sharpening was kept in the back of his van (on a shelf on the left-hand side). This stone had a beautiful wooden cover to keep it safe, with some simple carvings over the outside. I was always quite enchanted by this and made it my mission to look out at car boot sales for one similar, but I never found anything more than a plain wooden box.

In those 20 years since, I've always used an oil stone for sharpening my tools on site, although I know they might have fallen out of fashion in the woodworking world a bit. I still like the quick simplicity of them, a job that takes no longer than a few moments to hone a new edge.

I've still always longed for a slightly more elaborate oil stone box, something to make

me smile and to sometimes raise a question from a customer. It was time to carve something totally unique. I decided that to carve it with some of the tools that I use regularly would make this a really personal piece, and adding my surname would make sure no one would be in any doubt as to whose it was.

As this is something that might encounter a bit of abuse over time, I think making it from a hard, strong wood is essential. Whatever you choose it will get covered with oil in time and darken, but this building of a patina, from use, also brings another layer of beauty to an item.

I chose beech as my wood for this, a timber I'd like to use more of. I find beech to be good to work with and hardwearing. Make sure the piece is straight-grained and free from knots.



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

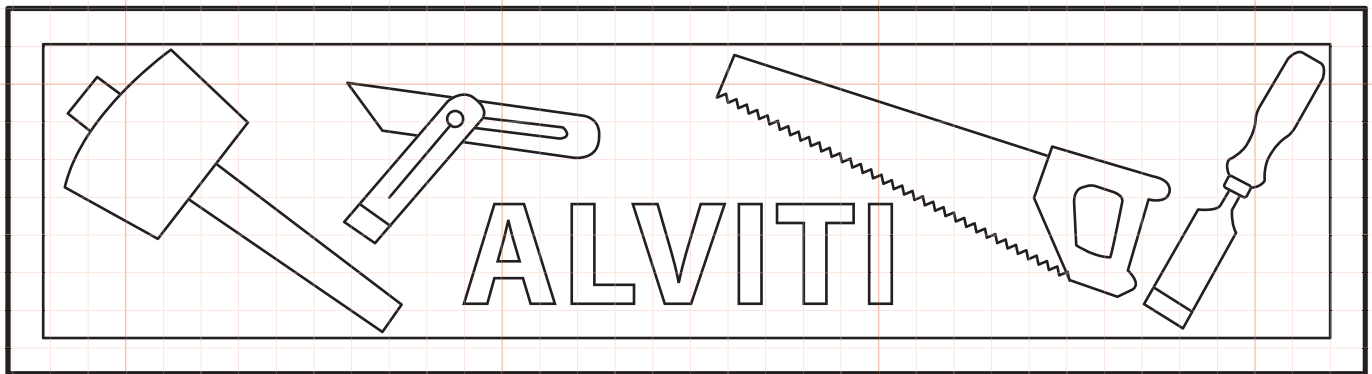
- PPE and RPE
- Router (optional)
- Jigsaw (optional)
- Smoothing plane
- Carver's mallet
- 60° V-tool, 13mm
- 60° V-tool, 6mm
- Skew chisel
- No.6 gouge, 13mm

- No.6 gouge, 7mm
- No.8 gouge, 4mm
- No.3 gouge, 2mm
- No.3 gouge, 4mm
- No.3 gouge, 7mm
- No.3 gouge, 13mm
- No.3 fishtail gouge, 6mm
- No.3 fishtail gouge, 12mm
- No.1 fishtail gouge, 3mm
- Skew chisel

- Straight bevel edge chisels – 3mm, 6mm, 12mm, 18mm, 32mm
- Nail punch

**Materials:**

- Beech – two pieces at 235 x 75 x 22mm (but longer if possible, to aid clamping)
- 9mm ply offcut to make the jig, approximate size 500 x 120mm

**STOP IT SLIPPING**

The oil stone box my workmate used to use had four panel pins in the corners, hammered so far in then cut off and left sharp. We would use the box sat astride a sawhorse, the nails would stop it slipping as we worked the tools up and down the stone. I don't really want to do this as mine will be used on my workbench and instead I'll either clamp a stop or use anti-slip matting to save any scratches.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KEVIN ALVITI

**RAKING LIGHT**

Be kind to yourself. I have my carving area set up with a light that is quite close to where I'm working. The trouble is, it gives off a low angle light – which picks up every defect, bump and gouge mark, no matter how hard I try. When I worked on new-build sites, if the foreman wanted to upset the plasterer, he would hold a torch on the wall and shine it across the plasterwork – no matter how good the plasterer's work was, defects could be found. Look at your carving with light from above, or better still natural daylight, otherwise you'll be thinking you'll never get that background smooth.





**1** Make sure you already have the oil stone that you want to use. I wanted mine to be not too big much bigger than the stone itself, about 12mm (½in) all round. The box will be recessed top and bottom by 12mm (½in) to take the stone. The top carving will only be recessed in about 3mm (⅛in), so this should leave a good 9mm (⅜in) of timber on the top.

To start with, I'd also cut the top and bottom pieces a bit longer than needed as it will aid with clamping later. Plane all the wood to size and make sure the pieces fit well against each other.

**2** Mark up the size of the stone in the centre of each piece. There are many ways to remove this timber. It would have made a good apprentice practice piece to chisel out the insides by hand, learning to chisel in the lines. Alternatively, a pillar drill with a Forstner bit could be used, using a chisel to square up the sides and a router plane to tidy the bottom.

**3** I decided on making a jig for my small palm router. Fitted with a collet, there is a 6mm offset from the router cutter. I used a piece of 9mm ply to create a template, making sure it was 6mm bigger all the way round than the recess I wanted. I cut the jig out carefully with a jigsaw, making sure to keep the sides straight.

**4** This shows why it's useful to leave the pieces of the box a little longer than you want as it makes clamping easier, so the clamps won't foul the router while removing the waste.

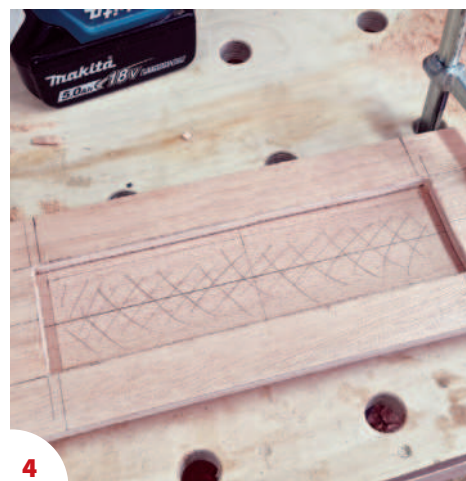
## Routing

**5** Make sure the jig is clamped tight before starting to rout. Also make sure your router is supported on the jig the whole time (a large base for the router can be useful for this), otherwise it may tip. Make the cut in multiple passes, lowering it by just a few millimetres at a time. Extraction is useful here as routers can quickly make a mess and produce lots of dust.

**6** Square the corners with a chisel and make sure the oil stone fits in the recess. Check the top fits slightly looser than the bottom piece of the box, otherwise every time you open the box the stone might come away with the top.

**7** To work out the layout, I made a scale drawing of the centre area I wanted to carve. I drew the tools I wanted to add to the carving and cut them out individually so I could see the layout I wanted and adjust until I had it right.

**8** I then used some spray mount glue to fit the drawings and lettering to the top of the box. I'm fairly sure there must be a better way than holding down the small pictures and spraying your own fingers while applying the glue – I just haven't figured it out yet.





**9****10****11****12****13****14****15****16****17**

**9** Cut the box to its final size. Using a plane, take the arris off the top of the box. In doing this I planed a small chamfer all the way round to soften the sharp edges.

**10** Start lining in. Using the V-tool (13mm 60°) cut all the outlines. Start with the borders, just freehand. It's surprisingly easy to keep straight, these can be done with just hand pressure. Outlining the tools it might be easier to use a light mallet with the V-tool for more control, but don't worry about getting too close at this stage.

**11** Once everything is roughly outlined, it's time to harden up some of the edges using some carpentry chisels. Here I used a mixture of larger and smaller chisels to outline all the straight lines – 6mm (¼in) chisel, 12mm (½in) chisel and a 32mm (1¼in) chisel – making sure the bevel is on the waste side and take lighter hits so as not to damage the wood you're trying to keep.

**12** Use smaller gouges to outline the detail areas of the tools. Here I'm using a No.4, 6mm gouge for the handle of the chisel. Match the gouge to the curve.

**13** Start lowering the background. This relief carving doesn't need to be too deep, about 3mm, but it can be worth doing it in stages, lowering the background roughly, then outlining again, then taking the background back a bit more – especially with a wood like beech.

**14** I'm not going to lie, there are parts of this carving where it's a real fiddle, especially around the letters. I used every small gouge I own to try to make sure it was the right fit to remove as much background as possible. Small fishtail gouges are useful here.

### Smoothing out

**15** With the background roughly lowered it's time to level it out. Take a shallower gouge as big as you can fit in the space (a No.3, 13mm in this case) and start smoothing out the gouge lines. Then work down the chisel sizes to smooth it out as much as you can.

**16** Now the fun bit – to add detail to the tools. All the tool carvings are fairly flat and straightforward. Use hard, shadow lines to your advantage. Using a straight chisel, strike where lines meet then lower the one side to meet this line to give the shadow detail.

**17** My favourite bit of this carving was adding teeth to the handsaw. Simply done with a sharp 6mm 60° V-tool, using hand pressure, move along the saw pushing down for each tooth. Try to keep the teeth even. Tidy the background afterwards if it's been marked.



**18** Add detail to all the other tools. Smooth off corners on the handles and add chamfers to the edges of the mallet head. With the chisel, I found it looked good for it to be an octagonal handle, shaping the edges with a 6mm (¼in) flat chisel, working with the grain. To the bevel add the slot for the blade and a groove in the wood part, a nail punch works well to add the detail for the pivot screw.

**19** I decided that a simple border would help set off this piece. Marking halfway and working from there, I drew on some 45° lines all round the box evenly.

**20** Using a two-handed grip (almost in tension with each other) on the V-tool, cut all the lines around the outside. To do this, I do all the one angle first and then all the second connecting ones afterwards. This is the only point I turn the carving, but it is worth working away from the carved border just in case you slip.

**21** Now it's time to add some finger holds to the sides of the box. This is to make it easier to open when the stone is inside. I marked all these up the same size where the boxes meet, about 6mm in.

**22** Using a sharp No.6, 13mm gouge and just hand pressure, sweep the cut from either side into the middle, working your way down from both sides until you meet the lines. This should give you a nice smooth cut, just big enough for your finger tips.

**23** With the slots cut, put the box together and see if it needs any alterations, or if the sides need sanding to line up.

**24** The piece is now ready to accept a finish.

**25** I chose to apply linseed oil in a few layers to finish this box. It will come into contact with oil on a regular basis anyway, so an oil finish is the best thing to go for. Use a brush if needed to get into all the fine detail areas and a cotton rag for the rest of it.

**26** The finished box should provide years of protection to the oil stone inside. Hopefully I'll get to pass this on to one of my children one day. ▶



**18**



**19**



**20**



**21**



**22**



**23**



**24**



**25**



**26**





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Angler fish in ash



# Denizens of the deep

Szymon Mlynarczyk carves a route from Poland to Oban

**M**y name is Szymon and I was born in Poland, however I consider myself to be a citizen of the world. After years of globetrotting I have settled in the beautiful town of Oban on the west coast of Scotland and I've been living here for nearly 20 years. Honestly, I cannot imagine living anywhere else.

First, and most importantly, I'm a husband and a proud father to two boys. My family means the world to me and I aspire to make them proud everyday – however, I have a secret love affair. An affair with woodcarving. It began about three years ago when I found myself in a rather grey period of my life. I felt as though something was missing and I longed for something that would provide me with a feeling of value and accomplishment.

I attempted many activities and lifestyle changes – I tried and failed to learn a guitar (although I think everyone has tried that at least once in their life), I also sought to become a weightlifter, however that wasn't as easy as I initially thought. At the end of 2018 I stumbled across few woodcarving books; the very same year I got a set of Kirschen chisels from my wife for Christmas – I was hooked immediately.

## Starting to carve

As I dabbled in the art of woodcarving and attempted to develop it into a hobby, the time spent creating woodchips allowed me to consider and re-evaluate my priorities. I gave up my career in hospitality and started a new job with VisitScotland. My normalised working hours permitted me to spend more time with chisels, Dremel and the power carving beast, Mastercarver Flexshaft, hiding ½HP in a small package (recent addition).

My family gives me power and energy. The perfect and mystical blend of Scottish mountains, lochs and oceans is my endless and forever changing inspiration. I have always had a close relationship with nature and my recent job change allowed me to get even closer to the hidden beauty of the land I am blessed to live in. These factors in my life fuel my imagination and I use carving as a creative output for this.

## How I get my inspiration

I have never completed any art school qualifications or any courses, but it would be untrue to say I'm self-taught. I watch many online tutorials, read any possible literature on the subject I can get my hands on and I must admit that, for some bizarre reason, I absorb wood-related knowledge like a dry sponge does water. I know that I'm still at the very beginning of my art journey, not only because my head is full of ideas but because I'm not able to create beauty out of all those ideas yet.

I often work from pictures and drawings or solely by memory of things I have seen, and I try to reflect what I see in wood without losing wood's identity. Sometimes I just let it go and carve without reference and I don't know what I'm carving

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SZYMON MLYNARCZYK





Octopus in scallops shell in oak – one piece Below: My first carving Below right: Goldfish in elm on charcoaled larch



until the timber will speak to me.

I love to experiment with wood grain by pursuing the best finishing techniques to expose the natural beauty of wood. Just recently I've introduced different texturing techniques to my carvings. I've fallen in love with elm and European ash, lime wood and birch have my greatest respect and I'm holding oak, beech and hazel in the highest regard.

Power carving is my favourite method. It gives me ability to shape wood the way I want it, efficiently and with less possibility of disaster. I know there are many critics of power carving and I get that for some it's not the 'purest' way to work with wood, but I'm a great believer that any method that allows us to express ourselves artistically is a good method. I'm not biased though, and I don't shy away from hand carving – especially

when it comes to finishing touches.

I have to admit that with all the awfulness the global pandemic brought, it was the best thing that has happened to my woodcarving hobby. Don't get me wrong, I would rather live in the world free of this plague – but when life puts you in a challenging situation, you are extremely lucky if you can find a positive outlook, and that's what I did – I found my love of carving. Lockdowns and working from home came to me with a thick silver lining – I could do my work in close proximity to my shed 'workshop' and travel restrictions naturally (and for lack of other options) forced me to spend more time on carving and perfecting techniques. The learning process puts me in that ambivalent state – on the one hand I feel I'm getting better at woodcarving, on the other hand, the more

I know makes me understand how little I know. It is a joyful process nevertheless.

There is something selfishly imprudent in a feeling of accomplishment when I'm showing off my finished carving. Just recently my Facebook Simon's Woodcraft page took off and received feedback, which motivates me to push myself and try even harder. I'm my own worst critic and often I need a fresh pair of eyes to see through the mistakes I made during the creation process. I bet it's a problem of many aspiring artists to hang on to imperfections and the inability to see through them.

I dream of a day that my love of woodcarving could sustain my simple lifestyle and all I had to do was to concentrate purely on creativity.

[www.facebook.com/SimonRex20/](https://www.facebook.com/SimonRex20/)





Chameleon in larch on charcoaled base



Lime wood octopus coffee spoon with Oban background



# From the community

A collection of letters and news from the woodcarving community

## Learning curve



When living in Canada I had always admired people who did woodcarving and woodturning, however, having many other hobbies and working full time I did not pursue either.

On returning to the UK and working in a stressful job, I decided that I needed a hobby in which I could immerse myself and hopefully relieve the stress. In 2004 I saw that Axminster Tool was offering a four-day carving course led by Ian Edwards, which I found was very enjoyable. Not being confident enough to carry on by myself, I sought out a carving club and found Exeter Woodcarvers and have spent many happy hours with like-minded members.

In order to gain more knowledge over the years I enrolled in a weekly evening class, which was run by the late Henry Phillips. As I feel we never finished learning I have also taken courses with Andrew Thomas, which have proved to be inspirational.

Like all other clubs and organisations in 2020, the coronavirus put a stop to Exeter Woodcarvers club meetings but not to my carving. I have a small workshop set up in my conservatory and have been kept busy with various projects.

