

WOOD CARVING

NIC WESTERMANN GUEST EDITOR

INTERVIEWS
SPOON
CARVER
NAAMA
LILA



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the issue**

**Profiles non-profit
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Guest editor's letter

Nic Westermann



When I was asked to take on the guest editorship of this issue my thoughts immediately turned to Mark Baker – I always looked forward to reading his editorials, so it made sense to re-read some of them. Mark had great technical and practical knowledge, but I think his real genius was in his interpersonal skills. He was a superlative demonstrator and he loved to visit clubs, recognising that they were the foundations of the hobby.

My background in carving comes from green woodworking, a related skill that often seems to be unnecessarily split from the types of carving more often found in this magazine. I think sometimes this schism, if it exists, comes from 'my' side. I spoke to Mark about this maybe 10 years ago and he thought it was completely unnecessary. His point was that all wood starts off green and ends up dry, the point at which we choose to start carving it is not really that relevant.

I will share with you what I have been carving recently, and how working with green wood isn't always the easy option. The painted bowl is one I finished in spring last year and the one underway I started back in September – this is still drying very slowly but it persists in cracking as it does. You can see for yourself the myriad cracks that I have sealed with superglue. However, both bowls are from the same tree. The first was straightforward and I expected another year of the tree being down and mellowing would have made this one easier, but this is obviously not the case. I've always secretly wished a bowl I made would crack so I could forge a unique patch for it, I've seen some wonderful old examples, but this spiderweb of cracks is definitely not what I was hoping for, and may yet defeat me.

As Mark would often do in his editorials, I'll ask a question: How do you benefit from carving? I'm guessing the answer for very few readers is financial – the hobby is rewarding in its own right, the ability to lose yourself in time and fine detail while

honing fine motor skills is both addictive and therapeutic. So bearing this in mind, I have put a slant on a couple of the articles I have included in this issue.

It seems that many carving clubs across the country are having difficulty attracting new members, and even closing in some cases. However, in the green wood scene, carving groups and clubs are starting up all over the country. In this issue I will be introducing a young carver, Naama from Israel – her work, I'm sure you will agree, is exquisite. I will also be showcasing an enterprise started by a good friend, Lee – the Milkwood Project. This shows another side to carving, and it's not that it largely focuses on green woodcarving, but that the personal and social benefits of carving are at the forefront. There has been significant funding for this project with its therapeutic and community benefits and as such it offers a new and viable model for carving clubs nationwide. Although applying for grants does take a special sort of mindset – form-filling is definitely not something I am any good at – it is something that clubs could consider. There's an often untapped wealth of knowledge, experience and enthusiasm in clubs that I have had contact with and it is good to share this around. There's no doubt that carving was very popular during the dark days of Covid and lockdowns, I know tool sales hit a huge peak when people were confined to their homes, and there's a chance to capitalise on and connect with these carvers and attract new ones into the fold.

If you do get involved introducing a new carver to the hobby, either individually or more formally in a group, I guarantee you will find it rewarding. As a good friend and demonstrator I used to work with loved to say: Enthusiasm is a fire that burns both ways.

Nic Westermann

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Heat treating

In part one of a two-part series, guest editor Nic Westermann covers the basics of heat treating steel

I have wanted to talk about heat treating tools for a long time as it's something I do on a daily basis as a toolmaker. It is a difficult subject to write about though. There is a lot of theory, which you will find this article largely concerning itself with. It is, perhaps, similar to the English language: lots of people can speak it, but there are so many exceptions and rules it's hard to get it perfect, and people around the world will hold strong opinions about what is actually right.

I do think, though, that this is a going to be a useful series. Heat treating allows you to modify and hopefully improve existing tools, but if you take it even further you can make tools from scratch. As with my sharpening articles, the emphasis is on understanding what is going on – when you understand the process, you can apply it to your individual situation, and it will vary from tool to tool. There isn't a single heat treat recipe that can be applied across the board and yield good results.

However, I'm not going to discuss any complicated chemistry here, I'll be concentrating on the theory in simple terms, with a quick visual representation of the process. This article is not a guide or 'how to', I will be covering the actual methods and relevant health and safety issues in the next article.

Overview

The basics of heat treating are very simple, if you have a hardenable steel and heat it to around a cherry red colour, the iron and carbon combine in solution. If cooled very slowly they will separate out again and the steel will become very soft – this is annealing. If you were to let it cool a bit faster the steel would be not quite as soft, but still not hard – this is normalising. If you cool it very quickly, the iron and carbon will not be able to separate out and will be effectively frozen together. This fast cooling is quenching and will result in a steel that has been hardened.

The steel, though, would be hard in the same way as glass is, it would result in an edge that, although hard, would chip when highly stressed and flexed. If you made an edge from normalised or annealed steel the edge would roll when flexed. We are looking for a balance between these two states, an edge that will flex but spring back into shape. This is done by tempering a tool that has been hardened. The hardness is reduced slightly but the toughness increases massively, the hotter you get an edge the softer it will get until it becomes useless. Tempering is simply a question of reheating the steel in the range of 180-250°C.

As a final simplification of the process, you get it hot, then get it cold quickly, then finally warm it up a bit. In essence it is that simple. To break up all the text I have shown this process completed in one heat, using the residual temperature in the shank of the steel to provide the heat for tempering. However, although quick and simple it is not a process that I would use commercially, nor recommend you do as it is not a very controlled process.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY NIC WESTERMANN

Health & safety – disclaimer

The processes in this article should only be attempted by someone capable of performing them safely. GMC Publications takes no responsibility for any damage or injuries caused to anyone attempting to follow the procedures in this article. All safety precautions must be adhered to and all necessary safety equipment must be worn. If you do not think you can safely perform the procedures described in this article, we recommend that you do not undertake them.



Rolling and chipping

Steels

You do need to start with a useable steel, this comprises iron and carbon, the percentage of carbon having the largest effect on the hardenability of the steel. You need a minimum of 0.4% C for a steel to harden. Most tool steels used in carving tools have between 0.6% and 1% carbon in. Other alloys may be added to modify the properties of the steel. As the percentage of carbon is low, it is often described in terms of points



Simple heat treat set-up



Quenching in water, not full depth



Residual heat starting to run to the tip



Tip drawn to a straw temper



Tip drawn to brown

– so a 0.80% steel would have been described as having 80 points of carbon.

There are many different ways steel is classified, but some can be easily read, for example 80CrV2 means a 0.80% carbon steel with added chrome and vanadium.

As a general rule, the more carbon a steel has the harder it will get, but is also more prone to breaking. This is one of the reasons files are frowned upon – old ones were made of very high carbon steel, over 1% as they had to be hard enough to cut steel, but the trade-off was fragility. Not too bad on a tool that had no shock loading when used as intended, but if used as a turning tool a catch could cause problems, plus a file is formed by cutting hundreds of tiny teeth into it, each one a potential point for a fracture to propagate from unless they are all ground out. This amount of work to get a safe, usable billet of steel can make files look like pretty poor starting points.

People often use drill bits thinking that as they are made from high speed steel, they will hold their edge for a long time. However, the shanks of drills are left soft so they don't damage the jaws of the drill chuck, so if you do this, make sure you grind your edge from a hard section of the bit.

Bi-metallic high-speed steel hacksaw blades are usually made with a tiny section of HSS for the teeth and a plain carbon steel for the rest of the blade, so once you have ground the teeth it is likely you no longer have any HSS left.

But the best starting point is a carving tool. It's a pretty good bet that you will be able to heat treat that without any major issues.

It's important to gain an idea of how hard the resultant steel has become. In a professional workshop this is usually measured on the Rockwell C scale, determined by the depth a specially cut diamond will sink into the steel under a certain load. Most carving tools are in the range of 58-60 HRC, although tools that have a tougher life, such as adzes, can be as low as 55.

However, a hardness tester is expensive. You can buy a set of hardness testing files relatively inexpensively and these can give good results with practice. There are two other methods to estimate hardness in a more empirical method that are reasonably easy to use and repeatable. First, a tool after hardening should scratch glass, but not after it has then been tempering as it will have softened just enough by this process.



Hardness testing file set – I only use the 65, 55 but mostly the yellow 60

In a similar way, a sharp, fresh file should skate over hardened steel but just start to bite on steel that has been tempered – be aware you can destroy a file quite quickly doing these tests. Although steel needs a rapid quench to harden properly, it actually hardens at quite a slow rate. If it doesn't seem to have hardened, leave it an hour and retest. If you use a calibrated hardness tester, you will notice that the steel will often increase by one unit 24 hours after quenching.

Heating

You need a way to heat the steel evenly and a way to check or estimate the temperature. For heat, a gas ring on a domestic oven will do for small tools. A blowtorch aimed at a fire brick can work, or even a lump of charcoal. If you can make a little cave to keep the heat in, this will be more efficient. Work in a well-ventilated space, outside if possible. I'll be talking about specific safety precautions in the next article.

To estimate temperature a magnet is a great tool, but get a metal one, not a plastic fridge one. When steel becomes non-magnetic this is a sign that you are in the right temperature range for hardening (quenching). It takes a time to take effect though, so let the steel come up to temperature slowly and keep checking. Ideally you want to let the steel sit for a few minutes (often 5-10 mins is better, but this seems like an agonisingly long time).

You can use a thermocouple to more accurately replicate heat treat temperatures, but be prepared to experiment. A thermocouple may give a repeatable reading but at 800°C the few I have will diverge by up to 20°. Depending on what you are using as a heat source, the outside layer of the steel may lose some carbon, usually due to the oxidising effects of the flame, and not harden properly. So be prepared for a bit of grinding after heat treatment to get back to unaltered steel.

Quench media

Steels are sometimes classified by their quench media, thus the well-known O1 is hardened in oil and a steel used for files such as W2 is hardened in water. There are air hardening steels – in an air blast – but I have yet to see a carving tool made from one.

Water gives a more rapid quench than oil, and has the potential to make a harder tool, but too rapid quenching can cause warping and even cracking, which will destroy a tool.

You can modify how rapidly the water quenches. Adding salt to make a brine will speed it up, as will adding detergent, but if a tool needs this to harden the steel must have very little carbon in and will be pretty marginal at best. Warm or even hot water will, not surprisingly, cool the steel more slowly. But if you decide you need a slower quench then oil is a better bet than water.

There are dedicated quenching oils that have different speeds, but you can get good results with vegetable oils. It sounds unlikely, but if you warm the oil you will get a quicker quench, the oil will be more mobile and transfer the heat away from the steel quicker. It wants to be about as hot as a drinkable cup of tea, around 50-60°C. As with heat sources, this is theory only at this stage. As already mentioned, I'll be talking about safety issues in the next article.

Tempering

This isn't like quenching or hardening – it doesn't matter what the steel is in when it is tempered. You can temper it in water, but obviously could only get up to 100°C. You can temper in oil, but it tends to smoke quite dramatically over 200°C. The simplest is the domestic oven. A top tip here – if you have quenched in oil the tool will smoke in the oven, so wash it in soapy water before putting in the oven. I put them in a baking tray with a loose wrap of silver foil round them, which tends to stop delicate tips of tools overheating as the oven cycles and the heat varies. Leave it for an hour for the temperature to even out.



Using an old magnet to test the temperature



Grain size in different steels, finer is better

I'll mention a bit about temper colours here. When clean steel is heated in the tempering ranges here a very thin oxide layer builds up, and light is refracted through it and changes colour. The steel will go from straw, to brown, purple, blue and finally, when the oxide layer is too thick for the light to pass through, grey. However, despite what you may have heard, these colours are not directly related to the temperature of the steel, higher carbon steels will take on colour (i.e. thicker oxide layers) quicker. An oily surface will also build up the layer quicker. It's a way to temper, but not my preferred one. Also, when tempering it's better to allow the steel to sit at your desired temperature for an hour, and this is difficult when judging temper colours as you can't tell if the steel has got colder. If it has there is no visible change in colour as the oxide layer can only get thicker, not thinner.

Grain size has a bearing on how well a steel will cut. It's similar to cutting a thread in boxwood compared to some quick-grown pine. Fine grain will hold detail better and be stronger.

Steel that is kept at high heat for a long time will exhibit a coarse grain structure. This is similar to crystals growing

in metamorphic rocks that are subject to very high heat over a long period of time. It can be caused by the steel being forged at too high a heat when made, or rarely by being overheated on its quenching cycle. If you have a tool that chips, it's worth looking at the grain size of the steel in the chip. Sometimes chipping is caused by the tempering cycle being too cool and leaving the steel too hard, however, sometimes chipping is caused by large grain size and this can also be addressed.

One way to break up these large grains is by thermo cycling – getting the steel hot and letting it cool. There is no need to let it cool really slowly (annealing), cooling in still air breaks the grains down more efficiently. This process relieves stress in tools and makes blades less likely to warp on quenching, so it is recommended to do at least one normalising cycle. If you are having difficulties with the steel, three normalising cycles and a quench is often used.

In the next article I will put all this together and show how to approach and troubleshoot heat treatment safely in the home workshop, even if you don't know the exactly what steel you are using.

THE SHARPENING CLINIC IS OPEN

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

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

I will try to answer all emails but will only be selecting one tool per article. You would then send the tool to me at your expense, I will sharpen it and make it the subject of the article and send it

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

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



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Miniature marvels

Guest editor Nic Westermann magnifies the exquisite work of spoon carver Naama Lila

I first became aware of Naama's carving from some images I had seen on social media. She does amazing finials on the spoons she carves and I was blown away by both the detail she puts in and also the form and composition. Last year, I was running a sloyd knife-making course and was surprised to see she had booked on to it – she lives in Israel. We had some conversations online about the course and carving in general, but when she arrived at my workshop I was amazed. I had no idea she was so young. It turns out she had booked the course and travelled over alone as a part of celebrations for her 20th birthday. That is hugely dedicated. The course itself was busy, as they always are, and it's nice to finally have a chance to ask her some more questions about her carving.

Why and what did you start carving?

I have always loved creating things. I guess something that contributed to my love of art is the fact that I grew up in an environment where something was always being created and where there was always some new material to explore. My mother is a jewellery artist who works with silver and glass mostly, but her studio is full of all sorts of things: different kinds of metal, glass, felt, fabric, clay, paint... At a young age I really loved drawing and spent the large part of elementary school drawing dogs, which were my favourite subject at the time.

I then discovered needle felting, which I focused on for a while, mostly creating felted animals. I love how different materials allow me to express things differently. I kept moving around, exploring different techniques like sewing, crocheting and sculpting. I focused on sculpting ball-jointed figures out of polymer clay for quite a while. But I think I always had in me a desire to work with something that is closer to nature – it just didn't occur to me to try to use wood as a material until some time during 11th grade. When I first tried to carve a little person out of a twig, using the scalpel blade I had used before to cut paper or clay, I became so excited. The idea that I could take something that had formed naturally and was of no significance to any person, like a twig, and make it into something expressive that might become special to someone, was just incredible.

I played around with miniatures for a couple of years, first using the eucalyptus and pine twigs I collected from the woods near my home, but gradually I got to know other people who work with wood (some were just chance encounters, but mostly through social media), many of whom were very generous and gave me more offcuts of wood than I could use. About a year and a half ago, last summer, I finally made it to one of the gatherings at Oren





Hetzroni's place, Kibbutz Herut, and became aware of the craft of spoon carving. As any spoon carver would probably agree, once you get a taste of this craft it is quite hard to back away.

Where do you carve?

Mostly, I carve at home. I do my axing outside on my chopping block, and sometimes I do some of the rough knife work outside, too, but then I take my tools to my room and continue there.

And of course, when we meet at Oren's place I carve there. It's a wonderful place and there are always kind and inspiring people there.

Who were, and are, you influenced by?

Ooh, tough question! So many people. I think when I was just starting out I didn't really know other people who carved, so I looked for woodcarvers on social media. I came across Katja Boiko, who is really skilled and carves beautiful figures. I am still inspired by her lovely work. I was also influenced by Giles Newman, who creates exceptionally accurate carvings of plants and animals mostly. I also found Dan Riggott, who carves these fantastic little imaginary figures with such a profound sense of humour that you can't help but smile when you see them. But there are many more people who have influenced me along my journey... I can't begin to name them all.