My main project since October has been a swan, which was inspired by a swan that I carved with Andrew Thomas a few years ago. The swan is carved from lime and I have put it on a slice of a tree which shows the growth rings and can be interpreted as the ripples on water as the swan is moving.

I always have a couple of smaller carvings on the go as well. It means that when something is not going the way I want, I can move to another carving and come back with fresh eyes. It usually works out well.

Since I started carving, I have made several lovespoons, inspired by patterns I have seen in *Woodcarving* magazine and have just completed two more.

Hope to be back carving with the Exeter Woodcarvers club soon.

Joan Mackintosh

## Flower power



I am interested in various types of woodcarving and also in displaying my carvings as effectively as possible, in the home as well as at exhibitions etc. One recently explored area of carving for me involves carving flowers in three dimensions. This has posed new problems for me. I am showing you my earliest attempt at grappling with this problem. Excluding the branch I have used six different woods for the flowers.

Tony Wilson

## Chip carving



The two articles by Tatiana Baldina on chip carving (issues 178/9) prompted me to look at the technique in more detail. I was also interested in its eminent portability/do-anywhere characteristics as we had a holiday in Scotland looming (yes, it did rain on occasion). So, a modest investment in a couple of books and a set of tools and I was ready to go. After a few practice runs, using Tatiana's designs, I felt ready to have a go at the bear, my own first piece. The design was found, some time ago, by my wife as the basis of a tapestry weaving project, but its linear and angular layout seemed to me to lend itself to a chip carving approach. While I don't see me becoming a chip-and-nothing-else carver I fully expect to have projects on the go, particularly to while away the evenings of grandparental babysitting. The carving is on a piece of lime I had available in the workshop and is finished with two coats of Osmo 1101 Clear Satin.

Kind Regards, Steve Parrott



# Freedom



I enjoyed reading John Patterson's article in the last edition (181) of *Woodcarving* and was particularly touched by the Covid-related carving of the two hands, which is extremely poignant. Apart from the stress and sorrow that Covid has caused to those directly affected, it has also been a difficult time for most carving clubs who haven't been



able to meet to carve and chat.

I am the chairman of Shropshire Woodcarvers and, like Exeter, we developed a theme to motivate our members and we, being an optimistic bunch, took the word 'freedom' (from Lockdown, of course) as our theme and our members responded with a good and very varied range of interpretations, some of which can be seen on our website. My own contribution was a bit zany, as you can see from the attached photograph, and includes a bit of Black Country dialect which was as close as I could get to incorporating the

word 'coronavirus'. In developing my ideas I wanted to create a bit of saucy humour in the style of a seaside postcard and I asked my artistic son-in-law, Matthew, to draw an appropriate couple. However, my enthusiasm took hold and I had progressed too far before I got his drawing which, by then, I couldn't fit it into my developing carving. But, it was too good to ignore, so I carved that as well and the result is also attached.

Lockdown has gone on for so long now but I have found carving to be a great escape and really quite therapeutic. I decided to challenge myself to the extreme and searched around for a suitable subject. We have had a figurine on display in a cabinet at home for many years, which I have always admired, and so I decided that it would be a suitable challenge, the result of which is also attached. Apart from the frogging on the jacket and the buttonhole,

it is from one piece of lime and, while it took me ages (but under Lockdown I had ages!), I never regretted taking it on. I did need a few additional tools to carve the small details and bought a set of Dockyard micro gouges, which are brilliant; delicate but brilliant.

Shropshire Woodcarvers are now gearing up to restart regular meetings in September but I suspect that it will take some time before the carving takes precedent over the chattering. But that's carving!

Best wishes,  
Stewart Tilley





# Relief carving – anamorphic art

John Samworth continues his introduction to relief carving with a Renaissance period technique

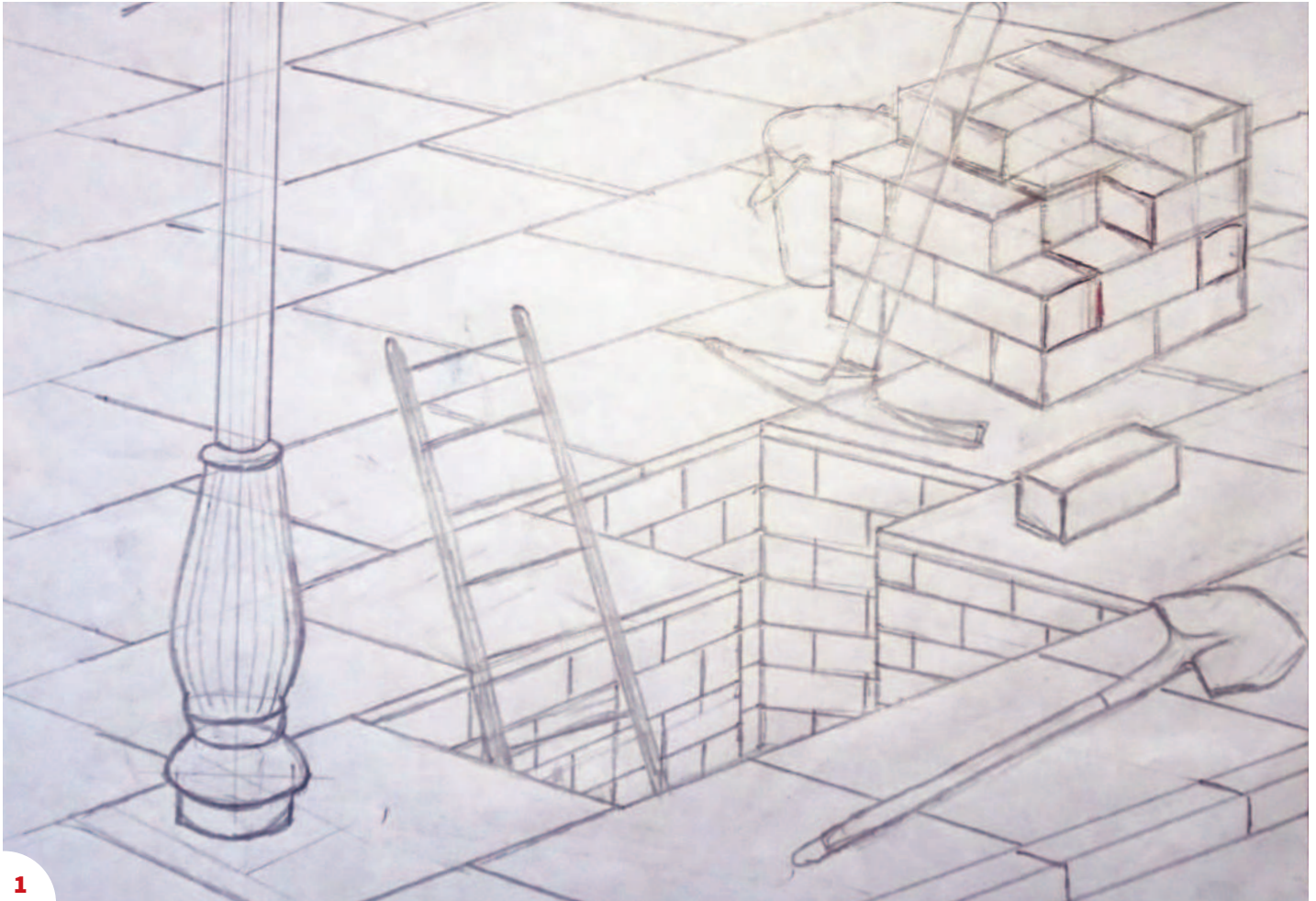
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**F**or the past 10 years, there has been a lot of work creating anamorphic art, a technique which dates back to the Renaissance period and perhaps beyond, the earliest documented work being that of Leonardo da Vinci included in the *Codex Atlanticus* (1483-1518). But I have recently been inspired by

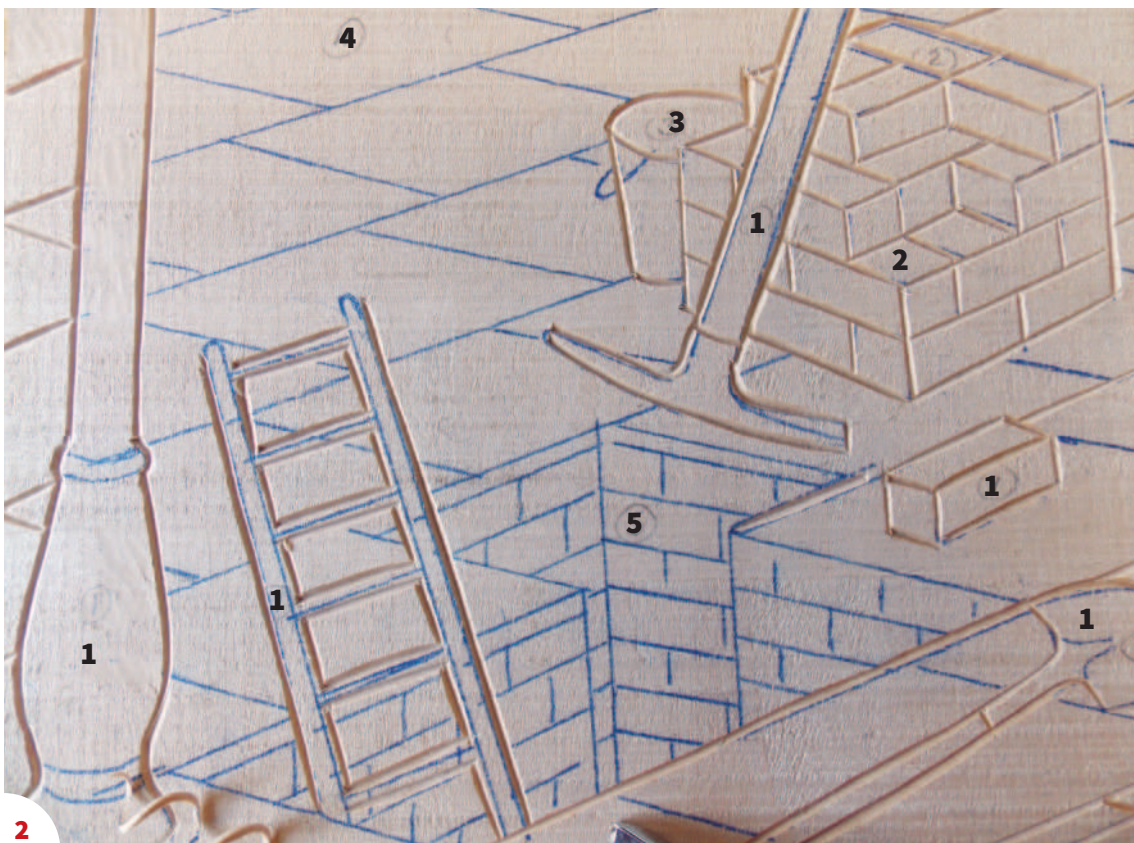
the techniques used in 'street art', particularly in the form of pavement drawings of holes in the ground. This set me wondering if such illusions could be carved. Of course, we can carve a hole in a piece of wood, but can we carve the illusion of a hole in shallow relief removing only 1mm of wood?





**1** In this carving I shall demonstrate the techniques for carving both a hole disappearing into the ground and various objects projecting forwards. I shall use a piece of lime wood, A4 in size, about 12mm thick. The street artist has the advantages of

colour and drawn shadows to create their illusions, but we can vary the carving's depths to compensate. Do not over use this technique and cut too deep, because that will defeat the object of this piece.



**2** Start by tracing the plan on to your wood. Number your levels. The high areas, number 1, are the lighthouse, shovel, pick and the loose brick. Next, number 2, is the pile of bricks, followed by number 3, the bucket and, number 4, the background pavement. Finally, we must consider number 5, the hole. At the top edge the hole must join with the pavement, while at the lower edges it must appear to disappear behind the pavement. Here is where I shall vary the cut depth to aid the illusion. I used a parting tool to separate all the elements, creating a stop cut around the kept features.



**3** To lower the background, I used a combination of No.3 and No.1 gouges to keep the straight edges truly straight. It is key that the background flows smoothly without changes of levels creating lines around the elements. Such lines will detract from the illusion. A skew No.2 gouge is useful to get into tight corners and a small No.8 gouge to cut clear the rounder ladder tops and shovel handle.

**4** Lower the level of the ladder at the point where the side rails disappear out of sight behind the pavement. On the right side rail can be seen the original parting tool cut, but on the left the side rail has been lowered to form a single-sided cut with a shadow forming the illusion of the side rail disappearing behind the pavement.

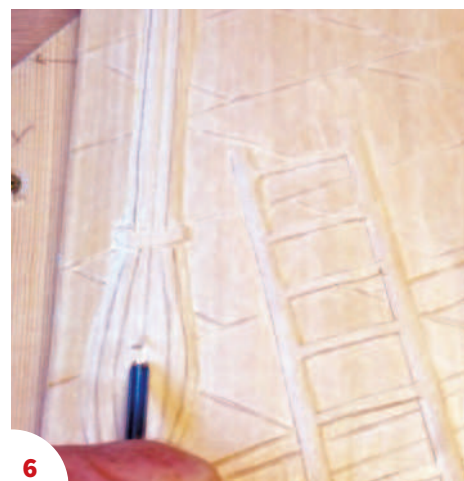
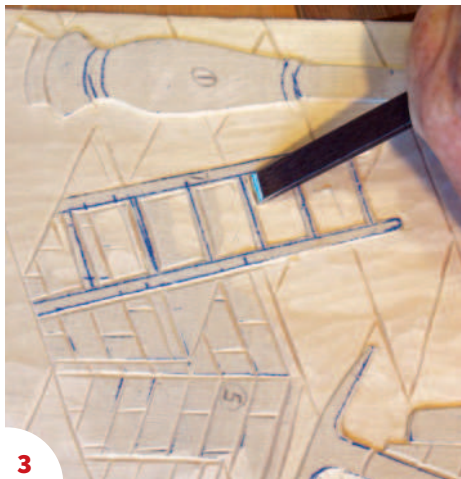
**5** Because the ladder is being viewed at an angle, one side of the side rail is sloped down to the background while the other is cut square. The blue highlights the edge to be sloped.

**6** Clean the face of the lamppost and round off the edges down to the background. Carve flutes into the post, three parallel flutes to the top section and five on the lower section. The lower flutes should reflect the shape of this bulbous section. Cut the first groove with a No.11, 4mm veiner and recut with a smaller No.11, 2mm veiner.

**7** Clean the shovel, pickaxe and single brick. For both the handles on the pick and shovel invert a no. 3 or 4 gouge and round the edges steeply while cutting a softer curve across the face. The resulting oval will foreshorten the handles creating depth within the image. The bottom edges of the shovel, pickaxe and brick must be cut close to the background pavement, if not they appear to float in mid-air. Take the opportunity to carve away evidence of using a parting tool around the edges to leave clean, crisp lines.

**8** Clean up the stack of bricks. Lower the level to just behind the pickaxe. Keeping parting tool cuts to separate the individual bricks works, but cut the edges of the stack clean and crisp. Lower the face of the bucket below the brick stack and round the edges. Scoop out the top oval of the bucket to create a solid-looking shape. The handle may be incised into the bucket and pavement.

**9** All that remains is to form the hole. There are different depths involved. The two brick walls marked F are forward of the two marked B. All four walls must vanish behind the front of the pavement. Defining the individual bricks with a parting tool works, but the vertical edges and the front pavement edges should be cut clean and crisp. The final carving is not more than 2mm deep, mostly only 1mm deep, and yet the depth of the image is quite astonishing. This is an illusion I shall certainly explore further. ▶





# Sunken relief carving project

Mark Gough carves an Egyptian style relief of the god 'Thoth' in spalted sycamore

The idea for this article came from a book purchased many years ago titled *Relief Woodcarving & Lettering* by Ian Norbury, specifically from the chapter *Egyptian Relief*. The author explains the technique and supplies images to show examples, one of which is a relief carving of Osiris and Tutankhamun. The selected image for this carving is an adaptation of the god Thoth from a stone carving in Luxor. The basic technique for sunken or Egyptian relief requires the outline to be cut in with a V-tool and the inside edges rounded over and shaped to obtain the illusion of depth with the use of shadow. To obtain a deeper shadow effect here around the edge straight stop cuts are cut in with a knife. The smooth, sanded finish I have gone for avoids the reflection from tooled surfaces and concentrates the eye on the carved detail. A symbol for Thoth was added to fill the negative space on the lower right and to balance the whole carving. The finished relief was coated in Danish oil then waxed and buffed to a soft sheen, however, this would look amazing finished with gold leaf or even coloured spirit stain.

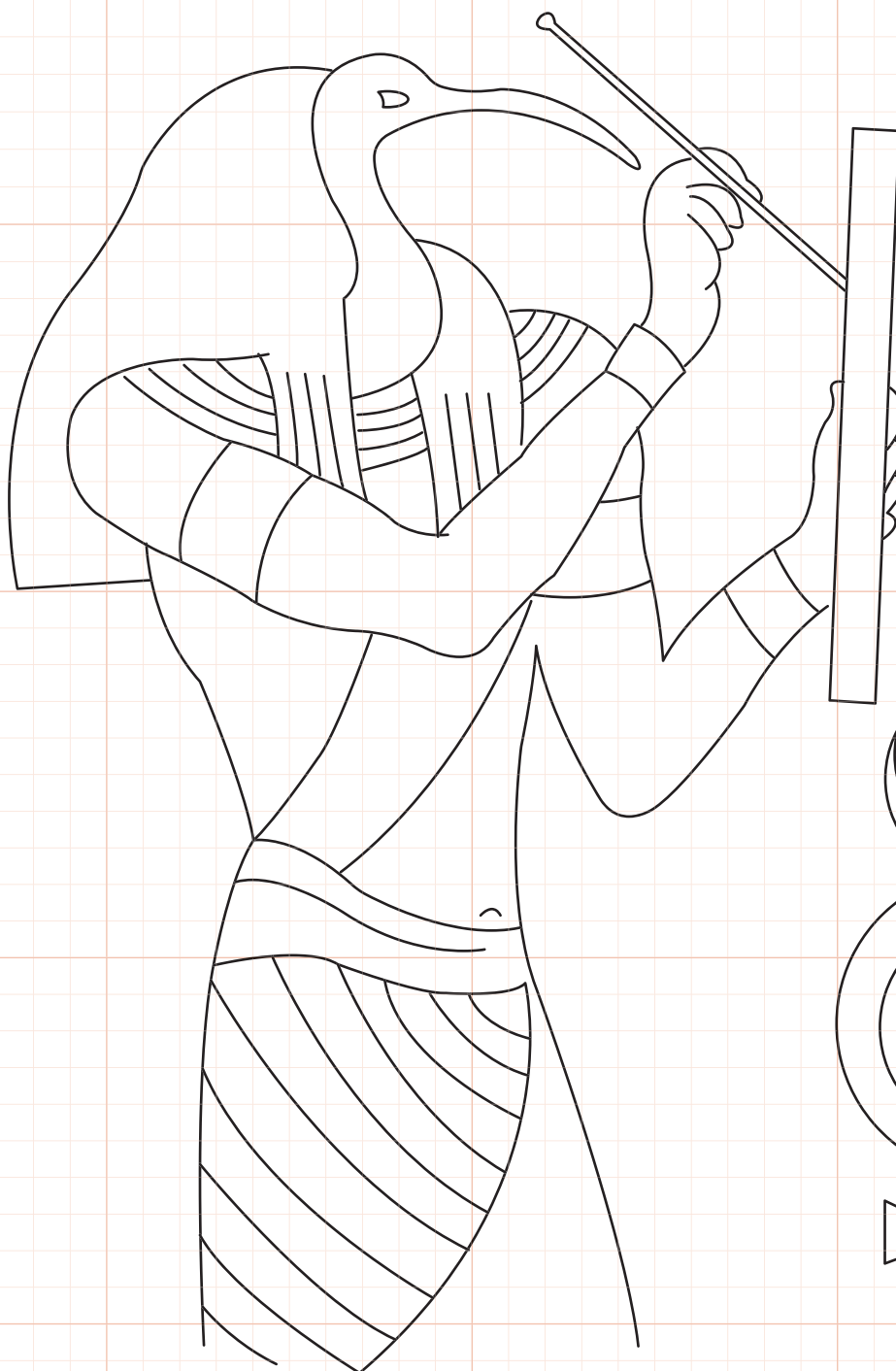
## THOTH

Thoth is the Egyptian god of writing, magic, wisdom, and the moon. He was one of the most important gods of ancient Egypt, alternately said to be self-created or born of the seed of Horus from the forehead of Set. As the son of these two deities (representing order and chaos respectively) he was also god of equilibrium. Excerpt from *World History Encyclopaedia* written by Joshua J Mark.  
[www.worldhistory.org/Thoth](http://www.worldhistory.org/Thoth).



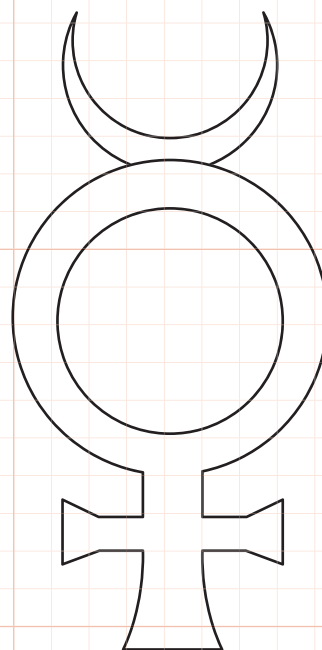
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK GOUGH





### USING A TEMPLATE

It is helpful to use a template to cut in the outline of the carving. Use a piece of 3mm hardboard or plywood and cut out the shape with a bandsaw or coping saw using the pattern provided. Clean up the edges and sand smooth then just take off the square edges with a couple of passes of sandpaper. This will prevent the knife from digging into the template.



### Things you will need

#### Materials:

- Spalted Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*)  
330mm x 240mm x 38mm  
(13" x 9½ x 1½) planed and sanded smooth all round
- 3mm Plywood or hardboard  
300mm x 200mm for template
- Double sided tape
- Sandpaper 80g, 120g, 180g
- Danish oil
- Clear paste wax

#### Tools:

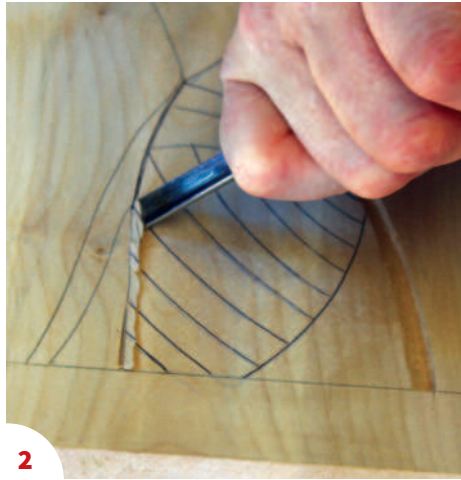
- PPE & RPE
- Drawing equipment
- Carving knife
- Carving mallet
- 5mm shallow straight gouge
- 10mm shallow straight gouge
- V gouge
- 12mm shallow fishtail gouge
- 6mm skew chisel
- Small round rotary burr, medium flame burr
- Nail punch

### KEEP IT SHARP

It is important to keep the tools honed throughout the project. This image shows the tools used, the carving knife was honed for a few seconds at regular intervals. This can be done on a flat strop or even a piece of old, thick leather belt along with some cutting compound.





**1****2**

**1** Fix the template (see sidebar) to the blank with double-sided tape or tiny dabs of adhesive positioned centrally and cut around the perimeter with a sharp, pointed carving knife. Take a light pass to begin with to sever the wood fibres then go around again to cut deep enough to form a stop cut. You may choose to do this freehand without making a template.

**2** Mark in the internal detail to give you some idea of the contours of the image. Then, to navigate some of the tight curves, select a small, shallow gouge and cut in the outline up to the knife wall. Cut just deep enough to lift thin slivers of wood away to reveal the overall shape of the carving. Some areas are cut deeper than others, which will be apparent as you proceed.

**3****4**

**3** Starting on the lower half of the carving cut the outline in deeper with the knife and remove the waste using a 10mm shallow straight gouge or similar to create depth each side. This and the top left side of the ibis and opposite shoulder are the deepest areas, so it may take several shallow cuts to get the correct depth.

**4** Use a V-tool to cut in beneath the lower arm and carve away the lower edge of the V-cut with a 12mm shallow fishtail gouge. This area only needs to be shallow – just enough to reveal the shape of the lower arm.

**5****6**

**5** The sash is shaped into a raised ridge down its length. Mark a line as shown and make cuts from this towards each side to create the effect. Soften the top of the ridge as it merges into the waist to give the effect of it wrapping round the back.

**6** Give the lower half of the carving a light sanding and check the contours. Make any adjustments to get the correct shaping then turn your attention to the arm on the right of the image. Use a 10mm shallow gouge again and cut in the outline of the arm. You may find a skew chisel useful at the point where it goes under the wrist of the front forearm.

**7****8**

**7** Make a deep stop cut on the bottom of the tail of the ibis with a straight chisel, this is the lowest area of the carving. Cut in the shoulder with a V-tool. The upper body is carved out to form a shallow gradient from the sash to the lower arm and undercut very slightly so that it makes the whole arm stand out on front of the chest.

**8** The area above the arm is carved out to the same level below the arm and the gradient continued up to the opposite shoulder, which is also cut deep to give the illusion of the body being twisted slightly to face sideways towards the tablet. Leave the left wing pronounced, this will be the highest part of the carving. Again, a skew chisel is useful here to carve out the sharp corners.





9

**9** The tablet or writing palette is cut in with straight chisels, just shallow stop cuts enough to make it visible. It can be done with a knife if you prefer or a V-tool slightly tilted to the inner edge.



10

**10** The detail of the hand holding the tablet is quite a challenge due to the shape and size of the curves. Use the corner of a small shallow gouge and incise the shape of the fingers as shown then remove the waste with a small round carbide rotary burr. This needs to be quite deep as it is set in the background.



11

**11** Go round all the internal edges with a medium rotary burr to smooth over the tool marks and get into any difficult missed areas, then go over the whole carving with 80 grit sandpaper and check all the contours and depth of cuts.



12

**12** Carefully carve out the reed pen with a V-tool then sand the whole piece with 120 grit sandpaper and re-mark the inner details of the skirt, sash, armbands and collar.



13

**13** Cut in the edge of the kilt with a V-tool just deep enough to make it stand proud, then carve away the lower right section with a shallow gouge to level it out and blend in.



14

**14** The pleats of the kilt are scribed with the knife at an angle to undercut them slightly, then carved out with a small shallow gouge and cleaned up with sandpaper. You will need a skew chisel or pointed knife to remove the waste under the hip area and down the left side. The remaining details of the sash, armbands and collar can be done the same way. The texturing of the Ibis can be done with a V-tool or, as in this instance, with a nail-head burr and rotary power unit. Use this with a small round burr to cut in the eye and navel too.



15

**15** A symbol was carved into the bottom right corner to balance the whole piece. To do this, position the bottom of the symbol in line with the bottom of the kilt and the outer right-hand edge of the circle in line with the fingers behind the tablet. You will have to select the most suitable gouge in your toolbox to match the curves. Alternatively it can be done with a V-tool and skew chisel. To finish the carving use a small rounded punch to stipple the armbands.



16

**16** Clean up all the internal sides and surfaces with 180 grit sandpaper then give it two coats of Danish oil. To finish off, wax and buff with clear paste wax. ▶



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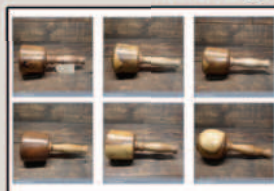
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# Grinling Gibbons Tercentenary Awards

The Grinling Gibbons Society has announced the winners of the Tercentenary Awards for emerging professional carvers in wood and stone





**T**he Grinling Gibbons Tricentenary Awards were the result of a collaboration between the Master Carvers Association and the Grinling Gibbons Society. Loyd Grossman announced the winners on behalf of the judges. First prize in stone went to Freya Morris for Line of Defence and first prize in wood was awarded to Jo Grogan for Gorgoneion. Both winners received £1,000 and places at the annual Prince's Foundation Summer School in 2022.

With a focus on inspiring and supporting emerging professional carvers to develop their valuable skills of craftsmanship, the awards are an important part of the national tricentenary celebrations marking the legacy of Grinling Gibbons.

This joint education initiative for works in both wood and stone is principally funded by The Carpenters' Company, The Masons' Livery Company and Worshipful Company of Joiners and Ceilers. There are three awards in each category worth £1,000, £750 and £500.

Grinling Gibbons had an unequalled ability to transform solid, unyielding wood and stone into something truly ethereal. The theme for the Awards was taken from a quote by Horace Walpole in which he recognises this and Gibbons' genius in the 'art which arrives even unto deception'.

The judges' criteria for assessing each entry was based upon how well the work:

1. Relates to the theme 'art which arrives even unto deception'.
2. Demonstrates a desire for the pursuit of excellence in design and to push materials to the limit.
3. Extends and challenges the carver through the use of technique and disciplined process.
4. Delivers a compelling package of storytelling and execution.
5. Demonstrates that the carver has potential to achieve a significant position in their field of carving and design.

## The Tricentenary Festival

The Awards are an important part of the Grinling Gibbons Tricentenary Festival, which runs from August 2021-August 2022. The finalists' carvings will be displayed as part of the touring exhibition, Grinling Gibbons – Centuries in the Making, at Bonhams, 101 New Bond Street, from 3-27 August 2021 and then on display at Compton Verney Art Gallery, Warwickshire from 24 September till 30 January 2022.

More information on this and the Tricentenary Festival can be found on [grinling-gibbons.org](http://grinling-gibbons.org) or follow on @Grinling300 @grinlinggibbons300, #GG300 #grinlinggibbons300

## The woodcarving awards

### First prize in wood: Gorgoneion by Jo Grogan

**Jo says:** 'This piece draws inspiration from my background in fashion and from



PHOTOGRAPH BY DAFTYDIONES

Gibbons' lace cravat. My aim was to create a piece of wearable art. I found that the lobster was a unifying motif which has been referenced by both fashion designers and Gibbons. I also wanted to play with the texture and surface and incorporate a lace relief pattern to the lobster, referencing the gros point work by Gibbons and bobbin lace-making techniques which my Nan practised. The piece is mounted on a modelled clay skull representing the precarious future of wood carving and the uncertainty over wood carving skills being lost. The skull rests upon my copies of *The Painter in Wood* by Peter Thuring; *The Lost Carving* by David Esterley and a Dutch-style lace collar made by my Nan Lily.'

The judges unanimously agreed: 'This lacy lobster is a virtuoso piece that conjures up the world of Alexander McQueen and Jo's previous career in fashion. Her take on the brief is particularly exceptional given she is a first-year student.'

### Second place in wood: Carving by Sarah Davis

**Sarah says:** 'I am a multimedia artist using hands-on sculptural techniques to explore the cyclical nature of recovery and renewal. The shedding of snakeskin, the hatching of eggs and the short life of the octopus are all cycles that exist within nature. I use these narrative tools as a way to think about how we can navigate

our own relationship with pain, healing and mortality. In 2012 I graduated from Chelsea college of art with a BA in Fine art. I returned to education in 2015 to study woodcarving and gilding at the City & Guilds of London Art school. I graduated with a distinction in 2019. Since then I have set up my own studio in south London.'

The judges felt 'Sarah's storytelling is visually striking and lures you in, at once capturing the drama and movement of the octopus'.

### Third place in wood: Global Deception by Tom Buchanan

**Tom says:** 'This piece is a commentary on the idea that Covid-19 is being exploited to control and deceive the masses. It seeks to explore the role of deception, both real and imagined, in shaping responses to the pandemic. The toilet roll symbolises the panic buying that took place. It represents the panic and fear that is engulfing and taking over the planet. Above everything sit the two crossed syringes, symbolic of the antivax movement that is rooted in a fear of global conspiracy. Similarly, the uncoiled nature of the toilet roll conjures up the unravelling of the fragile threads that bind society together and is resonant of a global community in turmoil and descending into destruction.'

The judges said: 'Tom has shown a high level of technical skill to create this piece from one block with accomplished lettering and a political message.'