Since I started coming to the gatherings at Oren's place every week, I have been greatly inspired by many people there, which I guess is why I became so focused on carving spoons. Oren himself is obviously a great inspiration, both as a person and as an artist. But there are lots of other super-talented carvers who come there, and I'm always inspired.

I was also inspired by many people I met on my visits to the UK last year, but if I start mentioning all of them, this interview would never come to an end.

I know you do most of your detail work when the wood has dried, and that accounts for most of the work on the spoons you do, so do you see yourself as a green woodworker primarily?

Well, when I carve a spoon, I always work with green wood, either wood I find by the side of the road (branches that people have trimmed off their trees) or wood that other people in our carving club find and bring to our meetings. You are right, though, once I get the 'spoon part' of the spoon mostly done, I let it dry before going into any detail on the finial. It is much more comfortable to carve small details when the wood is dry. It takes the details much better. So I end up spending most of the time carving the wood when it is dry, but in terms of material removal I definitely remove 99% while the wood is still green. But sometimes I carve little things that aren't on a spoon, and then I have a basket full of pieces of wood left over from my spoons or other people's. Those pieces are dry, and when I come up with a concept for a little carving I choose one of them, sometimes split it or saw it if it is larger than I need, and start working with a knife. Although since I started carving spoons I haven't been doing as much of that. There always seems to be some idea for a spoon that I want to make and that ends up getting prioritised.

The result is that I see myself as both a green woodworker and a (dry wood/conventional) carver. But since most of the carvers I know are greenwood workers, I guess I feel more part of the green woodworking community.



PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN BY CARVER AND PHOTOGRAPHER HAIM HEN



PHOTOGRAPH BY HAIM HEN



PHOTOGRAPH BY HAIM HEN

1 Guava wood spoon with a tiny locking lidded box carved on it **2** Close-up of the locking lidded box on the guava wood spoon **3** Three spoons in their boxes – from left to right: Cypress wood spoon with a little mouse carved on top; loquat wood spoon with a little anvil, hammer and axe head carved on it; Judas tree spoon with a sleeping fox carved on it



4



5



6

4 Carob wood cupcake scoop, about 45 mm wide 5 Plum wood fox child, about 60mm tall 6 Avocado pit flower, 20 x 30mm

Do you think it's a useful distinction?

I think so. It seems to me that there is much more of a community within the craft of green woodworking (compared with (dry wood/conventional carving). But I really don't feel like I'm aware of everything that is going on, so I'm probably not the best person to ask – that's just what I gathered from my experience. The first time I came to Oren's place, though, I spent the whole time there working on a carving I had started beforehand, which didn't have anything to do with spoons (and it wasn't done with green wood). I was worried everyone there would find it strange and that I'd feel left out, but they were all just interested and curious, and I found that since we shared the love for wood and carving it didn't really matter.

Your work, or at least the scale, reminds me of netsuke. Have you ever carved just the detail and not a spoon?

I certainly have! I started with tiny people on twigs, then went on to carving all sorts of different things, all of them just small, detailed sculptures unrelated to spoons. I carved a lot of little things for friends, relatives and special people in my life, and the carvings were inspired by them and the things they love, pretty similar to the way I carve most of my spoons now. I do have some carvings planned that are not on a spoon, but I guess because I know so many spoon carvers, who obviously love spoons, it seems like there is always a spoon to carve for someone. Every once in a while, I find the time to carve something that isn't a spoon, and I love doing that as well.

What woods do you prefer to use?

There are a few types of close-grained wood that grow around here which I love. One such wood is loquat, which I hadn't carved before I got to know Oren and the other carvers. It has a really smooth feel, is quite dense and takes detail amazingly.

Olive is another one. It is pretty hard wood, and has a tendency to twist and crack as it dries, especially with the prettier pieces (older branches) that have crazy colours inside. But it is really tight grained as well, and carving details on it once it dries is a real joy.

I also have a special love for apricot. It began when I arrived at Oren's place early one Friday morning and discovered that a branch had broken off his apricot tree. There was something so magical about the colour gradient, the way the wood felt and the way it caught the light with tiny shimmers in the grain.

And there are many other types of wood, such as Judas tree, almond, cypress...

When it comes to types of wood that don't grow around here, there are some pretty awesome ones. I've had the pleasure of carving boxwood, for instance. Not too long after I started carving, I got a piece from a knife-maker called Rudi Zirlin here in Israel. I was blown away by how nice it was for detail work. From my experience, it seems to take detail better than anything else I have carved.

One last wood I would like to mention is something I got in a package of little pieces of different types of wood from a Swedish woodturner, Ulf Jansson. This is a type of wood called euonymus, which is fantastic, too.

If I recall correctly, Ulf told me it isn't something that grows wild in Sweden, either, but he got it from some garden where Japanese plants were being grown.

I always thought that you did all this with knives, but now find you do have a tiny gouge that you made yourself. Can you tell us about this?

Sure. I did start with just knives, but then I paid a visit to the knife-maker I mentioned earlier, Rudi Zirlin. He is an amazing artist and he offered to show me how he makes the tiny gouges and chisels he uses to engrave wooden handles or even metal bolsters and stuff. At first I was doubtful about using them since I was used to the knife and already comfortable with it, but I definitely wanted to see how he made them. It was incredible to watch him work. He is so experienced and good at it. And then he also gave me a little bunch of old, slightly rusted Dremel bits so that I could regrind them and give them whatever edge I need.

I still use a knife for the greater part of the process, but when I tried incorporating the tiny gouge into my work I realised that for certain steps, like when I need to remove material from a narrow space where the knife doesn't fit comfortably, or when I need to leave a tiny, smooth indentation, these tools make it much more efficient.

I realise you currently can't carve due to a carving-related injury, but what are you looking forward to when you get back to it?

Yeah, the past three months I've been unable to carve. I'm not sure carving is the only thing that led to this injury. What happened is that I started university at the end of October, and in the period before that I spent all my time either writing very fast (studying for some tests I needed to pass before starting some of my courses) or trying to get carving projects done. It must have been too much for my hand, because a few days before the semester started I became aware of a pain in my wrist and one of my fingers. It seems to be improving slowly, but I really wish I could carve already. These months have been really hard for me. There are quite a few unfinished carvings that I can't wait to get back to, some of which are gifts or swaps that have been waiting too long. And I've also had many ideas for things I want to create. It's so frustrating to be unable to do that. I think the thing is (with carving as well as with most other crafts) that you get so into it, you tend to forget about your body and your physical needs – it's so easy to get lost in carving tiny details for hours and then only when you get up do you realise how tightly you have been holding the little piece of wood and the knife, and how much your hand hurts. I really hope when I get back to carving I can find the way to be more mindful of my grip and posture, and just be attentive to my body. As hard as it is to stop carving when I'm in the middle of something, it loses significance when weighed against having to stop for a long period, or causing damage to the body. This is the only pair of hands I'm ever going to get, and I need to take care of them.

Ah, so maybe getting totally absorbed in carving isn't always good for us. Where do you plan to take your carving?

Wow... That's a hard one. At the moment I'm mostly thinking about what I want to do when I can finally carve again, and how I will fit carving time in between my studies. I just finished my first semester studying biology at the Technion, which is a university in Haifa. My current plan is to go on to veterinary school after that, but there are so many things that interest me, I don't actually know yet. I have no doubt about the fact that carving will always be an important part of



7 Apricot pit leaves, 11 x 18mm **8** Loquat wood pack basket finial, 20mm **9** Cypress wood Venus figurine finial, 15mm



10

my life, but trying to make a living out of it is not something I think I want to do. I wouldn't want to risk making it into something stressful that I don't enjoy.

I think I would like to do some more teaching in the future. I've had a limited experience so far. I assisted Oren in some workshops, which was a lot of fun, and I learned a lot from him, but it isn't like teaching alone. I did have a few opportunities to teach people one on one. The past couple of years I was doing my national service volunteering at a place for people who have special needs, and a few of the people there showed some interest in carving so I ended up teaching them whenever we could find the time. There have been a couple of other people who heard about my carving and asked if I'd be willing to give them a few lessons. But I do feel like I need to get a lot more confident in teaching, especially if I'm ever going to teach more than one person at a time.

Regarding plans I have for different designs, I definitely want to do some more exploring with dynamic/movable carvings. I started doing that with the tiny locking lidded boxes I carved, and also with the tiny lidded pack basket with the hinge. I love how these tiny bits of movement give life to the carving. I have some ideas I really want to try once I get back to carving. I would also like to have a go at incorporating magnets into some of these things. I've wanted to do that ever since I first saw the way Dan Riggott (who I mentioned earlier) uses them. He uses magnets often when creating his little characters to make removable objects and accessories for them.



11

10 Naama holding an apricot wood spoon with a bunny finial **11** Loquat wood spoon with anvil and hammer for Nic **12** Close-up of Nic's spoon



12

'I should have worn my glasses'

And finally, a couple of pictures of the spoon Naama gave to me. It was after the course, I didn't have my glasses on and had seen online that she had been carving a chicken-based spoon (I also keep chickens). Unable to focus on the spoon I took a punt and thanked her for my chicken spoon. She was rightly quite annoyed! **Nic.**

Heraldic cartouche

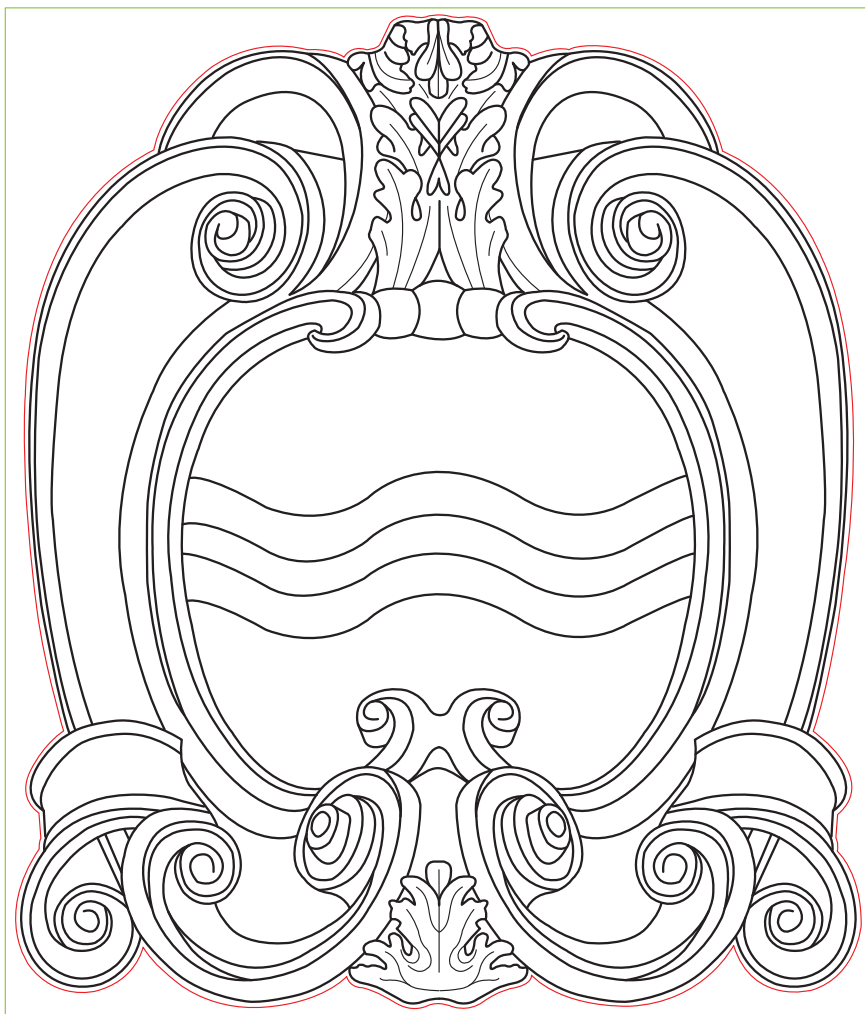
Steve Bisco carves a 'corporate' coat of arms in the Baroque style

When we consider heraldry, we tend to think of a shield shape flanked by heraldic beasts with a medieval armoured helmet on top, and for the coat of arms of an 'armigerous' person that will normally be the case. However, coats of arms are also often used for corporations – especially public authorities, universities, ancient livery companies, banks and insurance companies, and other organisations that want to portray an image of public service and reliability. For them, the medieval image of a knight in armour ready to fight the king's foes is not quite relevant, so corporate arms are often portrayed in a 'cartouche'.

A cartouche, when used in heraldry, is an elaborate type of frame, mainly oval, circular, or of a fluid, curvy shape, surrounding the arms of a corporation (or in some cases an individual). They were used extensively in the Baroque period of the late 17th/early 18th century when Sir Christopher Wren was rebuilding the City of London after the Great Fire, which is why so many examples of the heraldic cartouche can be found carved in stone over the entrances of the City institutions of that time.

This project is based on such a cartouche. The frame is Baroque in style, and I have carved it in 70mm-thick limewood to give it the three-dimensional depth it needs to accommodate the elaborate scrolls that curl from front to back, top to bottom and side to side. The arms of a fictitious corporation are displayed within the cartouche, consisting of two wavy silver lines on a blue background. In heraldic terms (see box), the 'blazon' (description) for this would be 'azure, a fess gemelles wavy argent'. As far as I can determine, no person or organisation currently has these arms so we can use them for this example. You have the choice to use this example, or use another coat of arms you like the look of, or substitute it with your house number or a symbol you like. You should avoid using arms that belong to someone else, even if they have the same name as you, as they are personal property.

Many carvers don't like paint on carvings, but colour is a vital part of heraldry. A coat of arms without colour is an oxymoron, so resign yourself to painting at least the arms even if you don't paint the frame of



the cartouche. There are good reasons for painting the frame in a light colour as limewood is quite dull and was typically painted in the 18th century. However,

I have compromised by painting the shield in its heraldic colours and leaving the cartouche frame finished in a clear lacquer.

Things you will need

Tools

Gouges:

- No.2, 25mm
- No.3, 10mm
- No.3 fishtail, 18mm, 10mm
- No.4 fishtail, 6mm
- No.5, 7mm, 13mm curved
- No.7, 10mm
- No.8, 8mm
- No.9, 20mm, 3mm, 16mm curved, short bent, 10mm
- V-tool, 6mm straight, 2mm straight

Chisels:

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

Other:

- Bandsaw

Materials

- Lime 340 x 290 x 70mm
- Acrylic sander-sealer, clear acrylic lacquer, cerulean blue water-based paint, metallic silver lacquer



Preparations

1 Get a piece of lime 340 x 290 x 70mm and make a full-size copy of the drawing to fit it. You can get this done at a print shop, or copy the image into your computer and print it out on two overlapping A4 sheets in landscape. Trace the drawing on to the wood using carbon paper, and mark round the cutting edges in red.

2 Cut around the outer edges with a bandsaw. If you don't have access to a bandsaw, use whatever saws and chisels you have to remove the outer wood and trim it back to a vertical edge.

3 Set up the carving on your bench, using wooden blocks to hold it still. If you don't have a bench you can walk around, you can fix the carving to a backing board that you can clamp to the bench and move around so you can approach all cuts from the best angle.

4 Start roughing out the shape by working down to the surface of the 'shield' area. Bost down vertically around the edge of the shield and, initially, work down to a level 25mm below the top surface. Make a depth gauge by inserting a screw through a flat strip of wood, with the lower end of the screw protruding 25mm.

5 Leaving the middle of the shield area at the 25mm depth, continue to bost down the sides to a depth of 45mm. Slope the surface from the middle to the outer edges to form a dome shape. Make sure the edges are completely vertical so the cartouche shape is transferred accurately to the lower level.

6 Now we can shape the sides. Slope the outer edges from the original board level at the top end down to 25mm below the board level at the bottom end. Rough out the hollows to frame the cartouche.

7 Continue to rough out the rim of the cartouche by roughly shaping the small volutes at the bottom end, then roughing out the three 'beads' at the top end. Slope the acanthus leaf at the top down to the level of the beads.

8 Rough out the shape of the acanthus leaf, which curls over at the top, then move on to the upper scrolls that curve over the top each side of the acanthus and disappear over the back of the main volutes. Hollow the inside of the curve.

9 Rough out the shape of the main volutes in the upper end of the frame. These are more difficult as you have to create a spiral working down from the centre point and the upper edge of the volute. Both volutes must tilt at an angle away from the middle and slightly downwards.