PHOTOGRAPH BY DAFTYDIONES



## The stonecarving awards



PHOTOGRAPH BY LUCINDA MACPHERSON

### First prize in stone: Line of Defence by Freya Morris

**Freya says:** 'This piece aims to evoke the exuberant and complex character of Gibbons' sculpture, while expressing a contemporary political message. The Crown Portcullis is the emblem of Parliament and the Rod of Asclepius is a symbol of the medical profession. The rose, clover, daffodil and thistle represent the four nations and reflect Gibbons' use of plants in his compositions. The chains of the Portcullis are replaced with closed peapods and keys, a reference to keyworkers. Supposedly, Gibbons included closed peapods when he had not been paid, and open peapods denote the reverse. I want this piece to reflect my concern at allegations that some close to government may have profited from the Covid-19 pandemic, while key workers throughout the British Isles have not been financially recompensed for their extraordinary work.'

The judges were struck by the depth and fluidity of the carving. 'It is a highly accomplished piece creating a sense of movement in a mature and professional way. To convey Gibbons' unique carving style in stone is always difficult, and we feel that Freya has more than risen to the challenge, redesigning her concept as her work progressed.'

### Second place in stone: Carving by Alex Waddell

**Alex says:** 'My interest in carving started at a young age when I visited my grandfather's workshop. He made rocking horses and I enjoyed looking at his projects and his tools hanging on the walls. As a student I explored folk custom and the connection between people and the carvings they produced. During a stonemasonry apprenticeship at Winchester Cathedral, I learned traditional techniques. I was surrounded by fine carving in both wood

and stone from the early medieval to today. As a graduate student at City & Guilds I have refined my skills and hope to establish a workshop, with carving being a major part of my practice. After a hard year, this piece is celebratory and fun. It pays tribute to Gibbons, but I hope it will also bring a smile to people's faces.'

'This is an ambitious piece and demonstrates Alex's strong work ethic, rendering flesh, feathers and fabric convincingly on a small scale,' concluded the judges.



PHOTOGRAPH BY DAFTY DIONES



### Third place in stone: Carving by Tom Clark-Collins

**Thomas says:** 'The piece depicts a human being passively led to irrelevance. The orb represents an imperceptible force (noumenon) that governs the realm of capital, and therefore technology. This force demands exponential growth, achieving this through employing a closed system of analysis and improvement (cybernetics). Human demise is based upon our reliance on the technology and obsession with systems developed by this force, and its increasing un-reliance on us. We are sedate on a travelator headed for its fangs. The piece connects to Gibbons in its medium, through technique, and the dust inhaled in the pursuit of making something in a solid material by hand.'

For the judges: 'This stands out as a modern interpretation of the brief, which has managed to create the illusion of depth and perspective with admirable technical foreshortening in the figure.'



PHOTOGRAPH BY LUCINDA MACPHERSON

### Other entrants



Adeline Wartner's entry for the Grinling Gibbons 300 Award



Oscar Whapam wood carving



Silje Loa's, limestone and limewood carving

PHOTOGRAPHS BY LUCINDA MACPHERSON

### The Grinling Gibbons exhibition



The exhibition Grinling Gibbons – Centuries in the Making will be touring until 2022

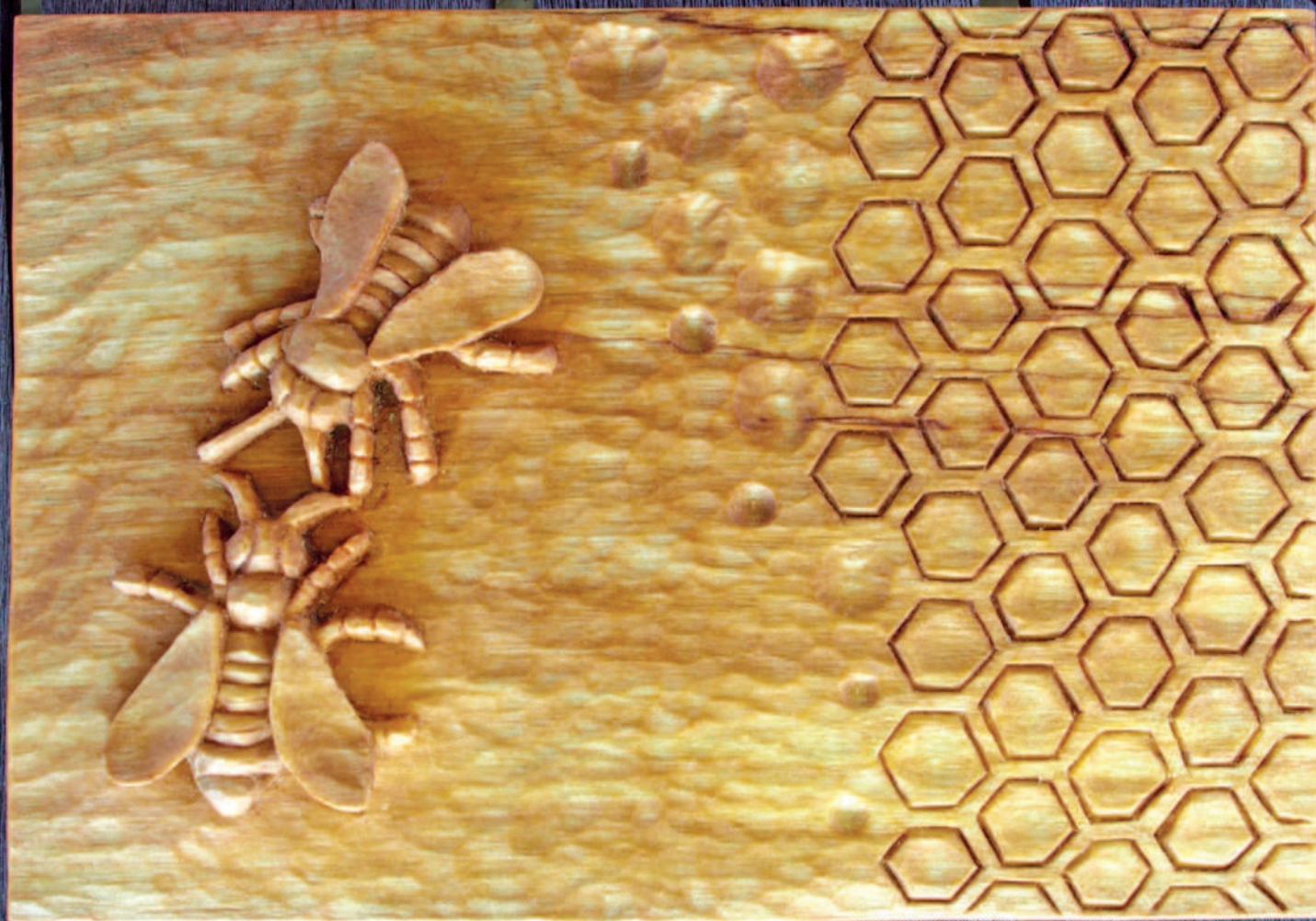


PHOTOGRAPHS BY LUCINDA MACPHERSON



# Bees and honeycomb

Dave Western draws inspiration from garden friends with this design



**W**hen an unprecedented heatwave drove me out of the shop and into the shaded and slightly cooler embrace of my backyard maple tree, I decided I would finally tackle a little project that has been rattling around in my mind for some time now. I've been wanting to have a stab at carving a couple of honeybees building some comb, but was always a bit reluctant to start due to the complexity of carving both the bees and the section of comb. Necessity became the mother of invention when I was forced to limit my array of carving tools and do my carving on a rickety old garden table. I opted to keep the design pretty simple and although the

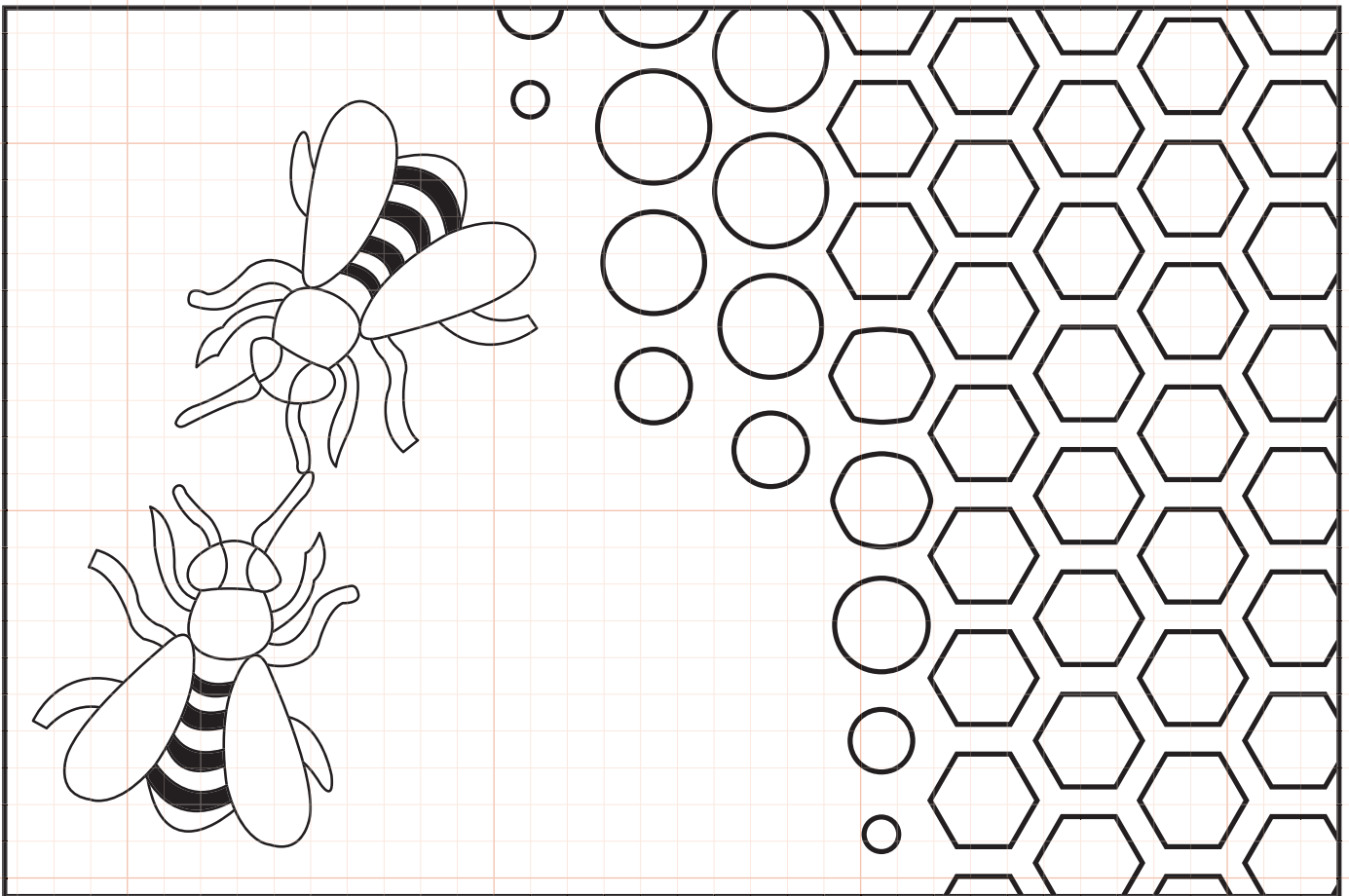
bees are raised almost to full three dimension, they could be carved very basically and in much lower relief without losing too much of their appeal. I chose to draw out the comb freehand because, even in nature, there are discrepancies among each chamber and there is seldom a hive of 'perfect' hexagons. Other than some initial cutting, which was undertaken in the fiery confines of my overheated shop, everything else is easily doable with a limited range of tools and the simplest of workbenches. Indeed, much of the carving took place in my lap. The design can be scaled up using a photocopier, but the version I carved is fairly small and manageable at 18.5 x 13 x 2cm.



### Things you will need

#### Tools:

- PPE & RPE
- Japanese-type saw
- No.7 sweep, 14 mm gouge
- No.9 sweep, 10mm gouge
- No.1 sweep, 14mm gouge
- 1mm Japanese chisel
- 3mm Japanese chisel
- 6mm Japanese chisel
- 3mm Japanese gouge
- 6mm Japanese gouge
- Drill and assortment of bits
- 1in straight knife
- Bent knife
- Scraper
- Danish oil and/or beeswax polish



PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVE WESTERN



1



2

**1** I made a couple of photocopies of my pattern and glued it to the workpiece before using a Japanese-style saw to cut away the section of wood over the comb and around the bees, thus raising the bees from the background.

**2** In retrospect, I could have saved on the photocopying by just pencil lining the areas to be cut and saving the paper pattern for after the block is shaped. But paper is cheap, so having two copies wasn't too hard a financial hit (even for a woodcarver).





**3** With the bulk of the material cleared, I began roughly clearing the area around the bees using a No.7 sweep, 14mm gouge. If you are confident, you could probably saw a lot of this material away fairly quickly. Be conscious of grain direction around the bees and also be careful not to dig down too deeply.

**4** With the majority of the excess material cleared, you can begin shaping the bee's body. I used the same gouge to shape the bee's abdomen and the curve of the wings then used a No.9 sweep, 10mm gouge for some of the tighter curves. Keep the gouge at 90° to the work face and avoid the urge to hog off too much in one go. To remove material on straighter sections I used both a 1in straight knife and a No.1, 14mm straight gouge and cleared to a depth of approx. 8 mm.

**5** I drilled some holes around the more complex sections of the bee bodies. I used a drill press set to a controlled depth to ensure that when I cleared each little section, I would more or less arrive at the same area and the background would be kept consistent with the area around the comb. A regular hand drill with a masking tape depth marker wrapped around the bit works just about as well.

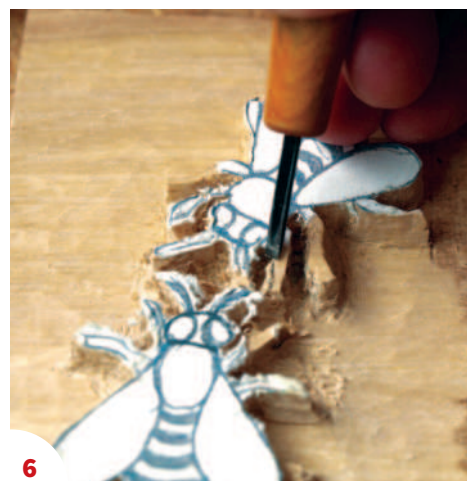
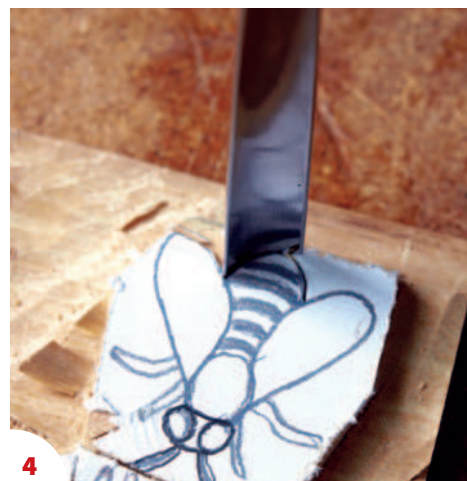
**6** To clear the confined areas around the bee's body, I used a number of very small Japanese chisels, from 1mm, 3 mm and 6mm chisels to 3mm and 6 mm gouges. I had to be on constant alert not to chip or snap off the thin sections that remained after all the cutting.

**7** With the bee bodies roughed out, I used a 1in straight knife to scribe out all the body and wing lines. I cut to a depth of approximately 3mm with all these line cuts and made sure to keep my knife as vertically placed as possible.

**8** I began work on the bee's body by gently cleaning up the legs and antennae. I used a small 6mm chisel for much of this and constantly monitored the ever-changing grain direction to ensure I didn't take too much material off. I also began shaping a bit of round-over on to the tops of the legs and curved them a bit toward the background to look more like the bee was standing.

**9** I also began shaping the bulbous section of the bee's abdomen. I used the 1in straight knife to shape a gentle dome, which also allowed me to raise the wing areas slightly. I cut to a depth of approximately 4-5mm alongside the wings and that gave me plenty of room for later steps with would involve wing shaping. With the body shaped, I took a moment to re-scribe the body lines with the tip of the straight knife before moving on to rough shape the bee's thorax and head sections.

**10** Once I had the bee's body rough-shaped and most of the paper pattern cut off, I began shaping the wings. I used a bent knife, but you could use the No.9 gouge or similar to achieve the same lightly concave shaping. Watch the wood's grain carefully to avoid snapping off sections if it isn't flowing in your favour.







11



12

**11** With the bodies largely roughed out, I sharpened up the straight knife and the 6mm chisel before starting to refine the rough edges and finish-shape some of the body and leg details. As you can see, the 'sides' of the legs and body look a bit crumbly and rough, so I spent a fair bit of time cleaning all those areas with the sharp blades. I also tidied up the ground areas between each section of the bees.

**12** As the body and ground areas became a bit more tidy, I began shaping the abdomen and rounding over each of the little striped segments of the body. I used the 1in straight knife to rough out and shape each section, before cleaning and gently rounding each segment with the tip of the 6mm chisel.



13



14

**13** Although the bee's abdomen is not so obviously segmented in nature as it is on this carving, I think the exaggeration helps to make this section a bit more visible. I found that scribing a thin line through the mid-point of each little section further mimicked the complex lines found on a real bee's abdomen.

**14** I began texturing the ground the bees are 'stood' upon. I wanted it to have a lightly faceted feel and not be a glassy smooth surface, so I cut in small dimples with my bent knife. Again, this can be mimicked with fine cuts made by the No.9, 10mm gouge or similar.



15



16

**15** Aim for a consistent depth of cut of only about 1mm, but be conscious of cutting with the grain and not pulling up an edge or the area will look rough and craggy rather than smooth and soft. I covered the entire board with this textured surface.

**16** I then glued the honeycomb pattern back on to the workpiece and began scribing all the segments. I cut a 1.5mm deep incision that remained 90° to the face of the piece and used the 6mm chisel and the tip of the straight knife to clear a small wedge-shaped chip which began about 1-2mm inside the segment and ended at the inscribed line. This keeps the outer edges of each cell crisp and visually tidy but allows them to become a bit more visible and dramatic when viewed from a distance.



17



18

**17** I then used the No.9, 10mm gouge and the 6mm Japanese gouge to shape the round sections which mimic the unfinished cells typically found in any honeycomb structure. I simply spun the gouge around each circle to form a shallow concave hollow. I aimed to keep the bottom as smooth as possible and to avoid the gouge digging in and removing a reverse grain chip. I made the large holes approximately 3mm deep and the smaller ones about 1.5mm.

**18** With all the honeycomb section cleanly cut, I began removing the remains of the pattern with gentle passes of a small cabinet scraper. You can also use a flat chisel to achieve the same result, but be careful not to dig the tool into the work. The scraper works best, as it is unlikely you'll catch it and pull up a chip.



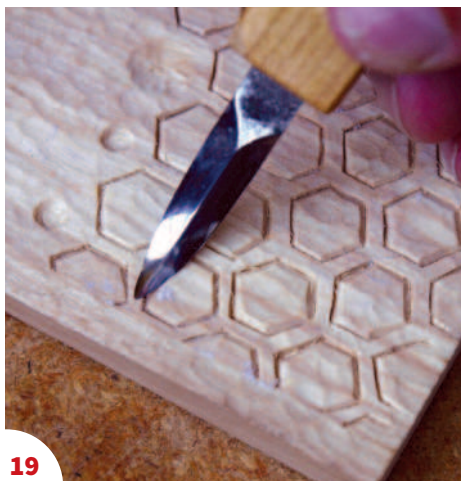
**19** I decided the original textured finish I had applied to the piece was not quite deep or broad enough for realistic-looking cells, so I returned with the bent knife (again a judiciously used No.9, 10mm can suitably stand in for the bent knife) and shaped a small concave hollow into each hexagonal cell. I took my time with this and on some cut quite deeply (2-3mm) being careful not to chip off pieces. Be very conscious of the flow of the grain and adjust the pressure and depth of each cut to suit.

**20** After I was satisfied the comb section all looked good and each cell was nicely finished, I returned once more to the bees. I marked off the eyes and the leg joints with a pencil and then used the sharpened tip of my tin straight knife to scribe and incise each joint. Working down the sides of the legs can be a bit tricky, so be careful not to apply too much pressure. Gently round over the material around the eyes and try to achieve a nice domed effect in these sections.

**21** Originally, I cut the bees so their edges were pretty much 90° vertical to the work face. I realised that made them look a bit heavy and clumsy, so I undercut the wings, abdomen, and some of the legs. This lightened them visually and created more of an appearance of them standing above the work face rather than simply being part of it.

**22** No doubt a carver with a steadier hand and better eyes than mine could hollow out under the legs and antennae for an even more dramatic effect, but I was satisfied to just take things as far as I did.

**23** Once I was happy that the carving was complete and everything was as well carved as I could get it, I finished the carving with a couple of coats of Danish oil applied by brush and allowed to cure overnight. After the third coat, I applied a fourth coat which I lightly wet-sanded with 600 grit wet and dry abrasive paper. I sanded very lightly to avoid breaking through the finish anywhere and then finished the carving off with a nice buffing of beeswax polish... which seemed the most appropriate finale for this particular design. ▶



19



20



21

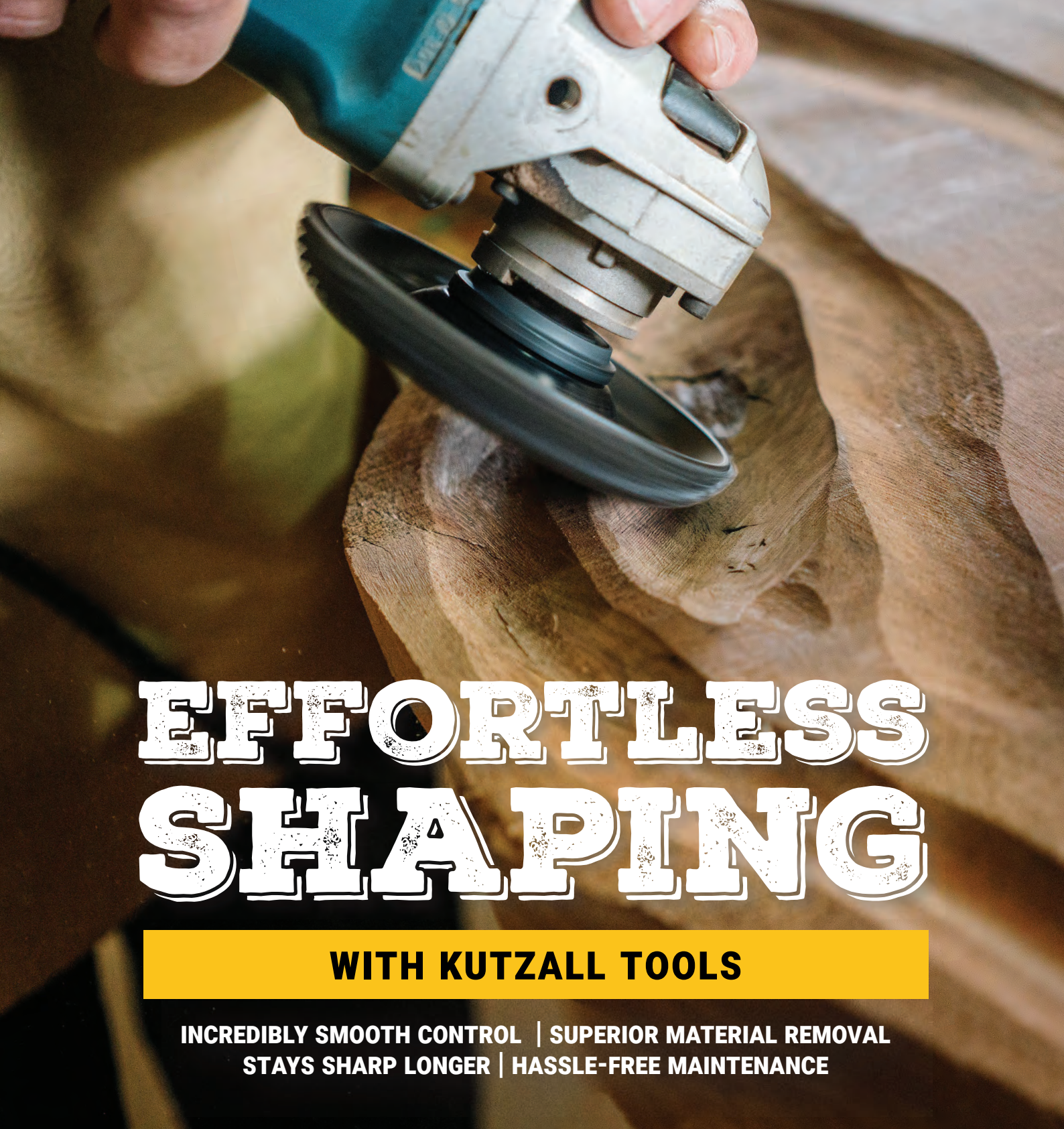


22



23





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# Wedding anniversary spoon

Cedric Boyns creates a spoon with a handle of trapped balls for a very special and personal occasion



**F**rom very early on in my carving journey I have been fascinated by the idea of trapping a ball in a cage, which I first saw when my wife was given a Welsh lovespoon. I have experimented with this technique quite a bit in various projects, one of which is a spoon with four cages trapping eight balls, and I decided to try to extend this further and make a spoon that would be a memento of

our marriage with 16 cages and enough space inside those cages to trap a ball for every year of our married life. We had been married quite a few years before I made it, so those balls had to be added first, and since then I have added a new ball each year. I recently decided to make another spoon as a present for some good friends of ours who have also been married for quite a few years.





### Materials:

- Abrasives, 120 down to 400 grit

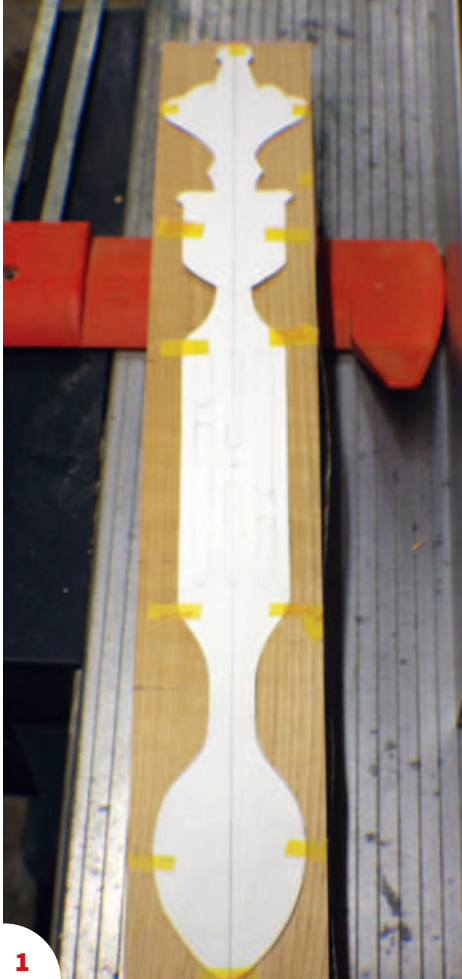
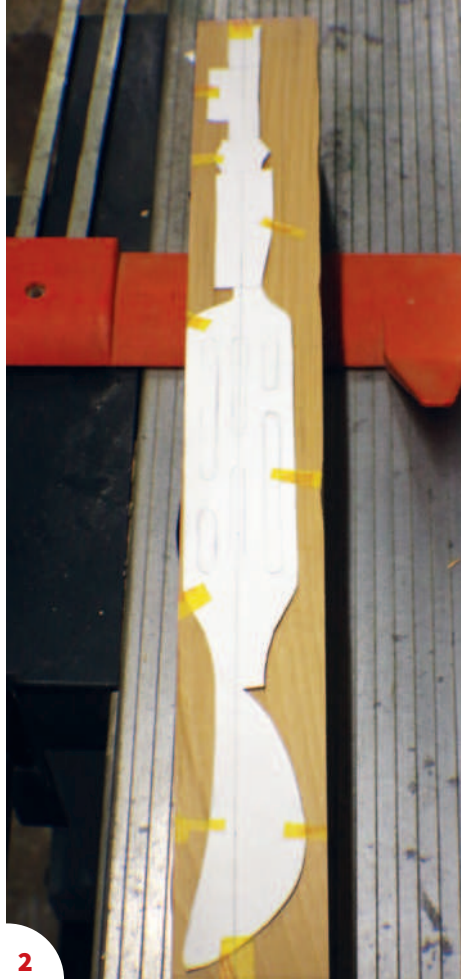
**Tools:**

- method of measurement.

- Riffler (knife and spoon)
- Detail carving knife
- Flexcut 8mm scorp
- Gouges: No.3 and No.5 (3mm, 6mm and 10mm), No.9 (6mm), No.11 (2mm), No.1 straight chisel (6mm), or No.2 (6mm)
- Spoon bent gouge, No.6 sweep (6mm)
- Long bent gouge, No.3 sweep (8mm)
- 12mm skew chisel
- 6mm spindle gouge






**1**

**2**

**1 & 2** Use a full size copy of the templates to draw the front and side profiles on to the block.

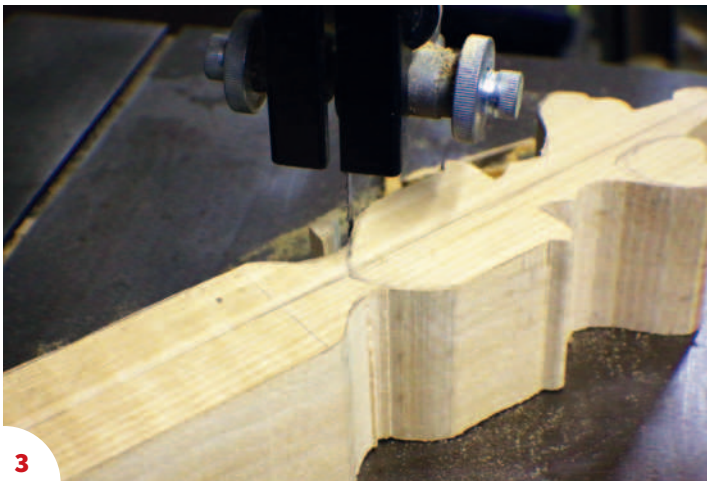
**3** Cut out the front profile on the bandsaw.

**4** Glue back the waste wood with blobs of hot-melt glue and cut out the side profile.

**5** Remove all the waste wood to leave the spoon blank.

**6** Starting with the cage area, plane this area square so that the width of each of the sides measures 50mm. It can be a fraction larger, but do not reduce it to less than 50mm.

**7** Using the detail given in the drawing, mark out the areas to be removed to create the cages.


**3**

**4**

**5**

**6**

**7**



**8** I used a carpenter's gauge to mark the centrelines of the areas to be drilled out. This provided a groove into which the point of the drill bit can be placed, so helping to ensure that the holes could be kept in a straight line, which is important when drilling out the cages.

**9** Once all four sides have been marked out, the drilling of the cages can be started. Drill the holes so that they just overlap. This leaves almost triangular shapes along the sides of the cage bars, which need to be removed to straighten the sides.

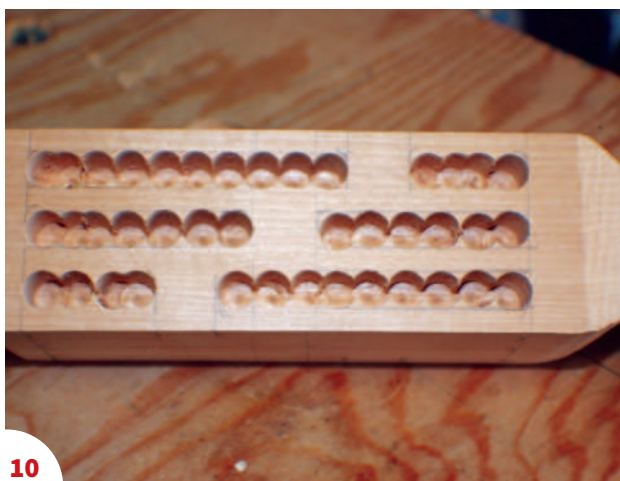
**10** Each face is drilled to a depth of 15mm as shown in the photo. I suggest that you start with the front and rear faces and then move on to the side faces. If using a pillar drill, it will be necessary to place a small, flat piece of waste wood under the relevant area when drilling the sides, because the hearts extend sideways beyond the cage area and therefore prevent the spoon lying flat when placed on its side. Remember to make the necessary adjustment to the depth when you do this. (If using a hand drill the 'stops' can be marked on the drill shaft with tape of some sort).