10 Move to the lower end now and rough out the shape of the two swirls on the outer corners. Proceed carefully and don't remove wood you may need later.

11 Complete the roughing out by shaping the two C-scrolls and the acanthus leaf at the bottom end. The C-scrolls curve down towards the back of the board and their volutes slope towards each other.

Carving the detail

12 With the shapes all roughed out, we can start the detail carving with the shield. Trace on the two wavy bars and cut away the background, leaving them standing 1mm above the surface. Reshape the shield surface to leave the background smooth and even.

13 Carve the rim into a cove that is 10mm wide and has its inner edge about 4mm above the edge of the shield. On the outer edge of this rim, carve a sharp edge about 3mm deep, meeting a second cove that is shallower and slightly narrower. Carve the outer areas into a broad hollow, with a sharp ridge where it meets the second cove. The outer edge is 10mm wide, is flat and slopes slightly to the outside. Refine the detail on the three beads at the top of the rim, and the two volutes that sweep on to the shield at the bottom.

14 Carve the acanthus leaf detail in the top centre. The leaves at the very top must appear to curl forwards, so hollow out under the curl.



15 Complete the top area by refining the spirals on the upper volutes so they flow smoothly into a vortex. Refine the shape on the two upper scrolls that spring from the upper volutes and flow upwards and outwards towards the back of the carving. Hollow the upper scrolls underneath the main scrolls.

16 Moving to the lower end, carve the detail on the two C-scrolls. Refine the volutes on each end so they flow in opposite directions in line with the scroll, like a roll of paper being unrolled. Hollow out the frame inside the scrolls so it corresponds to the other parts of the frame.



17 Carve the small acanthus leaf between the scrolls at the bottom of the carving.

18 The outer scrolls at the bottom corners are the most complex to carve. Starting from the shape roughed out in Step 10, hollow out inside the curl back to the edge of the cartouche frame, even opening through at the back end. Refine the edges of the 'ribbon' to an even thickness of about 6mm and run them into the volute at the lower end. Carve narrow V-grooves along the ribbon about 6mm in from the edge, and slightly hollow the space in between them all along the ribbon.

19 With the detail carving finished, we can now proceed with undercutting from the back to remove wood that we don't want to be visible from the front. Place the carving face down on very soft padding, with blocks of wood around the sides and a batten screwed across the top to hold it still. Shave away the wood behind the outer edges of the carving to create a slope away from the

visible area. Take care to maintain contact between the ribbon volutes in the outer corners and the sloping side of the panel.

20 Smooth the surfaces with 180-grit abrasive, then go over the whole carving with 400-grit abrasive to give it a smooth, clean surface without dulling the detail. Here is the completed carving after sanding.

Decorating

21 Give the whole carving a coat of sanding-sealer, front and back. When dry, give it another light sanding, then give the cartouche several coats of clear acrylic lacquer until you have an even satin sheen. Leave the shield surface unlacquered.

22 Next, give the shield surface an even coat of cerulean blue or similar for the 'azure' part of the heraldic colours. Take care not to get paint on the cartouche edges. When this is dry, give the shield a coat of clear lacquer to produce a satin sheen.

23 Use a metallic silver paint on the two wavy bars (the 'argent' part of the heraldry). Paint it on very carefully so you get a clean edge with the blue background.

24 Here is the finished job, ready to add a touch of Baroque grandeur to your home.

Heraldry

Heraldry is a fascinating subject that is well worth the attention of a decorative carver. It has complex and fascinating rules, and its own language based on 12th-century Norman French with some English words thrown in – an early form of 'Franglais'. There are many good books explaining heraldry, especially those written by officers of the College of Arms (the controlling authority for British heraldry). Heraldry and carving have a very close relationship.

The blazon

Every coat of arms is described by its 'blazon', starting with the colour of the shield (see below), then the objects featured upon it, and then the colours of these objects. In heraldry, the features displayed on the shield (called 'charges') are considered to be solid objects attached to the face of the shield (the 'field'), and not just painted on. The principal charges mainly consist of wide bands which can be across the top (a chief), across the middle (a fess), vertically (a pale), or diagonally (a bend), plus chevrons and several other shapes. Smaller charges can be attached on the field or on to the principal charges. The blazon then goes on to specify any 'supporters' at the sides of the shield, and the crest on the top, including their colours.

Colours and metals

Heraldry has strict rules about colour which you need to be aware of when you do a heraldic carving. There are only five colours, two 'metals' and two 'furs' which, with their old Norman French names, are:

Colours:

Blue – Azure
Red – Gules
Green – Vert
Black – Sable
Purple – Purpure

Furs:

Ermine – Ermine
Vair – Vair

Metals:

Gold – Or
(can be substituted with yellow)
Silver – Argent
(can be substituted with white)



Volutes

This carving contains 10 volutes (the spiralling curls at the end of a scroll), which can be challenging if you have not carved them before. Starting from a central 'button' they curl round in a descending spiral like water being sucked into a vortex. The line of the spiral must merge in seamlessly with the line of the scroll, without any jarring kinks. If set out properly, they give a wonderful sense of 'movement' to a carving. ●

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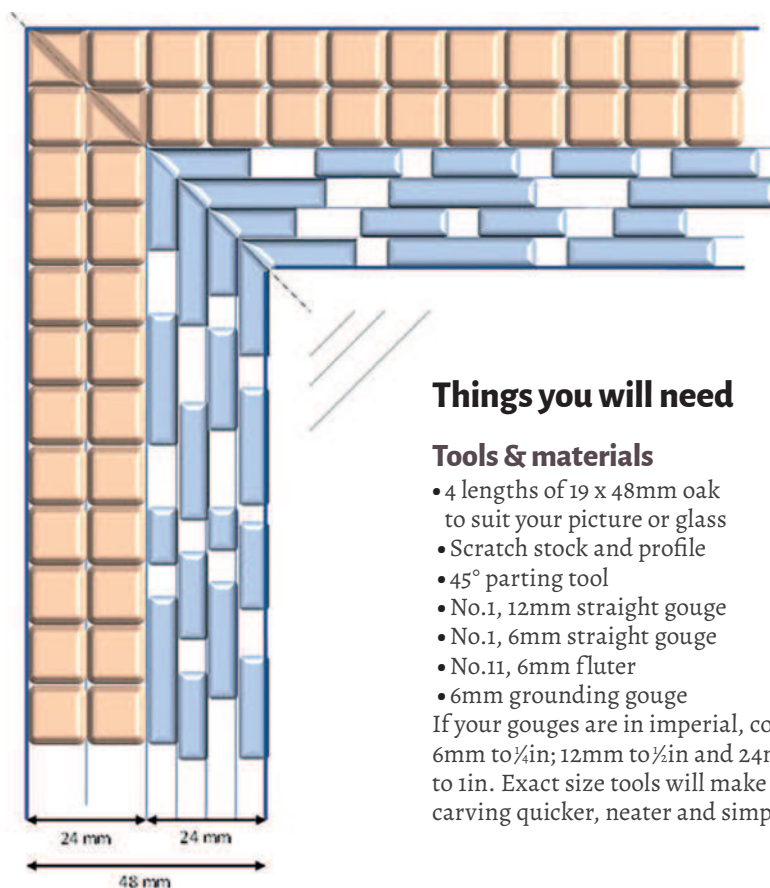
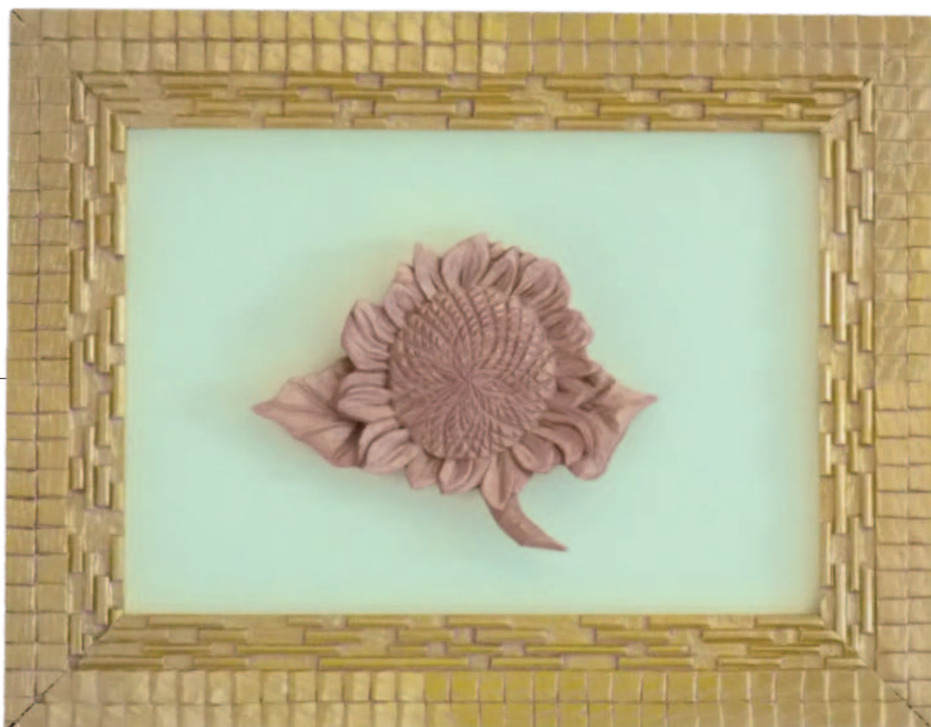
Modern frame

John Samworth combines two design styles to create an unusual border

A more modern take on a frame may be achieved by merging an Ancient Greek fret design with a Cubist shape of a square. The outer border of squares will be carved to evoke the imagery of a mosaic, the inner border will be carved with the blue section as raised reeds and the white gaps flat. An alternative take would be to carve the white gaps as flutes. I shall carve this frame in the leftover 19mm-thick oak stock from my previous frame carving. I plan to leave a natural waxed finish, although a painted gold finish sounds very tempting. I do not need to decide now, I can wait until after the frame is assembled.

1 I began by cutting a 6 x 6mm rebate in the back of the oak to take the picture mount or mirror glass. Cut a reed in the top section. Here I used a homemade profile from an old plane blade in a scratch stock. Also, there are factory manufactured plane profiles and router profiles which will cut the reed profiles quicker. Set the scratch stock to 6mm for the first reed. Re-set the scratch stock to 12mm for the second reed, 18mm for the third and 24mm for the fourth. Reeds may also be cut with a parting gouge and a straight gouge or a carpenter's chisel. Use whatever tools you have to hand.

2 Once all four reed profiles have been cut, mark out the mosaic section of 12 x 12mm squared. Note: the pen indicates where I slipped with the scratch stock and made an ugly gouge mark. The occasional, small error will not cause a problem – I shall ensure that this is a section of reed to be removed later.



Things you will need

Tools & materials

- 4 lengths of 19 x 48mm oak to suit your picture or glass
- Scratch stock and profile
- 45° parting tool
- No.1, 12mm straight gouge
- No.1, 6mm straight gouge
- No.11, 6mm fluter
- 6mm grounding gouge

If your gouges are in imperial, convert 6mm to $\frac{1}{4}$ in; 12mm to $\frac{1}{2}$ in and 24mm to 1in. Exact size tools will make the carving quicker, neater and simpler.





3 While the reed profiles are still complete, run a medium grit piece of sandpaper, wrapped around a rule, to tidy any loose splinters. It is far easier to do this now rather than later.

4a & 4b Holding the work steady while carving is essential. Especially with hardwoods, such as oak, where extra force is applied to make the necessary cuts. My bench vice is flush with the bench top, I am able to hold the work in the vice with the bench top resting in the rebate. Another simple solution is to clamp the work to the bench end, relocating the clamps when required.

5 Use a 45° parting tool to separate the mosaic squares, cutting a groove about 1mm in depth. Work from the inside and cut towards the outside edge to avoid damaging the reeds. The last part of the cut may be started on the outer edge, cutting inwards to avoid causing the outside edge to break out.

6 Note: Ideally, I would have used a No.1, 12mm gouge for the next few steps, however, my gouge is 10mm. Use what tools you have. A carpenter's chisel will work fine.

Using a straight No.1 chisel to cut deeper in the grooves. By beginning each cut from the centre, where the four corners meet, each mosaic piece will appear as a separate piece. If you cut through with a larger gouge the effect will change and the border look more like a chocolate bar.

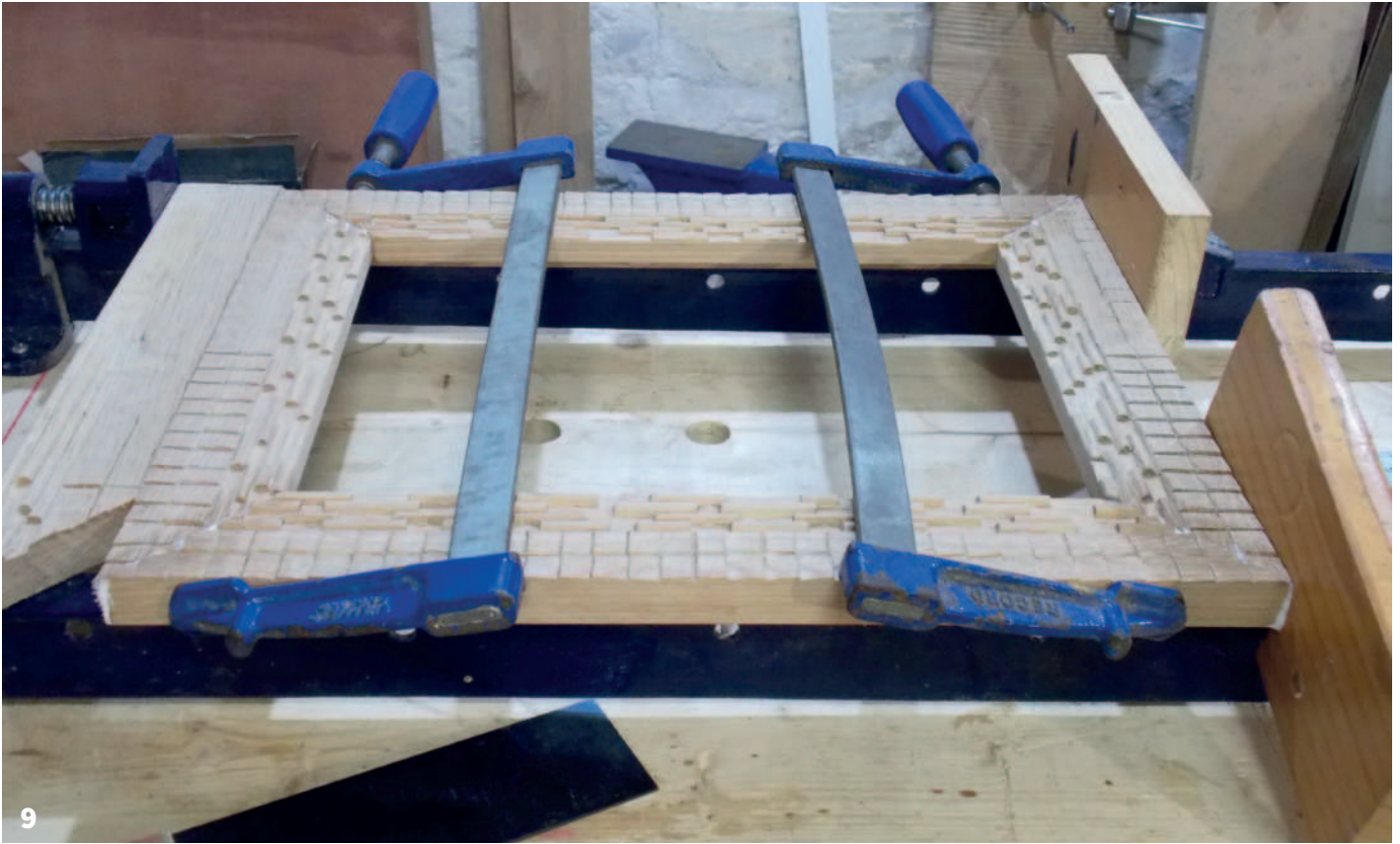


7a & 7b Using the same No.1 gouge, angle over the top of each mosaic square. This will give each square a slight tilt and reflect the light at different angles. Start from one end, carving towards the halfway point, always carving away from carved work. Repeat the process from the other end to ensure that the mosaics are angled differently one half to another. You can see the effect with the change in reflected light two-thirds of the way up the picture.