**11** Some of the initial holes have to be deepened to compete all the cages. I chose to use a conventional twist drill for these extensions because I thought that this drill would be less likely to cause breakaway damage to the inner surfaces of the bars of those cages being drilled out. Look carefully to check which of the holes need to be drilled in this way, and ensure that the central core and the other areas of solid wood are left undamaged. The core in the centre of the cages serves to give the cage area strength.

**12** Once all the drilling has been completed, use a steel rule with a detail knife to score the edges of the bars where the triangular bits of wood need to be removed to make the bars straight. I completed this removal with a No.3, 6mm (fishtail) gouge.

**13** Cleaning up the inner surfaces of the middle outer cage bars is more tricky, but can be achieved using a No.1 straight chisel or a No.2, 6mm gouge, working from either side through the outer cages.

**14** The cages are now ready for sanding to remove all traces of the drill marks on the sides of the bars. I used a variety of sanding sticks (some homemade) as well as strips of abrasive and rifflers to achieve a decent finish. Also, using a No.3 sweep long bent gouge (8mm) and a No.6 sweep spoon bent gouge (6mm), any solid inner wall to a cage was hollowed slightly, which not only removes any drill tip marks that were left, but also allows the space for the balls to move freely within those cages once they have been inserted. The clean-up will inevitably result in a slight widening of the cage openings from the 9mm drilled, but try to keep this to a maximum increase of 1mm, which will leave the bars 5mm square, the cage openings 10mm wide, and also keep the bars as straight and parallel as possible.





**15****16**

## Carving the other features

### Above the cages.

**15 & 16** Any necessary adjustments to the symmetry of the shield and the hearts can be made and the front and side surfaces made flat.

**17** Transfer the shield pattern to the shield from the template. The pattern I have chosen for this spoon is relevant to the couple I am making the spoon for, but it can of course be modified to suit personal choice. The features are first isolated using suitable small gouges to make shallow stop cuts angled slightly away from the features. Wood is then removed carefully from the outside of these stop cuts.

**18** The amount of wood removed is personal choice in order to highlight the pattern as shown in the photos. I chose to leave the carving of the wavy lines to later.

**19** The back of the shield can then be shaped. I chose not to make it too thin.

**20** Moving on to the hearts, the wood between them is removed so that they stand proud at the front. The top is shaped and the central part then cut out using a 7mm drill and a fretsaw to give the form of a keyhole.

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

**21 & 22** I made use of a knife riffer to shape and smooth the inside of the keyhole and a suitable small gouge to shape the region between the hearts and the shield, before the whole region was sanded.

**20****21****22**





23



24



25



26

**23** I completed shield by applying the wavy lines using a No.11, 2mm fluter.

**24** As a finishing touch to the hearts I decided to carve in the initials of the couple I am making the spoon for. The letters were generated on the computer (Helvetica font, 70pt bold) and stuck on to the centre of the heart surface using contact adhesive.

**25** Using shallow stop cuts with a suitable straight chisel or small shallow gouge slightly away from the edges of the letters to start with, I first cleared away some of the waste wood as shown.

**26** The letters can then be isolated by further stop cuts, and carefully clearing the adjacent wood to make the letters stand proud of the surface. Once you are happy with the effect, the paper can be removed with label remover, and the letters can be finished off by careful sanding down the grits to 400g.

#### **Below the cages.**

**27 & 28** The back of the spoon bowl needs to be rounded and shaped. I used No.3, 6mm and 10mm gouges for this, but it can be achieved with any suitable small gouge.

**29** I decided to put a small (5mm) lip on the outside of the spoon, which I cut in with a No.9, 6mm gouge prior to further shaping and sanding.



27



28



29



**30****31****32**

**30 & 31** The bowl of the spoon is then hollowed using small gouges to start with, but as the hollow got deeper I made use of a bent gouge and a scorp (as I don't have a hollowing knife).

**32** Once I was happy with the final shape, I completed it by sanding with homemade sanding pads made by sticking strips of abrasive to small pieces of foam rubber, with double-sided tape.

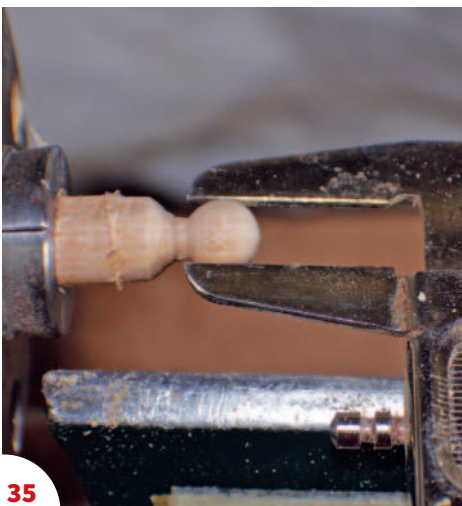
**33** To finish the main structure of the carving, each end of the cages section was shaped and smoothed to link this region with the spoon bowl below it and the shield above it. Final sanding with 400 grit can be done at this stage and I applied a coat of clear wax polish, accessing the inside of the cages with a small stiff paint brush.

### **Making the balls**

There are two options for making the balls.

#### **Turning them on a lathe.**

**34** I started with 12mm/½in lime dowel that I had made previously. A short length was secured squarely in the chuck and the free end rounded into a half sphere using a small (6mm) spindle gouge. (Ensure that the lime is very dry so that the balls don't shrink after they are made.)

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

**35** The balls need to have a diameter of 11-11.5mm, which can be checked using vernier callipers. The rounding is continued to almost complete the sphere, which is checked for size again and sanded, before being parted off with a 12mm skew chisel. It was then hand sanded to remove any nipple which might be left.

#### **Whittling them using a detail knife.**

**36** Again, starting with 12mm/½in dowel (or a rod of wood measuring at least 12mm x 12mm), carve the free end into a half sphere. Check the size with callipers as before.



**37** Continue to whittle to the other side of the sphere, taking small cuts from both the sphere side and the waste wood side, until a nice round shape is achieved, but a small stalk still attaches it to the dowel.

**38** The sphere can be a fraction big at this stage, as it is now hand sanded to the right size initially with fairly coarse grade abrasive, before being parted off and finished as before.

#### SAFETY WARNING

Always try to cut away from your fingers if possible. Where I have to cut towards my hand, I am using the thumb of my left hand as a stop against my right thumb holding the knife. This, along with the taking of small cuts each time, reduces the risk of a slip. Take special care when parting off. It is wise to put it down on the bench to make that final cut to free the ball. However, be careful that it doesn't fly off to be lost somewhere on the workshop floor when you do this!

**39** The two methods of ball making compared – turned on the left and whittled on the right. It is ideal to make as perfect a sphere as possible, but the important thing is that it doesn't fall out of the cage.

**40** Once made the balls are numbered in some way. I burned the numbers on before giving them a coat of polish.

**41** If the balls are the right size (i.e. about 1-1.5mm bigger than the cage openings), there is enough give in the bars to gently squeeze the ball through into the cage so that it is trapped, and will therefore not come out of its own accord.

Since in this spoon there was a requirement for over 40 balls, I distributed them within all the cages as equally as possible, reserving the upper front cage for the first, and then the other major anniversaries – namely 25 and 40 with space for 50 and also 60 (if they make it to those milestones). I also painted the 25 ball silver and the 40 ball ruby, and will supply a 50 ball painted gold along with the other numbered balls that will be needed for intervening years.

**42** The completed anniversary spoon will hopefully look something like this. ▀



37



38



39



40



41



42



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# Start to carve

**Peter Benson answers the question: 'What do I need to start carving and how much will it cost?'**

If you speak to any professional woodcarver and ask him or her how many tools they have they will probably say around 200 or more. If you then ask them how many they use for any one project, they will probably answer: 'About six.'

The reason for this is that there is a vast range of styles of carving, each requiring its own specific range of equipment. Before setting out to create a tool collection I would advise you to study as many styles of carving as you can and then decide which really appeals to you and makes you want to have a go. As a rough guide, you are looking at: architectural carving, as in stately homes and churches etc.; relief carving, similar to the former but can be simple pictorial pieces with no carving on the back; sculptural work, realistic or stylised; abstract design pieces; pieces that can be used in the home, including furniture decoration (usually relief), and so on. All of these styles of carving will involve more equipment that will add to the cost – more about this later.

I have not mentioned knife carving (or whittling, as many call it) but would seriously suggest that you consider this as a starting point. I have been carving for around 75 years and started with a penknife. I still get a great deal of pleasure carving with a knife and feel none of the stress that I often feel when carving some important 'masterpiece'. It is something you can do almost anywhere, you can carry your equipment in your pocket and material outlay is minimal.

If you want to go this way you will need a good knife, protective glove, preferably a leather apron, and a means of keeping the knife sharp. All this can be found on the internet or in this magazine and the whole lot shouldn't cost you more than around £75. There are some very good miniature tools available should you find that a knife is not enough.

## Knives

Just one word of warning here. It is illegal to carry any knife with a fixed blade (including a locking knife), in public, unless for a very good reason (you may need to prove this). There are many suitable fixed blade knives on the market for you to choose from at under £20 but, if you are likely to travel in public with your carving equipment, I would advise that you select a folding knife – this will work just as well as long as it is kept sharp.

There are dozens of books on whittling and most of the information you will need to complete hundreds of projects are contained in these. The softest suitable wood for knife carving in the UK is jelutong, but if you can get hold of some imported basswood that would be ideal.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY PETER BENSON



Knife carving kit





Examples of different gouges



Fishtails



No.10 veiners



V-tool

## Back to what I will call classical carving

For all the styles mentioned you will need a selection of gouges. These can be described as chisels with a round groove down the middle. They are, in fact, all ground to produce a cut that represents part of the circumference of a circle – the curve depending on the size of the circle. These are numbered 3-9. Any tool numbered 1 is a straight, flat chisel and 2 is a skew-ended chisel. All of these tools come with parallel sides or as fishtails – which you choose is purely your individual preference. You obviously lose some of the cutting edge from a fishtail each time you sharpen it, so it may be wise

to stick to the standard tool for a while if you are a beginner.

You may encounter a 10 and 11 – these are number 9s with extended sides for cutting deeper. The smaller ones are known as veiners and the larger ones as fluters.

The only other tool that I would add to my collection, to start with, would be a V-tool which, as it says, cuts a V. Probably a 60° V would be the most useful to start with.

As each of these tools, if you want quality, is going to cost in excess of £20 new, you need to choose wisely.

## Proceed with caution

A cautionary word before we go any further. You will see many sets and individual tools advertised that look to be bargains – steer clear unless you have had a chance to try them out first because many of these will not hold a sharp edge. Tools like the ones in the picture to the right are very common but will not provide a clean cut and I would avoid them.

Also, I personally, don't advise buying any tools in sets as you will be paying for tools that you will probably never use.

The other alternative to buying from a tool supplier is to look for secondhand tools. Sadly, our hobby tends to be carried out by us older members of the population and there are hundreds of tools out there that sit doing nothing because the owner has either passed on or had to give up carving.

Every so often these tools will come to light, usually at a carving club, so it would be a very



Cheap tools

good idea to try to find a club in your local area. Not only will you find tools but also there is always someone with wood to spare and, of course, advice is always available.

Unfortunately, the British Woodcarvers Association recently folded due to the lack of anyone volunteering to take charge and run

things, something that I suspect will happen more often to clubs and societies as a result of the lockdowns. I am sure many of the regions will still be functioning as clubs, and, if you would like to contact me on [bencarve@btinternet.com](mailto:bencarve@btinternet.com) I will try to put you in contact with someone in your area, if there is anyone.

When buying a secondhand tool, condition is everything. The makers to look for most are Addis and Herring, but most tools from Ashley Iles, Henry Taylor, Tiranti or Sorby are going to be pretty reliable – these were high-quality tools and will last a lifetime. Those in obviously good condition could well be dearer than a new tool, but don't ignore the rusty ones. These will clean up and be as good as new with a little effort as long as there is no rust pitting on the inner surface of the blade. Any on the outside will be ground off as the tool is sharpened. They usually have a lifetime guarantee so it may be worth contacting the manufacturer if you can't do anything yourself. The picture left shows how bad some of these tools can be.



Samples of old tools I was given recently



These two below have been cleaned up with an emery cloth and a polishing wheel—any more serious pitting might need a grinding wheel, as with the veiner.



Two have cleaned up well

Some tools can have the end removed before grinding again. In the end you would be getting a tool that is very serviceable for probably a third, or less, than the cost of a new tool.



This veiner will need grinding



The end is useless but can be cut at line to form good tool



Cheap bench clamp



Spencer Franklin clamp, perfectly adequate for most sizes of carving

## Holding devices

If you intend carving anything of any size you are going to need some sort of holding device. Small portable ones for attaching to a bench can range from around £15 from a mail order company and are perfectly suitable for holding small carvings.

More robust ones, with more features and capable of holding bigger pieces, would need to be attached to a bench and can cost up to £500. You will obviously need a bench or work station of some kind and, even without a specialised clamp, you will need some kind of woodworking vice. Screwing a block of waste wood to your carving and gripping this in a simple vice may well be enough. It is worth looking on eBay or at boot fairs as different designs of clamp or vice often appear at very reasonable prices as people don't know what they are for.

You will almost certainly need a mallet of some kind and a means of keeping your tools sharp. There are many options for this but an oil stone or diamond plate used in conjunction with a leather strop do the job admirably. If you join a club you will find that members have found dozens of ways to overcome the obstacles mentioned above.

## Final suggestions

Don't buy anything you don't need. I come across hundreds of tools that have never been used and were bought 'just in case'. You will have a rough idea of what tools you may require before you start your project. As a rough guide you will need numbers 3, 5, 9, 39(V) as a basis and then others as you feel the need. Don't bother with any complicated curves, bends and odd shapes at the early stages.

As with most projects of any kind, get the best equipment you can afford and keep it in good condition. Start simple—don't try to be too ambitious in the beginning and carve what you really want. The process is going to take some time and you need to

enjoy what you are doing. Most of all, don't carve in rubbish wood. Jelutong is good for knife carving and lime is ideal for most other styles. Old tree trunk and pieces of furniture and gate posts can be extremely hard and unrewarding. Leave projects in exotic wood or fruit woods until you have more confidence and experience. ▶



Oilstone, diamond plate and mallet



# Our contributors



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



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



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



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**Will Barsley** specialises in bespoke carving. He undertakes a wide variety of work, such as restoration of antiques or listed properties, heraldry, gilding, one-off sculptures, and teaching. He uses the finest materials and traditional skills to ensure quality work that will last for generations. [info@williambarsley.com](mailto:info@williambarsley.com)  
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**Woodcarving is an inherently dangerous pursuit. Readers should not attempt the procedures described herein without seeking training and information on the safe use of tools and machines, and all readers should observe current safety legislation.**

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A close-up, high-angle shot of a man with short grey hair and a beard, wearing a maroon sweater, focused on carving a piece of wood. He is using a chisel. The workshop is dimly lit, with a bright desk lamp illuminating his work area. In the foreground, various tools are visible, including a pair of pliers with red handles and a yellow power tool. A wooden block with the text "SWISS MADE 7/14" is also visible.

# Diary of a professional woodcarver

William Barsley talks about his experiences since graduating

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Teaching woodcarving to students in Somerset



The finished carvings from a one day course, where students chose what they wanted to make

Somehow it is coming up to five years since I started the Student Woodcarver series for this magazine, which ran from September 2016 (WC152) to September 2018 (WC165). That series followed my journey as I undertook a career change by enrolling on a three-year diploma in Historic Woodcarving and Gilding at the City & Guilds of London Art School in the UK in an attempt to turn my passion for woodcarving into a full-time profession.

Very kindly, a few readers have since written to *Woodcarving* to ask what I've been up to since finishing the course. Well, I'm happy to say that I'm still carving professionally and have been busy building my carving business, taking on a variety of exciting projects. I'm still learning every day (and I'm sure I will be for my whole career), but the course gave me a wonderful foundation and I'm so grateful for the opportunities it opened up for me.

In this article I will catch you up on some of the projects I've been working on since graduating, before introducing you to the new series that I'll be starting in the next issue, called Carving Countries.

## Teaching

Over the past two years I've made the move out of London and am now settled in Devon after a short spell living in Somerset, although some carving jobs require occasional travel back to London or elsewhere in the country. I'm very much enjoying the slower pace of life in Devon, particularly my morning sea swims.