Mark a reed with a random pattern of sections to remove. Removing about a third for the reed appears well balanced. Use a 6mm fluter to remove the bulk of the reed down to the

base level and a 6mm grounding gouge to tidy up the base. Scrape the gouge vertically to complete the tidying stage.

8 Once all four reeds have been cut, move on to the second length. Carve the mosaic section in the same fashion as before. Align the two pieces together to mark out the reed sections to be cut. The two pieces should look similar and balanced but not identical. Repeat this process until all four lengths have been carved ready for mitre cutting to their final lengths.



9

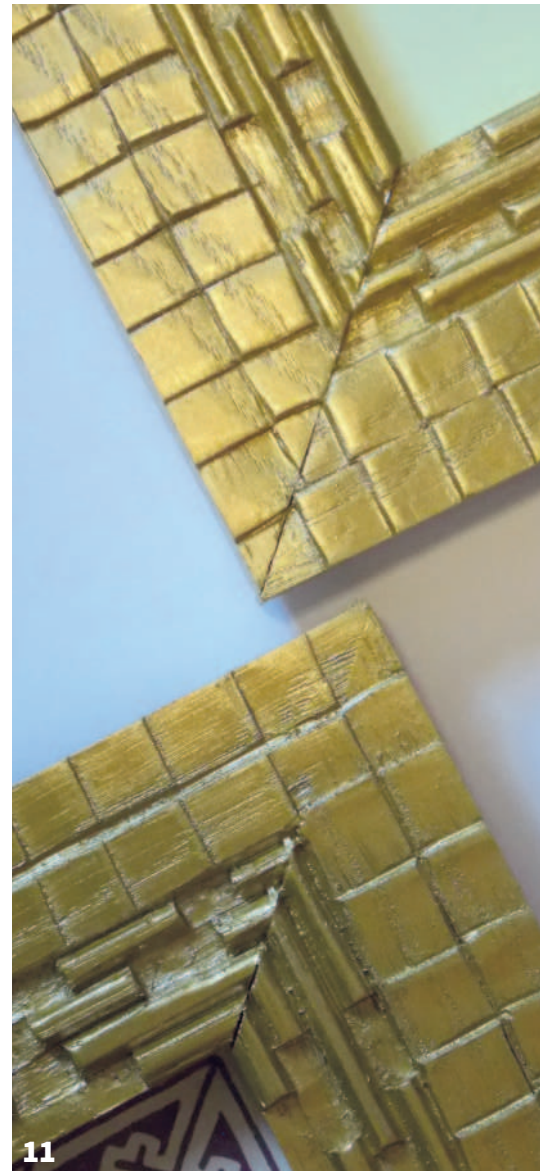


10

9 Glue up and clamp the frame. Those of you with keen eyes will note that I had carved the full lengths and the mitre cut crosses the carved wood. Ideally, it is better to leave the mitre area uncarved until the joints have been made. At the end I will show you the difference between each approach.

10 A difficult choice for me was should I paint the frame or leave the natural oak finish? Eventually I chose a touch of bling to brighten up the room. I used spray acrylic paint. Follow the manufacturer's instructions. I used two coats of white primer undercoat and two coats of top, gold paint. The light now dances off the facets of the frame.

11 On the top is the frame where the mitre was cut and formed after the frame was carved. The elements do not align cleanly. On the bottom, the mitre was cut and joined before the corner section was carved. Here the mosaic squares are perfectly formed, while the reeds smoothly align around the mitre joint. Worth the extra effort. ●



11

A box of roses

Dave Western carves a floral pattern to celebrate life

Recently, two of my neighbour's most beloved dogs passed away in fairly close succession. After spreading their ashes, she was left with the two little Tennessee cedar boxes that had contained their remains. The boxes were too pretty to discard, but it was a bit upsetting for her to see them lying around the house every day. She asked if I could carve something that would make them less funereal and more a source of happier memories.

She had requested that I do something with a rose theme, so I decided that a nice 'ribbon' pattern along the front and back face combined with a circular pattern on the top and the two ends would be a great way to add some happy vitality to the boxes without overpowering them with busyness. Tennessee red cedar (aka aromatic cedar – the stuff some of you may recognise from hamster cage chips or chest lining) is a pungent wood that can frequently feature a lot of knots and the two boxes I was presented with were no exception. To make everything work, I had to place the circular patterns off-centre on the top surface and at one end of the box. I mimicked the off-centre idea at the opposing end of the box to maintain the wonky symmetry.

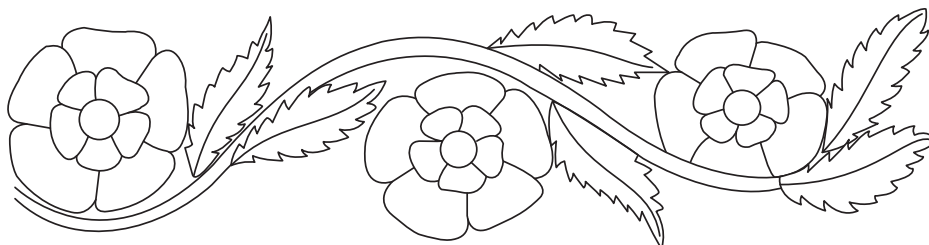
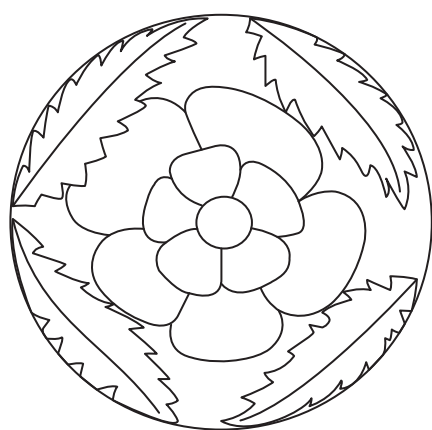
I was able to centre the ribbon designs front and back even though I ran afoul of a few small knots along the way.



Things you will need

Tools

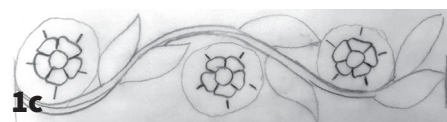
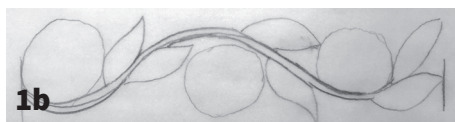
- Photocopies/tracings and glue stick
- 1 or 1½in straight knife
- No.1, ½in flat gouge
- ⅛ and ¼in chisel
- Gouges: No.9, 7mm;
- No.9, 10mm;
- No.7, 14mm
- Small paintbrush and penetrating oil (like Danish oil or something similar)



The designs themselves are pretty basic. They offer a nice carving challenge that isn't too overwhelming and can significantly cheer up a plain surface. Although I have used a small box for this project, the design could easily be transposed on to a chest, a cutting board, a cabinet door or any other flat surface. If you don't have a box on hand or the tools to make one of your own, I've often found little cheap wooden boxes for sale in craft or discount shops that would make perfect vehicles for this type of carving.

If you like this design, simply make a couple of photocopies or tracings and you can start carving. If you like the idea but would prefer to make your own design, I've included the following quick step-by-step showing the evolution of the design from a simple line to finished sketch.

1a & 1b I began with a wiggly line that broke the area I was working with into three distinct segments, then added the outlines of the three roses to see how they fitted the space.



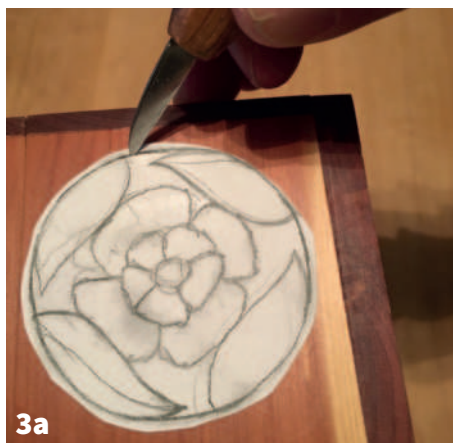
I moved them back and forth slightly until I was happy with the balance of their placement. Draw these outlines



2a



2b



3a



3b



4a



4b



5

very lightly so they can be easily erased and replaced. Place leaves to fill in remaining space and balance the rose circles. As with the flower circles, draw these lightly so you can erase and move them if you are unhappy with their initial placement.

1c To fill in the rose, break each circle

into five roughly equal segments based around a central circle. For the first ring of petals, use the five segments as a guide but draw each petal freehand without getting too mechanical about it.

1d With the first ring of petals complete, draw another, slightly bigger ring that is

also divided into five sections. Make sure to have each petal in the second ring begin at the centre point of the previous petals and not in line with the divides.

1e Finally, you can leave each leaf smooth-edged or you can opt to draw them with the more serrated edge found on a rose leaf.

2a & 2b To begin the carving, lay out where you want the pattern to fall on the box and either trace out the design or glue photocopies to the relevant areas. I am a big fan of printed/photocopied patterns as they save an immense amount of time and if you mess one up, you can peel it off and put a new one down. Use a regular glue stick for adhering the paper to your wood surfaces.

3a & 3b Use a sharp, 1in straight knife to scribe a channel around the outer edge of the circular pattern. I usually take two or three passes, gradually increasing cutting pressure and aiming towards a final depth of cut of about 3mm ($\frac{1}{8}$ in) or thereabouts. Then, using the same technique, scribe the leaves, the flower petals and the central ring of the rose. Because you'll be turning corners and going both with and across grain, be attentive to the pressure you are placing on the blade and to the direction the wood's grain is travelling. It is very easy to get thrown off course and make wild cuts if the knife suddenly grabs.

4a & 4b With the scribing complete, I began carving the circular rose section by clearing away the flat background areas. Use a small $\frac{1}{4}$ in chisel to clear the bulk of the material away and then clean tight corners and hard-to-reach areas with a $\frac{1}{8}$ in chisel and/or the tip of the 1in straight knife. Aim to make the background a consistent and level depth around the entire pattern. Be very conscious of grain direction around the tips of the leaves, as it is easy for the wood to pull up or split if you go the wrong direction, and as the pattern is circular, you will be experiencing almost constant grain changes as you travel around the 360° of this design.

5 When I was satisfied the background was good and level with the petals and leaves raised to about 2-3mm, I began shaping the leaves with the straight knife. You could also use a No.1-style flat gouge or even a regular chisel to do this initial shaping. As with levelling the background, you will be travelling 360° around the workpiece and the wood's grain will change orientation many times. You may find you have to approach your cuts from a variety of directions to keep the wood from pulling up or catching under your blade. Taper the leaf in both directions away from its centreline to raise the middle of the leaf and lower the edges.

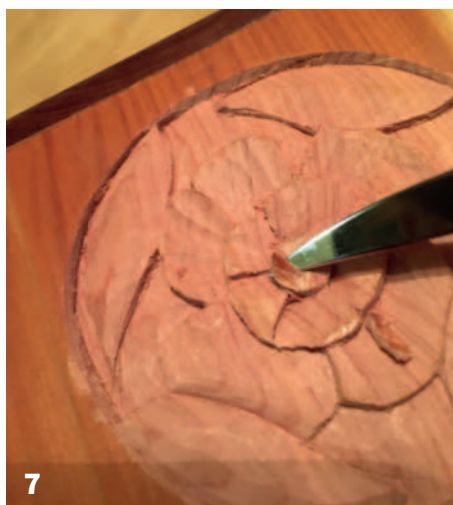
6a Once the leaves have been rough-shaped, begin shaping the petals. Start from the outer ring and work your way inwards toward the central circle. Don't work from the centre outwards, as you will be constantly in danger of chipping the edges off your petals. By working towards the centre, the thick and uncut wood is less prone to damage from the slip of a blade. You'll need to ensure your blades are good and sharp for this operation, especially for the petals where the grain travels across rather than with. Shallow cuts give the wood less opportunity to pull up or chip the edges of each petal, but be careful not to nick neighbouring petals with the edge of the blade.

6b Having shaped the outer petals, you can move to the smaller petal ring and start shaping them. All the same grain issues as occurred with the previous ring will come into play, only in a smaller and more confined working area. Something to be keenly aware of is to avoid putting too much pressure on the gouge/knife as you pare away the petal stock. You'll want to be very careful not to hit the centre circle with the blade (especially at the bottom of a cut) as there is a very real danger of popping the whole centre portion out. This is especially likely as you get to the last petal and the centre circle is mostly exposed. If you do pop it out, try a dab of carpenter's glue and a clamp (or some weight) to adhere it all back together. It's best to give a repair like that overnight drying time to avoid popping it straight back out again before the glue has set.

7 The final step in roughing out the rose is to shape the central circle. This part looks the easiest, but it is fraught with many challenges. You'll want to use the tip of a straight knife or small chisel to gently chamfer the edge, gradually working the area into a gentle dome shape. Again, the grain will be going with and across as you work your way around, so be alert for grain changes and the potential of chipping or pulled grain.

8 If you want the more serrated look of a typical rose leaf, now is the time to use the tip of your knife to make out simple little triangular cuts. You don't need to be too botanically accurate to achieve a nice effect. Keeping the cuts clean and crisp around the petals gets a bit more challenging as you get a bit less access for popping the chip out. Avoid the urge to pry the chips up as you put the tip of your knife at risk. If all the chip-cutting sounds a bit too onerous, the leaves can just as easily be left smooth-edged.

9 One last bit of detailing that I find helps to make the leaves appear a bit more realistic and lively is to cut a nice central spine through the leaf and then use a tight



gouge (like a No.9, 7mm sweep) to shape a bit of re-curve relief into each side of the leaf. You might prefer to do this shaping before you cut out the leaf serrations as it makes chipping less of a problem, but as long as you are gentle and follow the grain, it's usually a pretty straightforward process.

10 This picture shows the roughed out circular rose pattern just prior to final touch-ups. Some areas that need some extra work are around the leaf serrations where some haven't been fully cleared and some still show the scribing cuts. The petals need some light tidying, especially near a couple of edges where there has been

some minor chipping. There are also a few spots of background that need to be levelled and tidied a bit more to remove high spots, light pull-ups and some rough sections. Finally, the central circular area needs a bit more rounding over and smoothing.



11 The ribbon pattern is not so much different to carve than the circular rose, with the exception of requiring a distinct outer border. By making an angled cut with the tip of the knife or a No.1 gouge of about 6mm wide and 3mm deep, the pattern can be nicely raised without drawing too much attention away from the rose, leaves and vine detail. As can be seen in the photo, this is trickier than it sounds, as it is very difficult to keep the width consistent while avoiding the many inevitable grain direction changes. I've found that beginning with a 3 x 3mm cut allows me to slowly tilt the knife and take more width without risking the knife wandering. Several shallow flowing cuts are always preferable to one deep and aggressive cut.

12 I will readily confess, I am a man of short patience, so I opted to work the ribbon pattern in sections rather than cutting the outer border around

the whole design in one fell swoop. I've often found that moving around the carving a bit keeps me fresher and more attentive, so I alternated between border cutting and petal shaping. I also found that using both the straight knife and a couple of gouges helped me achieve a nice fluid look for the petals.

13 I shaped the petals exactly as I did with the circular roses, by moving from the outer edge toward the centre. One additional difficulty with shaping the ribbon roses is that the vine and the outer border are very close to the petals, so some vigilance is required to make sure you don't nick either with the edge of your knife or gouge.

14 In contrast to the circular rose, there is very little background to be levelled in the ribbon design, so the illusion required to make the pattern appear raised falls almost entirely to the outer border cut. This picture of the roughed-out ribbon pattern shows clearly that some smoothing work remains to be done to get a more even and consistent border. The vine also needs a bit more rounding over and some cleaning and shaping remains to be done on the roses and leaves. You can also see some scratches in the lowered background areas where I got careless with the edge of my chisel while shaping the vine section.



15



16a



16b



16d



16c



16e



16f

15 After I had gone over each of the circular and ribbon pattern sections one last time and had ensured that I had done as much smoothing and clean-up work as I could, I applied some finish. I used a bit of off-the-shelf Danish oil to provide a couple of layers of treatment, which I thoroughly wiped and left 24 hours between coatings.

16a, 16b, 16c, 16d, 16e & 16f
For reference, I have included shots of the front and back ribbon patterns as well as the three circular rose patterns. ●

Felling axe handle

Kevin Alviti is a clever feller when it comes to kolrosing this project

'You bring it up,' he said, his voice a little strained as he hefted the axe above him, a wry smile on his lips, 'and the lord god brings it back down.' Then, with more power than seemed possible for his aged frame, he swung it into the tree again.

You don't have to swing an axe at a tree many times to see why some men saw god in the woods or realise the effort that went into the timber we used in the past.

This man landed that tool into the side of the tree, exactly where he wanted it each time. Every few cuts had resulted in a chunk of wood being removed. It didn't look effortless – far from it – but he made it look natural. I stood holding a felling axe in my hands, feeling the weight of the 6lb head against me, suddenly wondering if my youthful energy would be able to match up with this man's lifetime of experience.

This was more than a decade ago, when my brother and I were on a course in a wood in Worcestershire. We were learning to fell trees using just axes and two-man cross-cut saws and then chainsaw mill them. It appealed to our love of wood – him a tree surgeon, me a carpenter – and something we both wanted to learn. We went with the expectation of just chopping a few saplings and probably listening to some experts, but ended up felling an oak tree so big we couldn't get our arms around it. This was all part of a carefully managed woodland that had been continuously coppiced for hundreds of years, only in this area of the wood every oak tree was around the same age, and a few needed to be thinned to allow succession.

As that tree hit the ground, I realised you don't just watch a tree fall, you actually feel it. Especially when you've got sweat on your brow and you're still gripping the axe with muscles that are burning. There's a gust of wind that hits you as it lands and a vibration that you feel in your feet. You can't help wondering what that tree saw in its life. Then, wondering what the young oak and ash saplings around it that will follow will witness. We all stood silent for a minute.

As we sned up that tree as a group, axes in hand, cutting it into useable lengths, we all felt a connection, not only to that tree but to the effort that went into the timber of the past and the tools that enabled it.

I'm not going to lie, after a day of swinging a felling axe, I struggled to lift my arms high enough to brush my teeth that night. And although I'm not giving up my chainsaws anytime soon, I do simply love axes.

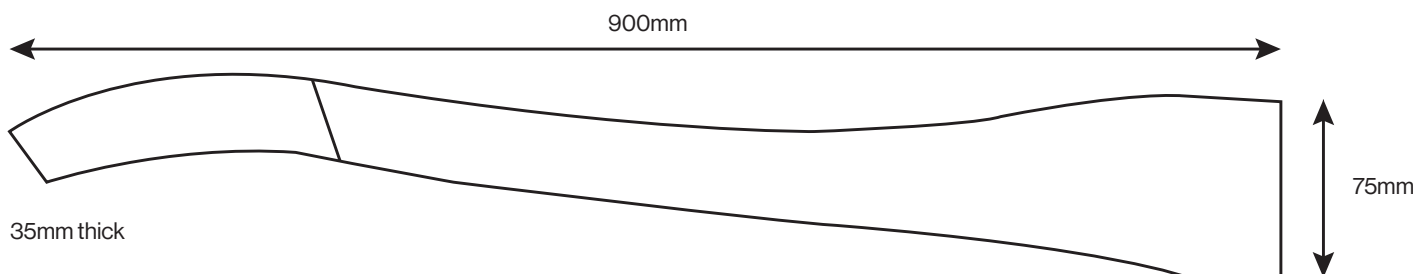
I have many for many purposes, and I'm lucky enough that my work calls for me to use them often. The other day a friend sent me a picture of an axe he had found in his shed, it was with three others, but on this one the handle had been fitted the wrong way round. I jumped to the conclusion that person didn't know what they were doing, until I saw how well it was fitted, so I think they must have used it as a sledge hammer.

He offered it to me, saying I could rehandle it if I wanted to. An offer too good to turn down. It also gave me the opportunity to experiment with something I'd wanted to try for a while. I wanted to decorate an axe handle, but I wanted it to still be useful.

When you swing an axe, one hand slips down the shaft, so you use the momentum of the weight of the head rather than just your brute strength. This makes decorating one difficult. I could carve or burn designs on the handle, but then they'd make it a less useable tool, making the handle rough to touch. It was when I started to try kolrosing that I realised it could be used in a way that you don't even feel it. Once the design is cut with a wide-bladed knife, it is oiled and a pigment is rubbed in, staining each cut. You then burnish it with a stone, making it completely smooth again. Doing this tattoos the wood, decoration visible but not tactile.

Time for an experiment.



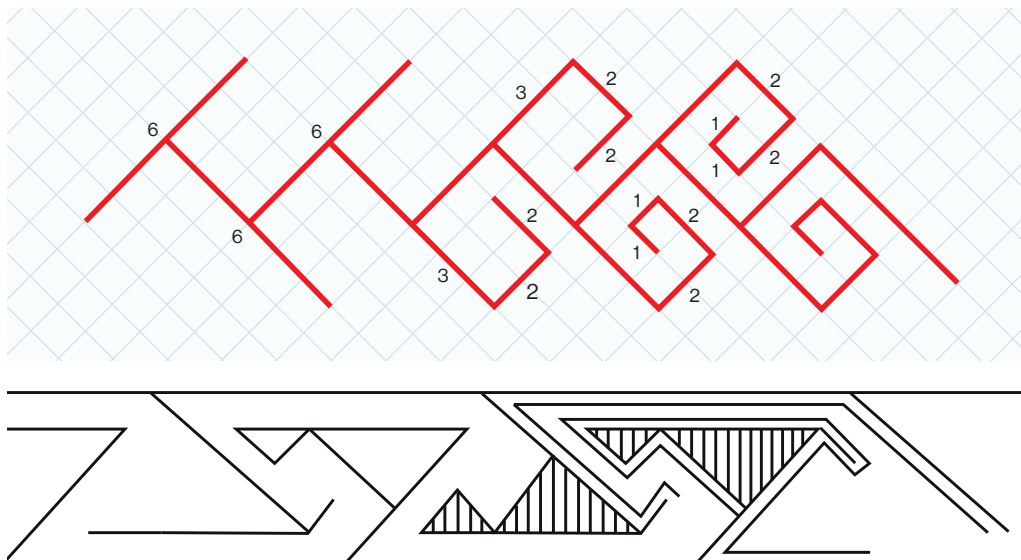


Things you will need

Pictish key patterns

Tools

- Bench grinder
- Angle grinder with sanding disc
- Metal files
- Oil or whetstones
- Some way of stropping the blade (depending how you sharpen)
- Drawknife
- Shave horse (optional – a bench vice will be fine)
- Rasps
- Sander
- Saw
- Bandsaw (optional for cutting out the shape of the handle)
- Kolrosing knife (you can use a carving knife if you don't have one)



Materials

In an ideal world, I would have made this handle from a freshly felled log of ash. I would have cleaved the wood apart and roughed it down with an axe, made the handle nearly the right shape and left it to season. Once seasoned I would have done a final fitting of the head.

But instead, I used some already dried ash I had in my store. It was sourced locally and having some ash in the shed is always good for making handles. This meant I could finish it in one go, no waiting for wood to season.

You can, just as easily, buy a handle for this project. Make sure that if you do you buy one it is of good quality, there are some truly horrendous ones out there that would never make a useable tool. Grain direction is important, it must run straight.

Pigment – I used coffee, cinnamon works well and I'm sure there are many more out there. It's something that probably warrants experimentation.

Patterns – I decided that Pictish key patterns would work well for this handle, the sharp angles lending themselves well to the knife. The book *Celtic Art – The Methods Of Construction* is a great reference point if you can find it for projects like this.



1 This axe needed a fair bit of restoration. First thing was to remove all the rust from the head. I know some won't like it, but I used an angle grinder with a sanding disc and removed the worst from it.

2 With the worst of the rust removed, it was time to remove the handle. This one was well fitted and took a fair bit of 'gentle' persuasion. I ended up drilling out the wedge and knocking it through from the other side once I'd cut the old handle.

3 I then worked on reshaping the edge of

the blade and correcting the bevels. A job not to be rushed and a little easier before a new handle is fitted. I mainly used my whetstone grinder.

4 I then used a series of oil stones to flatten those bevels and get it to a point where it was sharp. How you sharpen is up to you and it's easy to overcomplicate. I use a coarse oil stone then a fine oil stone, working the stone over the head axe head. Just make sure the stone is thick enough so it keeps your fingers away from the sharp edge (ask me how I know...).

5 I used the old axe handle as a template for the new one, marking around it, but giving myself some extra to allow me to shape it. Make sure the grain is straight and in the correct orientation. Allow enough thickness for it to flare at the end to stop it slipping from your hand in use. Then cut this shape out with the bandsaw.

6 Flip the axe handle 90° and cut it to shape this way as well.

7 I made this axe handle in the middle of winter, so rather than sit outside in a cold snap I used my shave horse in the polytunnel – positively tropical in there. I used a drawknife and spokeshave to shape the blade and get it so it's nice to hold.

8 I moved back to the workshop to fit the head of the axe. Take your time with this, it wants to be a good fit. Shape it and then keep trying it, removing a little material each time, when you offer it in you should see the points where it's catching as marks left on the wood.

9 I used a series of tools for this, but mainly a rasp and a sander to get it to fit nice and snug.

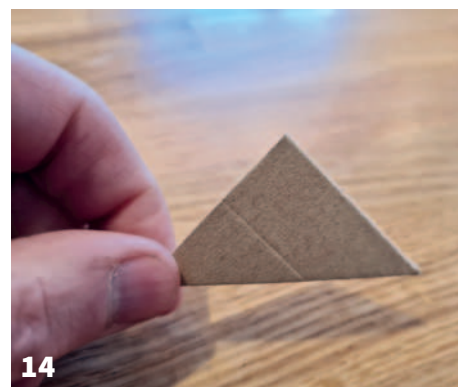
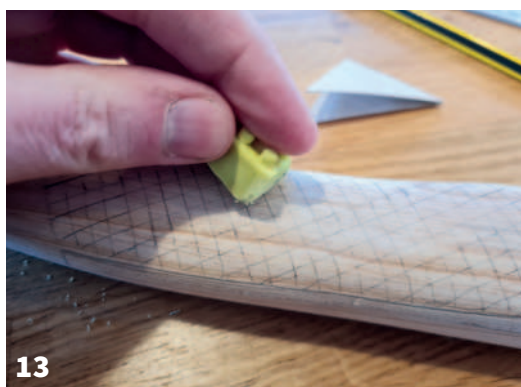
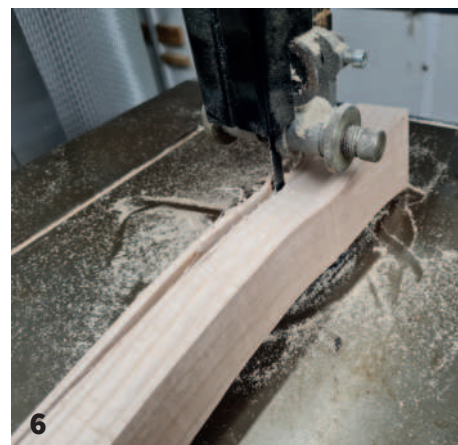
10 When the head is on, it wants to line up straight with the handle (for this type of axe anyway, it's different if you're making a hewing axe handle, for example).

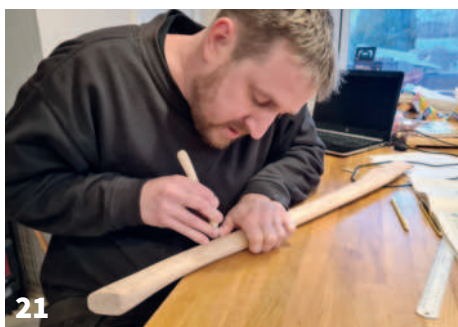
11 Where the handle comes through the eye of the axe mark a line down the middle, then make a saw cut in this down about halfway to two thirds. This will be where the wedge will go, which will hold on the head.

12 I then put the head to one side and sanded the handle up to 180 grit. I want it smooth to make the kolrosing as easy as possible.

13 Moving into the warm, kolrosing is lovely as it produces no mess. Mark up your handle. I separated mine into two areas, one smaller area where my left hand will go and the other for the main length. The smaller area is slightly harder to lay out. I drew a square diagonal grid with 5mm spacings. I did lightly rub away these lines to make it easier to remove them at the end.

14 I made a simple cardboard right-angle triangle to help with laying out. It keeps the grid perpendicular and helps later on with the other design.





15 This design is hard to start then easy. The first lines are all six squares long, then set back three and go perpendicular another six, step back three then repeat. Off each of these you turn two squares, then turn and go another two, then the same with one square working inwards.

16 The design kind of mirrors itself with the spirals in pairs, but it's very 'busy' and doesn't have to be perfectly laid out.

17 Take your kolrosing knife and cut all these lines. Make them strong cuts with the tip, keeping the knife as upright as possible.

18 With these cuts made, make a second series of cuts between each cut you have already made. No need to draw this one out unless you really feel the need, I just went straight for it and once one was cut it was easy enough.

19 The next design is a little simpler to lay out. Use the small triangle of card and draw the triangle between your two border lines. Leave a gap at the top of one and the bottom of another. Work the whole way up, this pattern can widen quite easily as the handle flares, just make the lines longer.

20 Draw a line from each of the 'gaps' that run parallel, leaving it short before it hits the other line. Then on this line draw one small triangle and one larger one. Repeat this all the way up and then back down the other side.

21 I experimented with different ways of cutting. One I found really comfortable was to use my thumb on my less-dominant hand to push the blade forward from the back of the knife, while my other hand controlled it. Cut the complete design. Make sure to take a rest if your hand gets tired. I found it took me about 90+ minutes to cut one side of the axe.

22 I sometimes lost track of where I'd got to with my cuts. I found I could either feel it with my thumb, or hold it up to the light to easily see how far I'd completed.

23 With the design cut, position the knife in a few millimetres and cut a parallel line to all the ones you have already cut, including the border. Cut vertical lines in all the triangles as well.

24 With one side completely carved, flip it over and start again.

25 With the cuts all made, lightly abrade away all the pencil lines, I used some 320g paper by hand. I also used the airline to blow out any dust trapped in the cuts once this was done.

26 Work on one side at a time. Wipe a coat of oil over the design.



27



28



29



30



31

27 With your thumb, work coffee grounds (or your chosen pigment) into the cuts. Rub them hard.

28 Remember coffee is hygroscopic and will absorb moisture from the air. Any coffee grounds you leave on your workbench will be a sticky mess come morning, so work on a piece of card or some scrap wood.

29 With all the cuts filled, wipe away excess and rub hard with a smooth (non-sedimentary) stone until when you run your fingers across it you can no longer feel your kolrosing cuts.

30 Rub it down with a rag and apply another coat of linseed oil. Try not to jump around at how cool it looks.

31 With the oil dry, hang the handle on the axe head. I cut a wedge from some dry oak with the right amount of taper to make the head tight in the eye of the axe. Some people glue their wedges in, but I didn't – I just oiled it and knocked it in tight. This way it can be removed if I end up hanging the axe badly. There should be no wobble on this axe head at all, make sure it's straight and true with the handle. With the wedge in tight, cut it off with the top of the handle a little proud of the axe head. Oil it up. Now go use it. Maybe think about making a sheath to keep that edge protected. ●





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Study of a savoy cabbage

Zoë Gertner gets her daily greens

Among the entries in the Veg Growers' Competition at the local fête there were several impressive savoy cabbages shown, one of which was displayed decoratively in a traditional Sussex trug basket together with a garden trowel and fork. A trug itself is a pleasing shape, as is the cabbage with its leaves and their texture. Together with the garden tools, it could be interesting to carve – in all, a fascinating subject and a rather intricate and pretty addition to my gardening-themed woodcarvings.

When making a more complicated carving or one which you are not fully confident about, it can be helpful to separate it into smaller individual elements or 'building blocks' and concentrate on a specific aspect or part of it. By regarding your study as a practice piece you can forestall any difficulties that might arise when you carry out your proposed carving – a valuable and time-saving preparation in advance. Here then, in detail, is my preparatory study of the striking savoy cabbage which I worked on before I began my intended Sussex Trug Exhibit carving.