I'd always dreamed of teaching woodcarving to others and, while living in Somerset, I had the opportunity to teach on a regular basis. I found it very satisfying seeing people discover the craft for the first time, and I plan to do more teaching here in Devon in the future.

## Houses of Parliament – Westminster Hall restoration

By chance, just before I finished college, an exciting opportunity arose to help restore the medieval hammer beam roof of Westminster Hall in London. I worked as part of a team of timber framers, woodcarvers, and conservators to repair the stunning medieval roof. Westminster

Hall itself dates back to 1097 and is the oldest part of the Palace of Westminster, although the existing hammer-beam roof was built in 1393 by the famous carpenter Hugh Herland, commissioned by Richard II. The hall has seen a number of famous trials, such as that of Guy Fawkes, King Charles I, and William Wallace, and has also been the setting for grand coronation banquets since the 12th century.

In total, 26 stunning carved angels are positioned on the end of the hammer beams, each approximately 2.5m in length and holding the heraldic shield of Richard II – fleur-de-lis and three lions quartered. The angels were hand carved by medieval carvers and each is unique with variances in hair, drapery, ornaments, and even in the interpretation of standard features such as the lions or fleur-de-lis on the shield, or the clouds from which they come out.

It was a privilege to be able to study the angels up close and see the original woodcarvers' marks. Some were definitely better carved than others and all of them had been restored numerous times over their 600+ years. For some angels, the carvers had gone to the trouble of adding detail such as fingernails, despite no one ever being able to see such detail from the ground far below.

Since Westminster Hall is open to the public as well as Members of Parliament during the day, we had to work night shifts for safety reasons, starting at 8pm and working through to 3am. This took some getting used to. Reaching the angels required a clever scaffolding system that could be electronically raised and lowered, which in itself was quite a feat of engineering. Sadly, the timber beams were attacked by deathwatch beetle back in the 19th century and early 20th, causing major damage. However, a metal roof, invisible from the ground, was added by Frank Baines between 1914 and 1923, saving a large percentage of the original timber work. The repairs we undertook were in part a result of the beetle damage.

I worked on the hall for a total of 18 months and it proved to be the perfect start to my carving career, giving me an insight into what it is like to work on a building site and meet tight deadlines. A big takeaway for me was also how fun it is to work in a team of craftsmen, as most carvers these days work independently. A great bond formed between us and we all had tremendous respect for the craftsmen who had made the hall and those who have helped to restore it over the years.







Progress shot of the Windsor overmantle being made



Windsor Herald: The inspiration behind this piece was taken from the Treatise of Walter of Milemete made for Edward III, which was the Gothic interlace/vine scroll that formed the surround of the sunburst badge of Windsor Herald



Norroy and Ulster King of Arms: The Lindisfarne Gospel manuscript was chosen as inspiration, produced around 715AD, using its zoomorphic interlaced patterns around the Norroy shield



Somerset Herald: Inspired by the *Beaufort Book of Hours* in the British Library, once owned by Henry VII's mother, Margaret Beaufort, an architectural canopy and vine scroll were used



William's ornamental wreath of hops

## College of Arms overmantles

As a carver I find heraldry ticks a lot of boxes for me. Given that the purpose is for each coat of arms to be unique to the family or company, there is always a new challenge and they are always incredibly special pieces for the clients. Since my final year of college, during which I was asked to carve the new crest for Roald Dahl's grandson, I've been working with the College of Arms to produce crests and coats of arms for clients around the world. The College of Arms, founded by Royal Charter in 1484, is a heraldic authority and consists of officers of arms. The College of Arms has been at its current site alongside the Thames in London since 1555.

Last year I was asked to carve new door signs, called 'overmantels', for five heraldic officers. These were: Norroy and Ulster King of Arms, Windsor, Somerset, Chester, and Bluemantle. Working closely with heraldic artist Timothy Noad, who creates some stunning designs, inspiration came from manuscripts that connected to each heraldic office. At the centre of each sign was the heraldic badge of the office, which was painted and gilded.

## The Hop Collection

Alongside commissions and teaching, I've been developing a new collection of carvings based on my passion for hops and inspired by growing up surrounded by hop fields in Kent. This will be launched in the coming months and is a new avenue I'm exploring with production carving.



### New Carving Countries series

Like many of you I'm sure, after over a year of travel restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, I've been dreaming about travelling again and exploring the sights and wonders of the world – particularly its woodcarvings. As an antidote to this, I've been reflecting on a journey I began in 2015 in which I set off (in part by bicycle) to explore woodcarving around the world. My aim was to find out how woodcarvers in other parts of the world make a living from carving and what variations there are

in the tools, woods, and methods they use. I quickly discovered that almost any country I visited had a rich and unique history of carving, whether in wood or stone, and that there were always carvers who were more than willing to share their stories with me.

The carvers I met on this journey and their passion for their own carving tradition is actually what inspired me to train as a historic woodcarver upon my return to the UK in 2016. As such, I'm keen to share these carvers' stories with you too, and

will be doing this through a new 11-part series, starting in the next issue.

Each article will centre around a specific country, taking a look at the history of carving in that country and including personal accounts from the carvers I met there. The countries we will explore include Bali, Malaysia, Thailand (in two parts), Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, India (in two parts), Iceland, and England. Quite the mix! I'm looking forward to the journey and hope you are too.



Packing for the Carving Countries trip



On the move, searching for woodcarvers in Malaysia



A farmer woodcarver in Thailand, creating this stunning piece





# Fox clever!

Paul Purnell gets crafty with his latest walking stick project

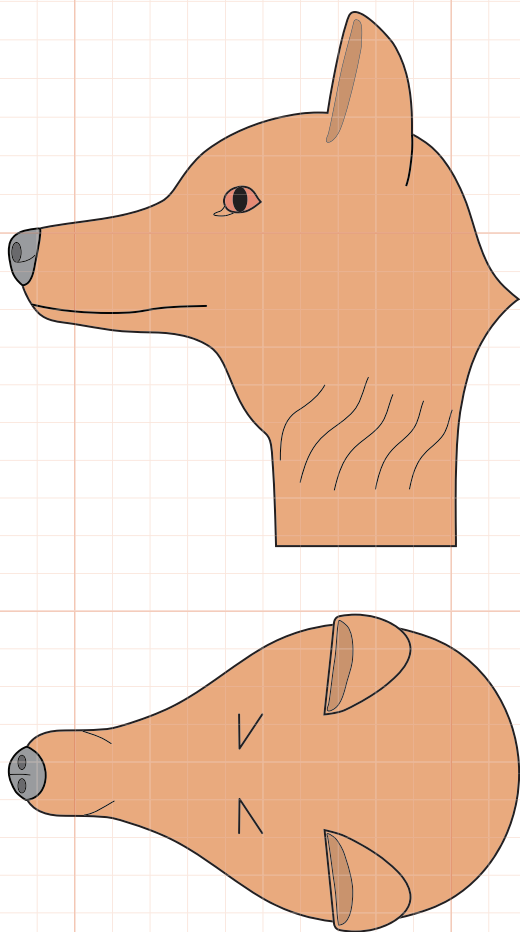
**T**he red fox belongs to the dog family. It is a resourceful and adaptable animal, which has colonised a wide range of environmental conditions, from sub-tropical to the Arctic tundra.

The pupils of a fox's eyes have vertical slits. These allow the eyes to open very wide and gather more light. Their eyes are especially adapted for night-time vision. Behind the light-sensitive cells in the

eye, another layer, called the tapetum lucidum, reflects light back through the eye. This doubles the intensity of images received.

Foxes have whiskers on their wrists that they use as 'feelers', much the same as cats do with their facial whiskers. This helps the fox move around more efficiently in the dark. Thanks to these whiskers and good eyesight, foxes are formidable night-time predators.





### Things you will need

#### Materials:

- Piece of lime, 100mm x 100mm
- Special, 7mm, vertical-slit pupil, glass eyes
- Shank of your choice and size
- 10mm spacer or several that approximate to this thickness
- Cloth-backed sandpaper 120 through 400 grit
- Brass ferrule
- Epoxy putty
- Epoxy glue
- Sanding sealer
- Finishing oil
- Assorted acrylic paints

#### Tools:

- Bandsaw
- Rotary carving tool
- Coarse-toothed cutters
- Fine carbide cutters
- Selection of diamond burs
- Ceramic cutters for texturing
- Carving knife or scalpel
- Junior hacksaw
- 13mm wood drill
- Cushioned drum sander
- Split-mandrel sander

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAUL PURNELL



**1**



**2**



**3**



**4**

### Carving the head

Before starting to carve, ensure you have plenty of reference material giving a view of a fox head from all angles.

**1** Prepare cardboard templates from the sketch. Use the side template to bandsaw the blank.

**2** Draw a centreline around the head. Mark the centre point at the bottom of the blank. Draw a 32mm square around this point. This head is for a 30mm shank with a 2mm safety margin. Adjust this according to the size of your shank.

Use a 13mm wood drill to drill a hole in the bottom of the neck to a depth of 45mm. Although there is no danger of the drill breaking through in this project, it is advisable to mark the drill with a piece of masking tape to the depth required. Drill the spacer(s). For this project, I have used two padauk and two African blackwood slices that I cut on the bandsaw. You can use one or more spacers of the material of your choice.

**3** Using a coarse burr in the rotary tool, reduce the sides of the neck. Do not cut into the square marked out in the previous step. Draw on the rough placement of the ears. Use the same burr to define them by removing material from between and behind. Round over the back of the ears.

**4** Use a burr to shape the neckline then pencil in the shape of the cheek line.





**5** Using a coarse burr, define the cheek line.

**6** Profile the skull in front of the ears.  
Draw the features on the head to help visualise the next stages.

**7** Use a medium cylinder burr to round over the snout. Outline the position of the nose and carve the indentation behind the fleshy pad of the whiskers.

Using the same burr, round over the top of the head down the foreface to where it meets the snout, known as the 'stop'. Draw reference lines of 5mm to help maintain symmetry.

Redraw the centreline after every step if the carving process erases it.

**8** Prepare the shank for the head using the dowel method. (Refer to WWC 21 for the full process.) Once you are happy with the fit, mark the positions of all components.

**9** Glue the spacer(s) to the shank with epoxy glue – do not glue the head. Allow to cure overnight. Temporarily replace the head on the shank. Use the coarse burr to carve the spacers to fit the profile of the shank. Do not remove any material from the neck.

**10** Use a flamed-head carbide burr to add some folds around the throat and neck.

**11** Give the head a rough sand with 120 grit paper on a cushioned-drum sander. Check how the carving looks. At this point, you want the head to be close to its finished shape. Locate the position of the eyes.

**12** Refine the nose shape with a carving knife. Use 240 grit paper on a split-mandrel sander to round over the edges.

**13** Draw on the shape of the mouth. The overlap at the corner of the mouth seen on most dogs is not prominent on the fox. Once again, draw reference lines at 5mm increments. Using a carving knife, place a stop-cut around the outline.

Now cut at about 45° to the first cut and from below. This will relieve the lower jaw that sits inside the upper jaw. Sand the edges with 240 grit paper on the split-mandrel sander. Sand a small dimple at the corners.



**5**



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**7**



**8**



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**10**



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**12**



**13**





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**DID YOU KNOW?**

Foxes are born blind and deaf. Adults can climb trees and settle on low branches.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF SHUTTERSTOCK

**14** Return to the nose and carve the nostrils. They are comma-shaped with a split at the sides. These splits create the alar flaps, which open when the fox is running and needs to draw in more air or when scenting. Use a ½mm dental burr to create the hole.

Then use a scalpel to define the split that runs from the nostril to halfway up the side of the nose.

The last part of the nose to carve is the philtrum. This is the line separating the left and right parts of the nostril. Define the philtrum with the scalpel or carving knife.

**15** Next, define the triangular-shaped bulge caused by the hyoid bone and muscles at the base of the lower jaw. This bone is attached to the tongue and helps with swallowing food. Use a 4mm diamond ball to outline, then sand with 240 grit paper on the split-mandrel sander.

**16** Draw on the shape of the inner ears and open the inside with a 3mm fluted ball. Aim to open up the socket well down into the head to give the impression of depth. Sand the inside of the ears with the split-mandrel and 240 grit paper.

**17** Now for the eyes. These are 7mm, special fox eyes with a vertically split iris. They are dark orange. Take care when working on the eyes, as they are the most important focal point of the head. On this head, the inner edge is approximately 10mm from the centreline. Draw a 7mm line from the inner edge. Insert a coloured pin into the centre point. Use another pin to locate the other eye. Check alignment from both front and top.

**18** Pencil on the almond shape of the eyes and drill a 3mm pilot hole at the centre point.

**19** Open up the socket with the 3mm fluted ball and a 2mm diamond burr. To keep the rough almond shape, you will need to carve behind the upper and lower edges of the sockets. To fit the eye later on into an opening that is less than 7mm, you will need to insert the eye into the upper part of the socket and then push the bottom of the eye into place. Alternatively, you can drill out a 7mm circular socket and use epoxy putty to create the almond shape. Check the fit of the eye as you carve. As you will paint this carving, you can make small adjustments to the eye shape with epoxy putty once inserted.

Using a 4mm diamond ball, create a shallow groove from the inner edge of the eyes towards the nose. Sand with 240 grit paper.

**20** Use a scalpel or knife to remove a triangular pip of wood from the outside edges of the eyes. Shape and sand to give the impression the lower eyelid fits under the top.





21



22

**21** Use a 2mm diamond ball to define the eyebrow ridges. Sand with 240 grit.

**22** Refit the head to the shank. Wrap a turn of masking tape around the shank for protection. Sand with 240 grit paper.

**23** Remove the head. Add some folds around the back of the cheek with the 4mm diamond ball. Add more definition to the neck folds. Sand with 240 grit paper.

**24** Fix the eyes into their sockets with epoxy putty. Work the putty on the outside of the eye to achieve the required shape.

This finishes the shaping of the head. Sand with 240, 320 and 400 grit paper to prepare for texturing. Use a combination of the cushioned drum, split-mandrel and hand sanding.

**25** Use your reference material to draw on the flow lines of the hair. Using a 2mm cylinder, blue ceramic stone, start the texturing with the ears. Use small 'C' and 'S' strokes.

Next, texture the distinct hair flow around the eyes.

**26** To protect the eyes while texturing, use a piece of plasticine, modelling clay or you can cut a piece from a self-adhesive, anti-scratch pad used to protect furniture.

**27** Texture the folds behind the cheeks. Move on to texture the muzzle to join up with the cheeks and eyes. Now work the top of the head to join up with the texturing of the ears.

Texture underneath the lower jaw and the back of the head.



23



24



25



26



27



**28****Paint mixes**Quinacridone gold +  
sienna + Titanium white

1 + hint of Payne's grey



1 + extra Payne's grey

**29****30**

**28** To add an extra dimension to the thicker fur around the neck, use a blue ceramic, inverted cone to apply deeper cuts.

Use the 2mm cylinder to apply another layer of texture on the neck. Check over the head for any area missed. Finish with a soft brush in the rotary tool to remove any dust or tiny particles. The texturing is now finished. Apply two coats of sanding sealer to the entire head.

**Painting and finishing**

**29** Now it is time to paint the fox using acrylic paints. Apply several coats with the consistency of skimmed milk. If you apply the paint in thick coats, it will fill up the texturing. As there are only three colours, I have included the paint mixes in the script. Alternatively, you can use a colour swatch.

First, use Titanium white on the underside of the mouth and down the chest area. Apply the orangey-brown base coat to the remainder of the head. This is a mix of Quinacridone gold, raw sienna and a hint of Payne's grey. Add a touch of Payne's grey to the above mix and darken the colour around the eyes. Add varying amounts of grey to this mix to add random highlights. Add further highlights with Titanium white. Use Payne's grey on the nose, the smudge across the muzzle, ears, around the eyes and for other random highlights. The painting is now complete. Carefully remove the paint from over the eyes. The carving is now finished.