Things you will need

Tools

- No.39, 1/4in & 1/8in V-tool
- No.3, 1/2in, 3/8in, 3/16in, 1/4in & 1/8in gouges
- No.5, 3/8in gouge
- No.9, 3/8in & 1/4in gouge
- No.9, 10 or 11, 1/8in gouge
- No.2, 1/4in or skew chisel
- Wax polish, redundant toothbrush and soft brush

Preparation

1 Normally I would use a denser, close-grained wood for my carving such as box, but because this is a larger practice carving and I want to work quickly, I used a cube of lime approximately 4in square and 3in thick, lime being easy and quick to carve, but it can be larger if you wish – a life-size one could be most impressive. Start by drawing the top view of the vegetable on the top of your wood, its leaves hanging over the sides of it, with the grain of your wood lengthwise. I included the end rim/frame of the trug in my drawing as that is relevant for my study carving, but it is not essential unless you intend to carve the full exhibit later on (for which, please see my following article).

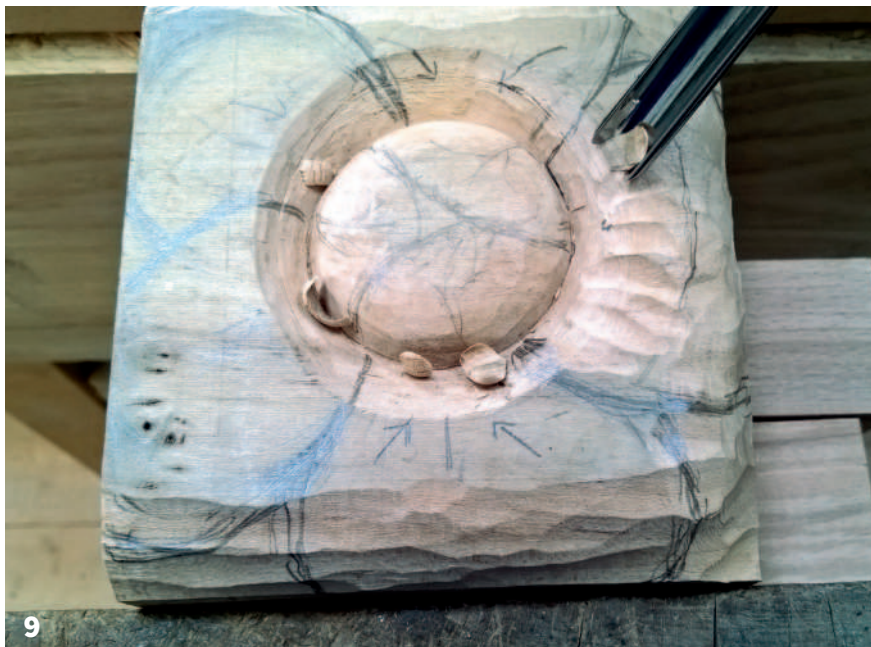
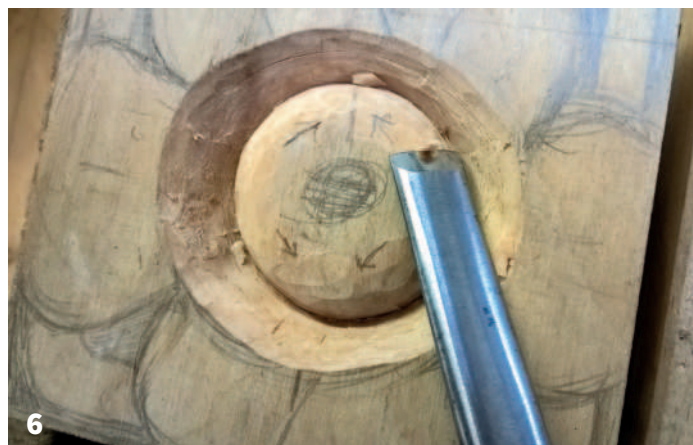


2 Using the 1/4in V-tool with a mallet to outline the head of the cabbage, the enlarged terminal bud that we consume, make a cleanly cut V-channel around its edge, cutting in the appropriate directions as shown but leaving the outlines of the leaves for later. Now a series of opposing cuts follow around the outline to relieve it so that it stands proud from the leaves.

3 The first set of cuts is made around the head of the cabbage as shown. With the No.3, 1/2in gouge resting against the side of the

V-channel, make successive cuts around its outline, continuing your cuts downwards along the angled side of the V-channel adjacent to the head and always cutting away from it. Make sure your gouge is turned so that the shape of the downward cuts matches the curvature of the outline.

4 For the second set of cuts, turn the gouge so that its bevel is beneath its cutting edge and work towards the first set from outside the head. Angle each second cut downwards and towards the first so that it meets cleanly with them, enlarging the original V-tool channel both deeper and wider.



To cut the channel cleanly, the gouge bevel must always be downwards during the second cuts, and when working towards the curved outline swing the gouge cutting edge slightly sideways so that its full width meets up with the first cuts, the outward ones around its edge.

5 To make a cleanly cut channel curving along the grain, use alternate cuts from each side as shown when you work towards it with your second set of cuts. When the V-channel has been sufficiently enlarged, begin rounding over the cabbage head, working into the channel and lifting your gouge hand over its edge to make rounded cuts around its perimeter.

6 Repeat the sets of opposing cuts and rounding over sequences until the cabbage

head is fully convex, its surface falls away from the top of its convexity and no original flatness of the block remains. Paring with the No.3 gouge inverted, smooth it, working with the grain in the directions shown.

7 Now the sharp, angled upper edges of the sides of your block of wood need to be rounded so that the leaves can lie over them smoothly, without any kinks. Start by rounding over the side edges, along the grain, beginning at one end and cutting successively outwards along it, extending the cuts back to the middle of that side, then from its opposite end in the same way. Repeat for the other side and pare their surfaces smooth so that no sharp angle or edges remain anywhere along them.

8 Next, round over the outer ends (one of which will be the end of my trug basket with a leaf overhanging it). Using the No.9, $\frac{3}{8}$ in gouge followed by the No.3 or 5, $\frac{5}{8}$ in gouge, lift your gouge hand as you cut over the corner into the end grain. Draw the outlines of large outer leaves on the rounded surfaces, attaching each to the bottom of the V-channel around the cabbage head.

9 Cutting towards the head of the cabbage with the No.9, $\frac{3}{8}$ in gouge, round over the surface of the leaves into the bottom of the V-channel then, taking care with the grain direction, cut away from here and outwards from the highest point, to make a continuous surface ready to mark their outlines over the sides and ends of your wood (the trug in my study piece).

10 Round over the outer edge of your block, where the outer leaves of the cabbage will lie beneath the handle of the trug if you intend to tackle my little box wood 'trug and its contents' carving later on. Leave the channel beside the head for the time being – these particular leaves are to curl forwards from their attachments to the head and the channel will be used for this later on.

11 For clarity, I am numbering the leaves and I have shown the rim of the trug as adjacent hatched lines. Using the $\frac{1}{4}$ in V-tool, cut round the outline of leaf no.1 starting from the highest point on the leaf outwards, towards and over the end of the basket to the middle of the edge of the leaf. Repeat on the other side of the leaf and join the cuts together here. Then starting as before, from the highest point, mark both sides of the leaf attachment, finishing the cuts either side at the bottom of the cabbage head to complete the outline of the leaf.

12 Using the No.3, $\frac{1}{4}$ in gouge, relieve the edges of the leaf as described before, reduce the hatched area each side beside it and draw the frame or rim on both fresh surfaces. Alternatively, if you are not intending to carve a 'trug and its contents' later, you could draw the outlines of additional leaves beneath both sides of no.1 instead.

13 With the $\frac{1}{4}$ in V-tool, cut round the remaining leaves. Around the leaves which overhang the sides start your cuts each side of the leaf from the middle of its lower edge and work round and upwards toward the highest point of its curve over the side, then from there along both edges to attach it to the bottom of the cabbage head. Start relieving it from the sides of the trug using sets of opposing cuts, first cutting around the outline with the No.3, $\frac{1}{4}$ in gouge within the V-channel, turning it to match the shape as described previously.





15



16



17



18



19



20

14 Cutting with the tool bevel beneath, remove the adjacent surfaces each side so that the leaf stands proud. I have drawn the lower edge of the rim as this is relevant to my practice piece, though if you have included additional leaves as mentioned in Step 12, cut their outlines and relieve them as before.

15 At the sides where the leaf edge lies along the grain, make alternate cuts towards it from each side to remove its adjacent surfaces cleanly, as in Step 5.

16 When they are formed, to make them overlap each other around the cabbage, reduce the surface of one side to below that of its adjoining neighbour, as shown.

17 Separate leaves 4 & 5 and round each over as described before using the No.3, $\frac{1}{4}$ in gouge. (They are to curl forwards toward the cabbage head from beneath the basket handle and be undercut later in my future 'trug and its contents' carving.) Remove any remaining flatness and draw the edges of the leaves, rolling over them as shown.

18 Here, by reducing the adjacent surfaces of the trug I have relieved its handle, having first outlined it with the V-tool then using opposing cuts with No.3 gouges so that it encircles the basket underneath. I have adjusted the width of the rim so that its outer edge adjoins the inner side of the encircling handle, and marked a small triangle to be removed between the edges of leaves 4 & 5 and the inside of the basket each side, all of which I will need to do with my intended small box wood carving.

19 Now more smaller leaves around the cabbage head are relieved over the surfaces of the larger ones using the $\frac{1}{4}$ in V-tool and No.3 gouges as before.

20 Using the No.3, $\frac{3}{8}$ in or $\frac{1}{4}$ in gouge within each smaller leaf, deepen their attachments to the cabbage head, tilting the gouge and further undercutting the head from all round.



21

21 Now draw the outer or upper edge of a smaller leaf, and deepening within its attachment to the cabbage head, extend it back as a concavity or hollow up to the outer edge, the concavity now curling the edge of the leaf forwards towards the cabbage head in the middle, with the larger leaf emerging from beneath it. Continue thus with the rest of the smaller leaves until they encircle the head of the cabbage.



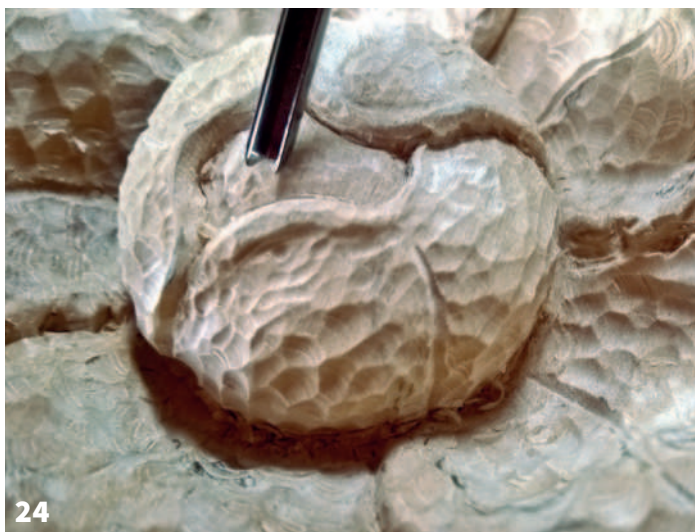
22

22 Using the No.9, $\frac{1}{4}$ in gouge, texture the leaves by making close gouge cuts over their full surfaces to give them the characteristic crinkly appearance of savoy cabbage leaves, with irregular indents along their edges.

23 Using the $\frac{1}{4}$ in or $\frac{1}{8}$ in V-tool, cut the main vein at the middle of each leaf, reducing the depth of cut to decrease its width towards its outer edge.



23



24 Now cut the edges of the tightly bound leaves around the head of the cabbage, reducing the area between them at its convexity with the No.3, $\frac{1}{4}$ in or $\frac{1}{8}$ in gouge. Then overlap one edge of each by reducing that of its neighbour, as described before. With the No.9, 10 or 11, $\frac{1}{8}$ in gouge, texture them as for the larger leaves and finish them by cutting a corresponding groove along the outer side of the topmost edge so that each leaf curls prettily along its topmost edge.

25 Finally, the leaves can be undercut by tilting the appropriate width No.3 gouge as shown and cutting away beneath their edges. It is helpful to mark the places to undercut with pencil beforehand, as shown.



26 Work round each leaf, and within adjoining angles between them the point of the No.2, $\frac{1}{4}$ in or skew chisel can be used to tidy the edges cleanly.

Finishing

Erase all pencil marks and check all meeting edges are cut cleanly, including those undercut, and that there are no large gaps missed in the gouge cuts texturing the surfaces of the leaves. A simple wax polish finish and the carving buffed with a soft brush sufficed for my practice cabbage, and now my little carving of the trug and its contents in box wood (shown left) can be carved with confidence. ●

BDWCA news & events

Will you be coming to the Festival of Bird Art this year?

In the last issue I mentioned that we are looking at ways in which we can increase entries to, and interest in, our show – the Festival of Bird Art, held in Bakewell, Derbyshire on the second full weekend in September each year – and that I would be telling you more in the next issue. So here we go.

I've been involved in the show since 2007 and, me being me, have kept a record of the number of carvers and carvings entered each year. These numbers remained fairly constant for some years but then, in 2016, started to decline and this has, sadly, continued, especially in 2022. We can't really blame it on the pandemic as it started four years before we had even heard of Covid, and our membership numbers have stayed constant, so why is this happening?

We're reaching out to our current members, initially through our membership magazine, *Wingspan*, asking the following questions:

- Why did they decide to join the BDWCA?
- Have their expectations been met?
- Do they belong to a regional group?
- Would they like to if one existed in their area?
- Do they compete at the Bakewell Show and if not, why not?

While we wait for responses to these questions the committee has agreed to make some changes, including one which we hope will appeal to a wider audience, in other words some of you, which is to...



Alert Hare carved by Maggie Port

...broaden the scope of the show

Without detracting from the fact that the BDWCA was established as a Bird Carving Association and that this should continue to be the mainstay of the show and competition, it was accepted that many members like to carve other wildlife, as well as carvers who are not currently members of the BDWCA.

The competition will remain a bird-carving competition but there will be two distinct exhibition tables, one for birds and the other for wildlife. We always have an exhibition table, and this year's table – which did include two wildlife carvings by one of our members, Maggie Port – is shown in some of the pictures. This table also included carvings which had been entered in previous years' shows.

Non-members can exhibit wildlife carvings but would have to pay a fee for exhibiting, as well as a slightly higher commission figure for anything they sell (members pay 20%). Carvers would need to pre-register their pieces so that we have an indication of numbers in advance of the show.

At the time of writing the details are still to be finalised – which they will have been by the time you read this – so anyone who is interested can contact me, Pam Wilson, either by email at pam@pamsway.co.uk or phone, **07831 251779**.

In the meantime, pictures of all the winning carvings entered in this year's show are on the Bakewell Show page of our website – www.bdwca.org.uk – as well as pictures from the previous few years.



Hedgehog carved by Maggie Port

For further information...

...on the BDWCA, as well as membership details, visit www.bdwca.org.uk. Membership includes three issues of the full-colour magazine, *Wingspan*.

Or contact our new membership secretary:
Mrs Margaret Port, Dairy Cottage, Knellers Lane,
Ashurst, Totton, Hampshire, SO40 7EB, Tel: 02380 869090
Alternatively, please email: pam.wilson@bdwca.org.uk



© JOY ALLISON FOR THE BDWCA

The Exhibition Table at the 2022 Show



© PAM WILSON FOR THE BDWCA

2022 Show tables taken from the Advanced table end



© PAM WILSON FOR THE BDWCA

2022 Show tables taken from the Novice table end

Diary dates

**Friday to Sunday,
14, 15 and 16 July 2023**

The BDWCA hopes to be exhibiting in the Art Marquee at the Global Birdfair, which is being held in its new location of the Rutland Showground, Oakham.

See www.globalbirdfair.org for more details.

**Saturday and Sunday,
9 and 10 September 2023**

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



© JOY ALLISON FOR THE BDWCA

2013 prize-winning Greylag Goose, carved by Maggie Port

Featuring the BDWCA Annual Competitions for members with the best bird carving winning the British Bird Carving Championship 2023 trophy.