**30** A view from the back showing the detail of the fur and the colour change on the ears.

**31** For this project I have used a yew shank. However, these are uncommon. Hazel is the most commonly used wood for a shank. Apply several coats of your choice of finishing oil to the shank and spacers. Use epoxy glue to join the head to the shank. Make sure there is not an air pocket trapped, as this can cause the head to push up as it is drying. Fit a brass ferrule and your walking stick is finished completely. ▶

**TOP TIP:** When texturing the head leave a small section – around 15-20mm – untouched at the bottom of the neck where it joins the shank. This will differentiate your stick as being a unique carving from wood and not resin. ▶

**31**







# Lumberjacks: a history

Armed with axes and saws, the people who worked in the forests of North America changed the continent's historical, geographical and cultural landscape forever

**T**hey are 'a young and powerfully built race of men... generally unmarried and, though rude in manner and intemperate, are quite intelligent,' described author and explorer Charles Lanman in his 1856 book *Adventures in the Wilds of the United States and British American Provinces*. 'They seem to have a passion for their wild and toilsome life and, judging from their dress, I should think possess a fine eye for the comic and fantastic. The entire apparel of an individual consists of a pair of grey pantaloons and two red flannel shirts, a pair of long boots and a wool covering for the head, and all these things are worn at one and the same time.'

While these observations could have been made at a taco truck in Tacoma, or a gin distillery in Dalston, these flannel-wearing menfolk aren't hipsters, millennials or 'yuccies'. They are icons from another age, striding out of the forests and into eternity with shredded arms, steely eyes and wielding a sharpened axe. Built of substance over style, they're a rare, real deal; teasing the nose with notes of winter and woodsmoke that could be bottled and sold by Tom Ford. Men who've become myth, loggers who've become legend: lumberjacks.

## Spirit of adventure

Just like the cowboy, the lumberjack still permeates popular culture today. As with their Wild West cousins, these iconic figures have endured for their strength, work ethic and resilience – as well as those timelessly stylish plaid shirts.

Immortalised in books, films and songs, their unmistakable look has been adopted and adapted from one generation to the next, while their pioneering spirit of adventure and connection to the great outdoors continues to inspire urban warriors to return to the woods.

The 'young and powerfully built race of men' described by Lanman hailed from Maine, and their 'toilsome life' is that of a logger, felling trees deep in the forests of New England during the height of the lumber boom in 19th-century North America.



A lumberjack standing at the base of a huge tree showing a cut in the tree, US, ca. 1900.





'Loggerettes' worked in the woods during the World Wars.

### NAME CHECK

The first known mention of the word 'lumberjack' was in Canada's Cobourg Star newspaper in 1831, while the 'lumberjill' emerged during World War II. Other terms include 'shanty boy', 'brush monkey' or 'woodcutter', while modern lumberjacks are known as 'loggers' or 'timber cutters'.

### Building the new world

From the moment the first permanent English settlement was established in 1607 in Jamestown, Virginia, the continent's forests became its most valued resource. Trees were cut for timber to build homes and make wagons that would roll across the Great Plains to the West, while woodlands were cleared for villages and farms. The best lumber was reserved for the Crown and sent to England to

make naval ship masts: a contentious issue which was to play a part in the American Revolution. Forested states met a growing demand throughout the 1800s, with white pine the favoured wood to build their new America.

Early logging camps were run by family outfits, but in the 1820s larger lumber cooperatives gained control. Pennsylvania's forests were plundered, while in New York additional land was granted to settlers



who established sawmills, and its rivers flowed with logs on their way to meet them. By the 1830s, Bangor in Maine had become the world's largest shipping port for lumber, and logging crews were felling the monumental trees of America's Pacific Northwest and the pine forests of Canada.

In the mid-1800s, the process of turning wood pulp into paper came into play, which – along with mass immigration to America, the Civil War, the California Gold Rush, the rise of the railroads and the grinding wheels of the Industrial Revolution – turned out to be bad news for trees, if not the timber barons.

### Logging legacy

Despite being built on their breaking backs, few of the profits from the logging boom made it into the calloused hands of the lumberjacks wielding the axe or bucking the logs. Life in the lumber camps was hard. Working in isolated forests through the harsh winter months, lumberjacks slept in ice-cold, crowded bunkhouses – and pay was poor.

Long before chainsaws and harvesters were invented, even the biggest of trees were felled by hand; the name 'misery whip' accurately described the discomfort of spending hours, days and months wielding a crosscut saw. Prior to steamboats and railroads, drivers risked being crushed or drowned as they guided and rode logs along rumbling rivers to the sawmills each spring on the 'log drive'. Camaraderie, good humour and strength – inner and outer – got them through.

From these remote camps and wild frontiers, the legendary lumberjacks Paul Bunyan and Big Joe Mufferaw were born. But it's the passionate, 'intemperate' loggers of the lumber woods who truly left their indelible mark on North America.

### Women in camp

Lumber camps were almost exclusively men-only zones but by the late 1800s some women worked in the camps, usually as cooks or assistants, known as 'cookees' or 'flunkeys'. They would prep the meals, fire up the stoves, wait on tables and prepare lunches for men to take into the woods.

During the World Wars, with men away fighting, 'loggerettes' began working in the woods and the sawmills, taking over traditionally male tasks. While many enjoyed the work, most were asked to move aside once the men returned, reverting to their roles as homemakers and mothers.

### Indigenous lumberjacks

Native peoples have always had a strong connection to the land, and many are striving to be responsible stewards of the forests today.

Before Europeans arrived to colonise the 'New World', Native populations who had lived there for thousands of years already harvested trees for canoes, shelter, weapons and art, and used bark for food, medicine and baskets.



Logging camp on the Menominee Indian reservation, Wisconsin, US.

Indigenous peoples were forced to move on to farming reservations after Congress passed the Indian Appropriations Act in 1851, completely altering their way of life and restricting their ability to hunt, fish and gather their traditional foods. Conditions on the reservations were harsh and by the end of the 19th century, some Native Americans were working in the logging industry, travelling to find work and sending their wages back to their families on the reservations, or having their families join them. Many became team leaders thanks to their understanding of land management and natural instinct for forest work.

### Savvy stewardship

Some communities, like the Menominee Indians of Wisconsin, began logging on their reservations. At first, the Menominee cut timber for their own use, but were later given permission to sell to outside sawmills, using the Wolf River for transportation. Between 1870 and 1890, the Indian lumberjacks cut and sold more than 88 million board feet of timber. They started a full-scale logging business, which drew in four million dollars around 1908, and opened their own sawmill in 1909.

Practising sustainable forestry, the Menominee people have maintained a healthy forest for over 150 years, and they're still logging today. In 1994, the Menominee became the first forest management enterprise in the United States to be certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).

### Value of nature

Other Native populations including the Klamath, Warm Springs, Siletz, Coquille,

Extracts taken from *Lumberjack* by Lauren Jarvis, Ammonite Press, RRP £9.99, available online and from all good bookshops.

### RISKY BUSINESS

Despite advances in machinery, working conditions and regulations, logging is still one of the most dangerous jobs in the world. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics' annual 2019 report on fatal occupational injuries places logging workers at number two, behind fishing and hunting workers and ahead of aircraft pilots and flight engineers.

Grand Ronde and Umatilla of Oregon are also using sustainable logging methods, restoring the diversity of flora and fauna in large areas of their tribal forests. In Canada, First Nations people such as the Tl'azt'en Nation of British Columbia are striving to reconcile the benefit of commercial forestry operations with traditional indigenous values and preserve their lands through sustainable practices for years to come.





# Kuksa bench

Following on from the article in the December issue, Paul Adamson shows a workholding device for kuksa making



**T**his is another simple project to make a holding device for woodworking. This is the type I use with students on courses for carving wooden cups called kuksa. It's basically a chopping block with raised sides so that the workpiece can be wedged in place quickly, after the main carving work on the outside has been completed.

It is relatively quick to make and employs some simple green woodworking techniques in combination with a chainsaw to speed things up.

You can do away with the chainsaw if you are not familiar with these though, and I recommend some training before using one, and some protective equipment.

All the materials are gathered freely from sustainable woodland management works, and these parts were gathered at the same time as harvesting the carving wood required for running courses, as I needed to replace some of the benches I've been using for the past few years.




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**1** The legs for these benches can be made in two ways – either in the round from coppice poles, or cleft from a larger main stem of a tree. Here you can see how the round stem has been split into rough halves and quarters, ready to be trimmed up with the axe if needs be. I cut all to a length that sets the bench at around hip height once the bed is cut into it, and the amount of leg tenon is allowed for. It's around 1m.

**2** Here are some nice cherry poles. It saves a lot of work, but they will probably slightly split on the ends when dry. It's not really a problem, to be honest.

**3** Here is the running split – I start this off by using a heavy wooden baton to force in the axe to the end of the log, aiming for the centre. Then, along the split, wooden wedges can be used to continue its path, taking them out and moving them along until you reach the other end. If the split runs off from the centre, then metal wedges or old axe heads can be used to correct. Froes can also be used but work better for steering the split when working on the quarters and eighths.

**4** I use a 32mm hole for the legs to fit into the log, so to get the legs down to this diameter, I first make a gauge by drilling a hole into a scrap piece of wood. Then using a sharp hatchet or axe I trim up the end of the legs along a length of 150mm, roughly round and oversized. You could let the legs season now for several months before finishing to size, if the wood is still green.

**5** Then jump on to a shave horse and carve down to size, checking the gauge makes it all the way along the shaved area. The legs often get stuck into the bed if not due to the taper – a pain when trying to transport the bench. Even more so when you have seven of them. You can, of course, use specialist tenon cutters for this part of the process.

**6** Two sets of legs finished. A set of round poles and a set of split ones.







**7** To support the log while drilling the mortise for the legs, I use a ratchet strap and two further heavy logs. The log here is 650mm long by 180mm dia. Using a long auger bit as in the picture with an eye for the handle, or a decent power drill and spade bit, drill the mortise to a depth of 100mm. You have to allow for the legs to splay to make the bench stable in use. Approximately 30° seems to do the trick, both out to the side and the end to the log.



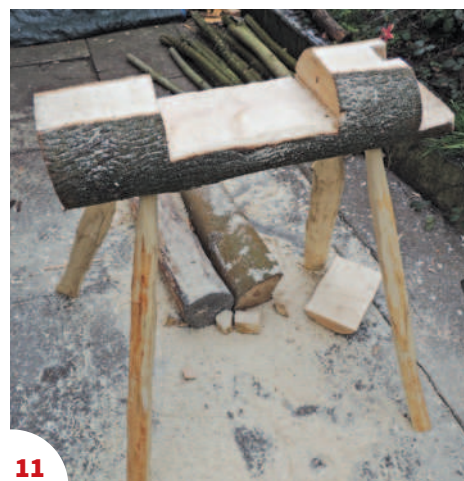
**8** All holes drilled. Note how they are offset, so as to reduce weakness in one area. Care is needed to drill the holes at the correct angle.



**9** Pop in the legs and stand up the bench, giving the legs a gentle tap to settle the splay. Twisting the legs around slightly may also improve the way the bench sits. If needs be, trim off the legs until it's at the desired height and level.



**10** I cut out an end section with the chainsaw when felling and converting the tree. A bowsaw and hatchet will also work to split this out. This part is sometimes handy for shaping the sides of cup handles. It's around 100 x 80mm. The extra locating groove is more for small bowls and useful for shaping the external rim 50 x 30mm. This part can simply be created with a gouge and baton.



**11** The bed I cut out with the chainsaw also, but unless you are familiar with boring into wood with the tip of your bar, I wouldn't recommend it. Also, unless your saw is sharp it won't want to cut along the grain of the wood. Again, two bowsaw cuts and a hatchet and baton will split this out eventually. The beds of my benches tend to be 260mm long by 70mm deep. It means I'm not using lots of blocks and wedges for the cups I make, but it does limit the products made. Simply increase the bed size as you require.



**12** The last couple of jobs I like to do is to remove the corners on one side of the bed, and to create holes for attaching holdfasts to aid carving.

**13** All done and ready to go. Dowels, pads and wedges will hold each blank that is worked on.



**14** A finished and well-used kuksa – one of many that will be produced on the bench. ▶







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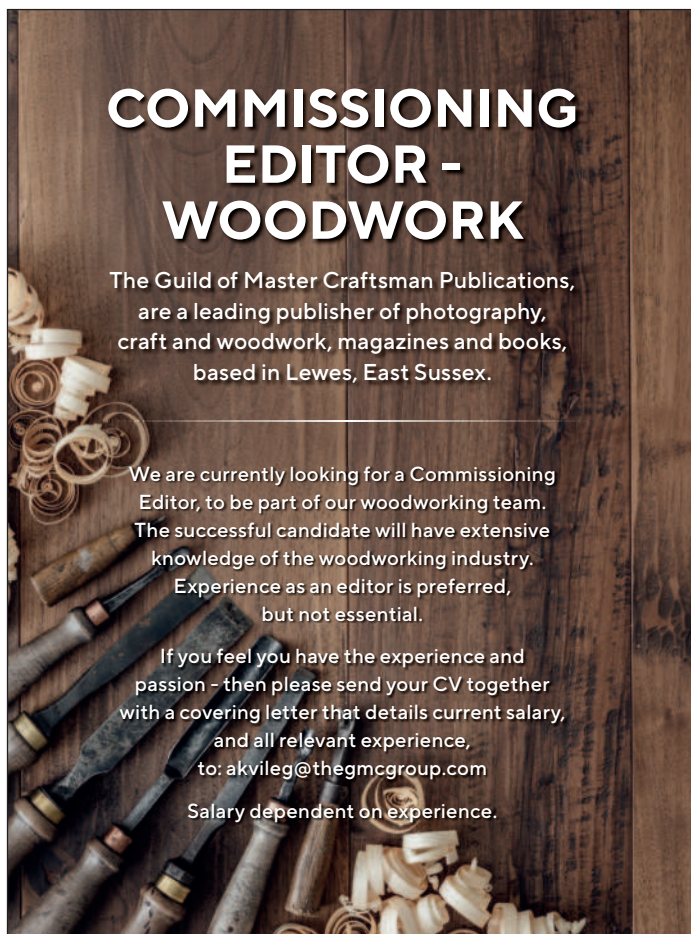
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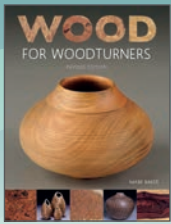




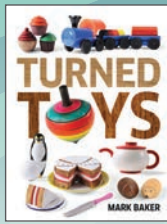
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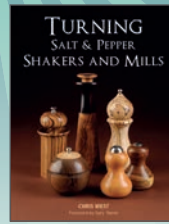
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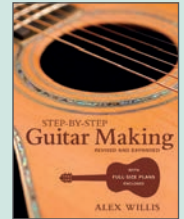
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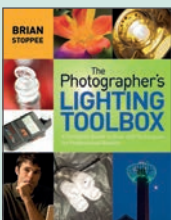
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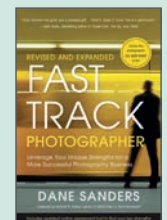
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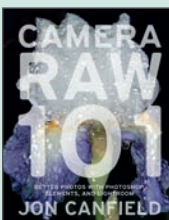
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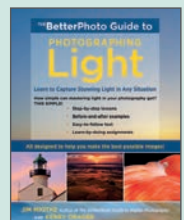
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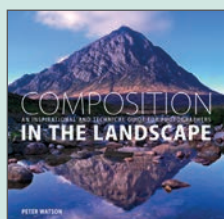
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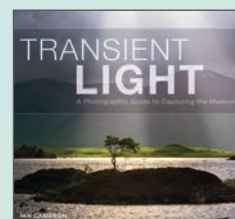
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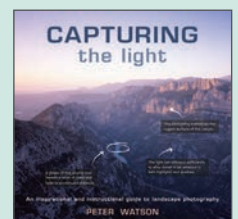
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# The Hawa Mahal

We learn the history of the 'Pink City' of Jaipur and one of its most famous landmarks

Jaipur is the capital of the state of Rajasthan in northern India and one of the largest cities in India. Its most striking characteristic is its colour: every building inside the historic walled centre is painted a shade of terracotta pink. In fact, this colour is so important to the city's heritage that it is enforced by local law. Its history dates back to 1876 when Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh II ordered the whole city to be repainted in preparation for a visit from Prince Albert. Terracotta pink was chosen because the colour traditionally represents hospitality

and the terracotta paint was suitable for the arid climate.

The pink colour also blended in with local buildings, such as the Hawa Mahal. This palace was built in 1799 from red and pink sandstone, designed by Lal Chand Ustad for Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh. The five-storey building features 953 windows, known as jharokhas, which are decorated with intricate latticework. Some of the jharokhas are carved from wood instead of sandstone. The latticework allowed royal ladies to look out on the city, as well as letting fresh, cool air into the building.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY GILLY PRENTICE



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