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

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

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The Milkwood Project

Guest editor Nic Westermann explains how Lee Burton grew his interest in green woodworking into a non-profit organisation

Chancing upon a likely looking piece of driftwood on a family camp led to the obsession with carving that has taken Lee Burton on the journey that has resulted in the Milkwood Project. A few days after returning home, Lee met with a friend for a whittle and beer in his shed and within an hour they decided to form a club – Narberth Whittling Association (NWA) was born. Within a couple of months there would be between five and eight members meeting every Thursday in his shed, with the log burner going and the odd wee dram, exchanging stories and chatting about their lives and the world in general. This was a group of various ages and whittling abilities and they soon realised how therapeutic and enjoyable this activity was.

Lee then spoke to his father, who had emigrated to British Columbia in the 1980s, about his new hobby and the club he had started hosting. They reminisced about his grandfather's passion for carving, which started with house name plaques. His carving hobby quickly became a craft he was soon to be known for and developed into carvings of birds, fish and mammals. When his grandfather passed away these tools went to Canada along with his father's. They were going to be posted to Lee, but his father balked at the high cost of postage. Undeterred, Lee booked a flight to Vancouver and was able to come home with three generations of carving chisels, which now reside at the clubhouse.



Round house under construction



Lee Burton (left) with Steve at the Milkwood Project



Round house nearing completion



Club night

Within six months the group had outgrown the cabin and was turning potential new club members away. Lee then attended his first Bodgers Ball in 2017 and, having already had an interest in green woodworking, discovered what friends and family described as an obsession for which he needed a woodland to fully realise. After a little research he found woodland for sale close enough to his home in Pembrokeshire and within his budget. Lee immediately drew up plans and applied for permitted development to build a workshop/tool storage. The workshop is off grid with solar-charged batteries running lighting, and is built entirely using only hand tools and timber felled and milled within one mile. With doors, windows and roof materials all reused and recycled, the workshop evolved in the space available without disruption to the woodland habitat and wildlife.

There is now in the region of 20-plus members, men and women of all ages from all walks of life, still meeting every Thursday from 7pm until 9pm (sometimes a little later) and the occasional guest or two, but now the club is in the woods – Milkwoods.

Just before the beginning of the pandemic, Lee contacted a couple of local charities that supported people struggling with mental health or depression, anxiety, and some living in solitude for one reason or another. It quickly became apparent there was a need for more support, and how beneficial craft and nature could be in addressing these issues. The organisers of charity MenzMen arranged to meet with the project and discuss further what could be offered. Within just a few weeks Lee committed to one day a week in which he would take small groups of people to learn spoon carving. He registered The Milkwood Project CIC (Community Interest Company) with Companies House as a non-profit organisation and has made two successful grant applications to the National Lottery Community Fund to buy tools, pay for tutoring and facilitate a variety of therapeutic green wood activities. These grants totalled around £19,000.

With a new purpose-built round house-style workspace, toilet and washing facilities which soon will have wheelchair access. The plan now is to offer activities to those with limited mobility and soon to children with learning disabilities or autism.

As well as carving spoons they also have a few pole lathes, both spindle and bowl turning, and last year started our local APT&GW group. Lee has expanded the site further and now has the main workshop, an outside workspace under a tarpaulin A-frame structure and will soon have a forge fired with charcoal made on site. So many local people want to attend club night Lee is now looking to run two evenings a week.

In the new year the group was contacted by singer-songwriter Martyn Joseph, who had started a non-profit organisation about nine years ago that now supports small, grassroots projects all over the world. A mutual friend had put them in contact and just a few weeks later they had a £2500 donation from his organisation, called Let Yourself Trust.

When I visited this site last year I was impressed – it is hard not to be, it blends so seamlessly into the woodland. However, when Lee said he had completed all this work by himself I was stunned, all while working full time – an amazing achievement. And the many testimonials I have seen show it's not just me who's impressed by the experience. Lee's enthusiasm for the site is infectious and he is obviously able to communicate the benefits of his projects as the financial support he is getting seems to grow day by day. As I have been putting this article together Lee has continually told me of new applications being put forward and approved. With this in mind, we have put together a few pointers to help clubs that are thinking of applying for funding. I am not trying to say this is easy, and it's certainly not something that I would be good at. However, Lee's energy and drive is the reason for this project is growing so fast and I wish him every success.

www.themilkwoodproject.org

Lee's tips to allow funding

Basics requirements to qualify for funding.

1. Register with Companies House as a Community Interest Company.
2. The Committee should have a minimum of three members, such as a director, secretary and a cashier.
3. Open a business bank account – Bank of Scotland offers no charges on accounts for CICs.
4. You need insurance and risk assessments in place to teach groups – Ian Wallace craft insurance is commonly used.

Lee's strategies to find funding

1. Local charities that support people in need of therapeutic activities have been very helpful to Milkwood, funding carving courses for clients they are helping as opposed to artist's grants, and of course the National Lottery.
2. Disabled access grants are available from local authorities.
3. Once you have made a contact at an organisation invite it over to connect with what you can do and offer. This has been a key factor for Lee.
4. Don't underestimate word of mouth. It is admittedly something that will build, but if you have connections then use them.
5. When you make an application, the wording is important. You need to explain clearly what you are going to do and your intentions. It may seem like a whole new language – but reading up on past successful applications should help you. Currently, Lee says there is funding available to encourage 'connectivity between generations'.
6. Don't be put off by the fact you will be using sharp tools. For Lee, this has never been an issue to gaining funding, although cut-resistant gloves are used extensively when teaching.

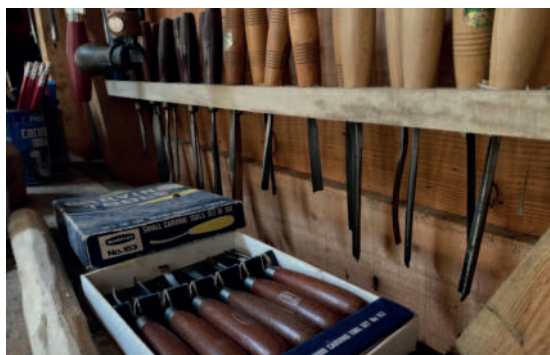


Another quiet spot to carve



PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF THE MILKWOOD PROJECT

Club night



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Foliage panel – part 2

Cynthia Rogers completes her leaf carving

In my previous article (WC192) I began work on this jelutong panel by carving the five leaves. To complete the piece, I need to add detail to the leaves and mount the work on a backing board. The illustration and list of tools and materials can be found in part 1.

Veining the leaves

1 The three leaves shown here are (from left to right) Kentucky climbing bean, acanthus and caladium. While these are not the only patterns of leaf veins, they show some of the variety that the garden offers. I suggest you study different types of leaves before attempting to carve them in wood. The different types of timber also present their own problems and require different approaches. It is relatively easy to cut fine lines with a chisel in hardwoods that cut cleanly, whereas softwoods are inclined to tear. Practice is again important, especially with the project underway. By the time the veining stage is reached it is a bit late to change your mind on the timber, so practise veining on a spare piece of the same timber before veining the project. Using a spare piece of your timber, draw up a few leaves like, keeping in mind that it is best not to get too carried away the first time. Try to keep the veins as natural as possible, with as few stiff, straight lines as can be managed (though some plants do have straight veins). Over the following steps, I'll explain some different methods of leaf veining. I recommended that you try all of them and then choose the one that works best with the timber you are using.

Using the V-tool

2 The V-tool, as its name suggests, cuts a V-shaped groove in the timber. Where a smaller V is needed, a smaller size of V-tool can be used, or you can improvise somehow. If you use the V-tool by drawing it towards your body, it 'dents' the wood (as opposed to cutting it, as it does when pushed). The value of this is that the tool is less likely to stick and tear; the disadvantage is that it is hard to see where you are going, and it only works in softwood.

Using an improvised tool

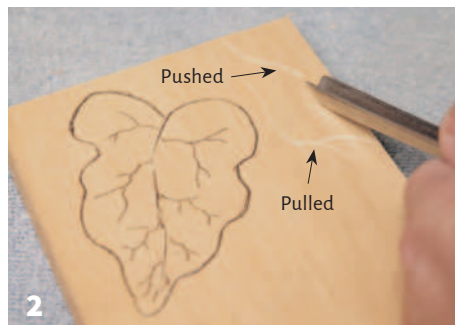
3 If the veins are not to be heavily indented, scoring with a sharp nail or similar is very simple. In this photo a slender spike is being used: it is easy to control and you can see where it's heading. When scoring veins it is always easier to work towards the body, not away from it – unless a V-tool or gouge is being used.

The raised method

Leaving the veins standing above the height of the surrounding wood is complex and time-consuming; there are three ways to achieve it.

Method 1

4 If extremely fine lines are required, then scoring with the carving knife is a handy technique to use. Care must be taken that the knife does not dig in and leave ugly marks. It can also be hard to get fluid curves using the knife – corners can look stiff and jointed like stick-figure drawings.





5 Method 1: Pencil in double lines to show the veins and cut down alongside with the knife. For clarity, the photograph shows the knife hold being demonstrated on waste wood.

6 Cut away the timber either side of the lines to leave the vein raised, then sand.

Method 2

Lightly mark with chalk where the veins are required, lay a clean piece of rounded steel or other metal along the line of the vein and tap with a small hammer so the wood is indented. The wood is then pared back level, basted with warm water and left to dry. The water will swell the wood that was pushed down and raise it above the now lowered surrounding timber; then sand to finish. This is a difficult and tedious process that is often used when carving the human body, if veins need to be shown. It is not recommended for these projects.

Method 3

7 For this project in jelutong I recommend method 3 as the simplest and most effective. Draw veins on the paper design, then lightly pencil them on to the workpiece. The photograph shows the leaves with the veins completed using method 3.

8 When veining has been achieved, rub over lightly with 400 grit or similar sandpaper to remove any rough edges from the veins.

Finishing the surface

Before proceeding further it is essential to finish the face of the carving. Once the undercutting is completed the whole thing will become more fragile to handle, which is a good reason to finish it now.

9 Using a clean paintbrush, brush the entire carved surfaces over with hot tap water. Do not soak or immerse the carving, as this may cause cracking or splitting. Allow it to dry overnight. When the timber is dry, rub over the whole face with No.0000 or 000 steel wool. The hot water will raise the grain, making the fibres stand up, and rubbing with steel wool will remove them, leaving a fine finish. Brush over with a clean, dry paintbrush to remove loose particles.

Undercutting the edges

The purpose here is not to remove all the timber from the back of the leaves, but just enough to make them interesting. Enough wood must be left untouched to ensure that there will be plenty of strength to fix the front to the backing board later. It is important to realise that the aim is a cut that will complement what has been done so far, not just remove wood.

Turn the design over and pencil on the tabs where the edges of the leaves meet, but do not cut them yet. They will not be cut until much later, as the strength is needed to hold the design while it is being worked on. The value of the tabs is now evident, as they hold the workpiece safely while we carve the back, without any damage to the front of the carving.

10 Number the leaves on the back for identification, as on the front. Make a pencil mark about 12mm in from the edges all around the design. It is important that a 'bridge' be left intact between the leaves to hold the design together.

11 A 9/10 gouge is here being used to make a hollow cut or cove on the edge of leaf 5. This is the opposite of the profile which has been carved on the face of the leaf, and using this shape on the undercut will make the leaf edge very prominent. At the top of leaf 5 (near the pencil) the V-tool has been used to open the centre, and the fishtail used on the tips.

12 Here the pencil is pointing to where the back of the leaf has been shaped to follow the front contour. It has a wavy look to match the front. The 9/10 gouge was used for this, cutting downwards carefully. Take particular notice of the tab: part of it has been cut away, but lots of timber has been left for strength.



13 The 9/10 gouge has been used again on the outer edges of leaf 3; it can also be seen that plenty of wood has been left on the tab. The cut is made to follow the shape of the leaf by using the fishtail to round it; the pencil points to an area where this can be seen clearly.

14 Tight cuts can be made either with the 8/7 gouge, as shown here, or by using the V-tool.

15 The top of leaf 2 is rounded with the fishtail, so as to keep adequate strength while cutting back into leaf 3. If a cove cut were made here, it would result in a hole being cut in the leaf.

16 Work along leaf 4, alternating the 9/10 and the fishtail as needed to conform to the shape. Take care when approaching the tip of leaf 1.

17 Here you can see the centre being shaped ...

18 ... and cut back with the fishtail.

19 Turn the design and continue to cut away waste. Note the steep angle at which the gouge has to be used in tight areas.

20 Elsewhere, a longer bevel is produced by cutting from further back, with the gouge held at a shallower angle.

21 Take care not to remove the tip of the leaf when approaching it with the fishtail.

22 Sand all the cut edges, working through the grades of sandpaper, starting with the coarsest. Take care not to lean heavily on the fragile edges; support the tips with your fingers as required, and work along entire surfaces.

Preparing to mount the carving

23 Carefully and slowly cut off the tab on leaf 3, using either gouge and cutting the timber away a little at a time from the back.

24 Turn the work face up to cut the edge neatly with the fishtail, then sand.

25 Working from the front, cut away the tab on leaf 1, taking small cuts with the 8/7 gouge; then turn over to tidy up and sand.





26 Holding the design by the tab on leaf 5, cut away the tab from leaf 4 and sand. Take care not to run the chisel into the clamp.

27 Use your fingers to feel for the thickest part of leaves 5 and 4, and mark these with an X in pencil. Turn the design face down and hold by the remaining tab. A piece of masking tape has been wound on the 3mm drill to act as a depth gauge. This will show the depth as you drill, so the bit does not go too deep and come out on the face. Drill one hole at each place marked; these will be for the dowels to mount the carving on its backing board. Pressing gently to hold the design in place, slowly and carefully cut away the last remaining tab and then sand. Using hot, clean water and a clean brush, wet the undercuts to raise the grain and allow to dry. When dry, rub lightly with 0000 or 000 steel wool and dust off any debris with a brush. Inspect the project carefully: if there are marks or pick-outs on the face, the time to fix them is now. When the timber is oiled, any marks will show up even more than they do at the moment.

28 Using the two drills that were used earlier, carefully make a few holes in the face to represent bug holes (this is optional). A small nail can be used for these tiny holes. Clean up with rolled sandpaper. Once coloured, these marks will look very natural.

The backing board

The wood being used is a piece of rosewood that was cut on the bandsaw; here we will finish it with a bevelled edge.

29 Clamp the timber firmly to the bench, but slide a piece of leather or cardboard under the clamp so as not to mark or dent the surface of the timber. A non-skid mat underneath also helps to keep it in place on the bench and stop it moving. Sand the back of the board, the face and the outer edges, using sandpaper wrapped around a block of wood or a cork block. Take care to keep the edges square and flat, and work through the grades of sandpaper until a smooth finish has been achieved. Move the clamp as necessary to access the whole of the board. Measure on the surface 12mm all around the face of the board and $\frac{1}{4}$ in (6mm) down the sides, and mark clearly as shown. This is the area that will be bevelled: the front corner is what will be removed.

30 Using the fishtail chisel and holding it at the angle shown, cut down towards the lower pencil line. Slowly work along the outer edge of the board, ensuring that all cuts are kept within the waste section. Do not worry that the surface of the bevel is not completely flat, as the bastard file will be used to level it out.

31 Hold the file as shown and slowly push it at the same angle as the bevelled edge. The angle here is most important: if the hand is either too high or too low, the face of the bevel will be altered. The pencil lines are there to be used as a guide, so keep an eye on them. The use of the file makes it far simpler to get a nice flat surface than trying to do it with a chisel, and it is less likely that the edges will break or splinter. If the file gets clogged with splinters of wood, use a wire brush to clean it. If you have a hand plane, you could use this instead to bevel the edges. When all the edges have been levelled, wrap sandpaper around the file to keep it nice and flat and sand the bevel. Repeat using the required number of grades of paper until a fine finish has been reached. Brush over the entire backing board with hot tap water and a clean brush, allow to dry, and sand with 0000 or 000 steel wool.

◀ Finishing

Prepare by oiling the backing board. In this case the rosewood backing did not need staining, but has been oiled and rubbed back twice with steel wool before a last wipe-over with a cloth lightly moistened with Danish oil. It has been allowed to dry and harden.

32 Place the backing face down on a mat or towel so as not to damage the face. Measure and mark on the centreline of the board 38mm down from the top edge; this is where the hanger will be fixed. If the hanger is left until after the carving has been attached, there is a risk of damaging the carving, so it is easier to do it now. As this project is not a heavy one, a small flap hanger will be sufficient to hold it. Place the flap on the centre mark and, with a small hammer, tap in the pins provided with the flap. Once the front section has been carved, stained, oiled, and is dry, it can be attached to the back with dowels and glue.

Attaching the carving to the backing board

33 Place the carved front piece face down on cloth so as not to scratch the polish. Use tracing paper to make a template of the back area. Transfer this to white paper and lay the template on the back of the carving, using wooden skewers (kebab sticks are ideal) to locate the dowel holes. (Note that the template differs in shape from the carving because parts of it have been cut away to enable masking tape to be placed to hold it to the back of the carving.) Remove the skewers and turn the paper over on to a board. Lay strips of masking tape across the template, with plenty of overhang on each side dangling free.

34 Turn the paper again and locate it back on to the carving, matching up the dowel holes with the skewers as before. You may need to tear away some of the paper, just enough to stick on small strips of tape to hold the template in place when the skewers are removed.

35 Carefully remove the skewers and gently place the carving on to the backing board in what will be its permanent position. Press the larger pieces of masking tape to the backing board and hold them firmly down while the carving is being removed. The template is now in position for the drilling of the corresponding dowel holes.

36 Using the 3mm drill, with masking tape as before for a depth gauge, drill through the paper where the holes are. Remove the template from the backing board and blow out any dust or shavings. Cut lengths of skewer to use as dowels, equal to the depth of the hole in the backing plus the depth of the hole in the carving, or fractionally less. Kebab sticks are made of bamboo and are exceptionally strong and flexible, which is ideal for small projects such as this that have almost no weight.

Gluing

Sand the reverse of the carving where glue will be applied. Take care that the edges do not get damaged – it is best to keep the sanding in from the edges, as its purpose is only to give the glue a grip. Rub a small area around the dowel holes on the backing board for the glue to grip; take care not to go too far, or it will show. Use good-quality glue: my preference is for two-part epoxy wood glue, but any good wood glue will do. (Instant glue will not allow enough time to get things lined up.) Make sure that the dowel holes have glue pushed into them with a piece of skewer; the dowels should squeeze the glue from the holes when they are inserted. The holes are slightly bigger than the actual dowels, which will allow plenty of glue to grip all surfaces and let any air escape. Spread the glue on the back of the carving, making sure that the whole of the contact surface is covered. Wipe any glue from the edges with a clean cloth, and align the dowels in the carving with the holes in the backing board. Press firmly but carefully. Check to make sure that glue has not oozed out



around the design. If this has happened, remove the carving, wipe off the excess and refit.

37 Place a clean cotton cloth on top of the carving and leave a weight on it for 24 hours; a small bag of sand works well. The carving will then be ready to display. ●

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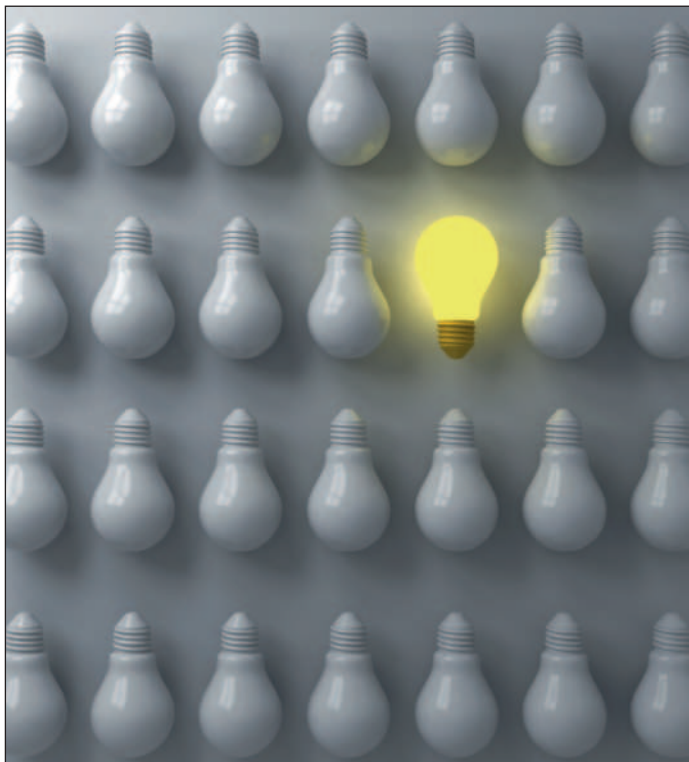
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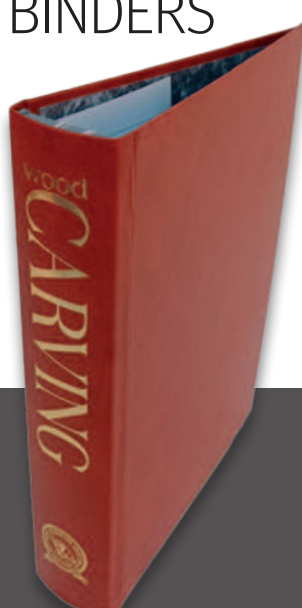
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The Chainsaw Madonna

Lotta Boholm Wall tells us about her carvings, business and films



Ann-Charlotte Boholm Wall, known as Lotta, is a chainsaw carver based in Långserud, Sweden. Many of her works are inspired by nature, history and folk traditions, and many of her pieces are built on a large scale. She also runs a sculpture park and is a budding filmmaker. She tells us more about her life and career here.

Early life and introduction to carving

I was born and raised in Säffle, Värmland, Sweden. I have been living in the northern/middle parts of Sweden for over 25 years: nine years in Jämtland, close to Östersund and then 16 years in Medelpad, close to Sundsvall. I moved back to my 'homeland' in the summer of 2018 and established my art and craft business at Wiksfors Bruk in Långserud, Värmland.

My inspiration to work with wood started when I was a little child. I used to be with my grandfather in his carpentry and upholstery workshop. My younger brother, Peter Wall (www.rohmanwall.com/wall-gruppen), runs the workshop nowadays.

I started carving when I was 20 years old. I was at art school and we got the opportunity to work with woodcarving, which I found really satisfying – I wanted to do more. I did my first three reliefs at that school. We tried different kinds of art techniques. I had a hard time with oil painting on canvas and watercolour painting on paper, but woodcarving and sculpturing suited me perfectly from the beginning. I was at home with it immediately. It felt like I had done it before, but I hadn't in this life – I believe that I have been a woodcarver in a previous lifetime!

My passion is to create art and craft by chainsaw and woodcarving tools. I started my company in 2003 and have mostly worked on private commissions, associations and companies during these past years. Since my new establishment in Värmland, I have wanted to take my art and craft to higher dimensions. My work has been shown in many exhibitions, museums and galleries. I have trained in design, aesthetic line, wood technology, sculpture and handicraft teacher training.

I teach woodcarving and knife carving for both children and adults, which I have done for many years, as well as guided tours of the site and what I do.

On my website is a link to a YouTube video in Swedish, but the images will make you want to visit and enjoy the wonderful outdoor life in my home country.



The Farm Boy carved pole



The Farm Girl carved pole



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF ANN-CHARLOTTE BOHOLM WALL



A totem pole in progress in Jaalen's workshop in British Columbia



Jaalen working on a totem pole with an axe

Influences

My interest in art, craft and different cultures has developed further through my journeys, mainly to the US, Mexico and Canada. Other sources of inspiration are nature, animals and Egyptian treasures.

I have travelled many times to British Columbia in Canada. That is the best place to be if you like woodcarving in big dimensions. I have visited BC many times in my life. My favourite places are Vancouver Island and Haida Gwaii. In 2013 I spent many days in this area and got to know many woodcarvers. One of these mastercarvers was Jaalen Edenshaw (www.jaalen.net). He is one of the reasons that I got inspired to do my 15m-tall carved poles. When I met him, he and his team were working on a 15m-high pole called 'Gwaii Haanas legacy pole' at the museum of Haida Heritage Centre. It was so special to see the totem pole in progress and it started a lot of dreams in my head.

Jaalen and I kept in touch over the years and in the summer of 2022 I travelled to BC again. I had a wonderful month looking at so much professional handicraft from the indigenous people of Canada. I also spent a week in Jaalen's workshop. I got the opportunity to help him and his team (Tyler York, Gwaii Edenshaw and John Brent Bennett) to carve on the back side of a new totem pole. He and his team were so generous to me and I also had the opportunity to make an own sculpture at his workshop, which I gave to Jaalen as a present when I left.

Wiksfors Bruk Mill

The place where I have my workshop and sculpture park is called Wiksfors Bruk in Långserud, Sweden. We started up this place in 2018 with a dream that it would be an attractive tourist destination. Our dream has since come true. We have had so many visitors since 2020 and we have also got an award as one of the best tourist destinations in Sweden.

We restored old factory buildings and the businesses at Wiksfors Bruk now include my sculpture park; my workshop; a waffle café; a wood-fired pizza restaurant; furnishing, food and clothing shops; IT and technology companies; a carpenter and a brewery.

The sculpture park features 11 outdoor sculptures. These are mainly playground sculptures representing figures of animals associated with the Swedish countryside. There's also my self-portrait sculpture called *Swimming Towards Freedom* and my 5m totem pole which I made for my 50th birthday present. I have also about 40 smaller woodworks on display in my workshop. Some are for sale and some are part of a permanent exhibition.



Lotta working on The Farmboy

The sculpture park also includes two 15m-high carved poles made out of pine trees. The poles project is one that I'm very proud of. It took me three years and cost me a lot of money. I learned a lot about myself during this project, for example that I'm very good at focusing, I'm strong (both in body and mind) and I'm very stubborn. During those years I also had to work as a teacher and do commissioned work to get food on the table and to be able to pay my bills. I worked about 50-60 hours a week to manage this project to completion. Some people and even myself were wondering why I do this crazy hard work and I can't really understand but it is something inside me that has to come out.

My 15m carved poles are a celebration of the life of The Farm Girl and the life of The Farm Boy. They are historical depictions of agricultural life and culture and a personal celebration of my grandmother and grandfather who worked on farms. I want people to learn something about our agricultural history and heritage when they see the stories I depict in the carvings on the poles. In summer 2021 we raised the poles with the help of a crane and people from a technique company. That was one of the happiest days of my life.

Filmmaking

Another thing that I'm very proud of is a 30-minute documentary film that I made with a young man called Linus Grötting. Its title in English is *Chainsaw Madonna*. We began working on it in 2018 and it was finished in autumn 2021.

A lot of people have seen this film and they really like it. It has also been featured in a programme on Swedish public service called *Landet Runt*. You can find a little clip of the film on my website.

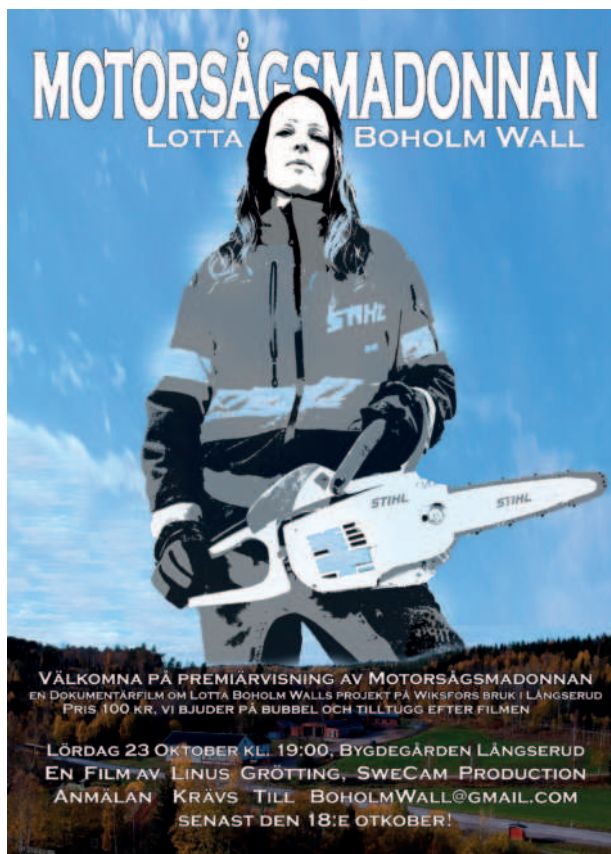
Future projects

I have plans for a new documentary film about my journey in British Columbia and Linus Grötting will be working with me on this as well. Other carving projects are for commissioned work, for example a big hamburger (the size of a table) to a food truck selling hamburgers. I shall also make two hen carvings as playground sculptures.

I also hope that I will have the energy to raise money for a special project: I would like to invite Jaalen Edenshaw and his team to Sweden and we could do a memorial pole or a canoe together. That would be so fun.



The sculpture Lotta gave to Jaalen



Promotion for Lotta's documentary film, *Chainsaw Madonna*



The 5m-high pole made for Lotta's birthday



Carvings at the sculpture park in Wiksfors Bruk Mill



Lotta's workshop at Wiksfors Bruk



The carefully painted Snowy Owl sculpture



QUICK-FIRE QUESTIONS

What has been your oddest carving experience?

It was when I made an Æsir god portal to special commission. The god of Frej had an erection. The customer wanted it like that. I have a picture at my website of that portal but the picture is not that big so you can't see that detail clearly.

What has been your most memorable carving experience?

My 15m poles celebrating the Farmgirl and the Farmboy

Have you ever given up on a project?

I don't think I have ever given up on a project, I'm too stubborn!

What is your favourite type of woodcarving?

Big carved poles like my totem poles.

What are the biggest differences in carving now to when you first started?

I have more machines and tools nowadays.

What is your favourite piece of equipment?

It has to be my Stihl chainsaw MS201 C – M fitted with a carving bar and blade.

What's the best piece of advice you have been given?

As long as you have a piece of wood left, you have the possibility to rescue your work.

What is the biggest mistake you have ever made?

When I did a sculpture called Bågskytten (the archer) I happened to cut his nose off with the chainsaw, so I had to make a new nose and glue it on again. There is a film about me making that sculpture on my website, but not when I made the mistake with his nose. ●

For more information about Lotta and her work, visit:

www.wiksforsbruk.se
www.boholmwall.se

Community news

A collection of letters and news from the woodcarving community



Carving in progress



Silver birch log, wax maquette and templates



Maquette and log. First cuts

The Green Man Christ

Have you ever looked into a bush or a tree and imagined you could see a face among the leaves and branches? People have been doing this from time immemorial, and from it developed the tradition of the Green Man, which goes back way beyond the beginning of Christianity. This tradition can be found in Britain and Europe, and there are similar traditions in most other countries of the world. There is a well-known example of a Green Man in Norwich Cathedral, and there is also one on the south wall of Chester Cathedral.

Fr. Simon (my parish priest) asked me to carve a Green Man Christ for him in August 2007, shortly before he left Holy Family. Though I was pleased that he thought I was up to it, this seemed an awesome task, and I wasn't sure if I could do it, so I warned him it would take a long time.

The term 'Green Man' was coined by Lady Raglan for an article she wrote about church architecture in 1939, but the correct term for such a figure is a 'foliate head'. The Green Man can be found in many old churches, usually carved into the masonry somewhere. What, you may ask, has a pagan tradition to do with Christianity? The Green Man figures mostly in spring festivals (which can still be seen in some parts of Britain today, e.g. Clun, near Shrewsbury), in which he drives out the evils of winter, and makes things grow once more. He therefore symbolises fertility, rebirth and the defeat of evil. The link can then be made between the Green Man and Christ, who has triumphed over evil and brought us rebirth in the Resurrection, which is probably why the early church absorbed the tradition.

What should this Green Man Christ look like? There were no examples I could find to help me, except the hundreds of Green Men of all shapes and sizes that I found on the internet, and in magazine articles. So, I began to consider what sort of symbolism to use. I discovered there were an awful lot of plants symbolic of Christ and Christianity, as well as animals, and I found it difficult to make up my mind which to use, or what message to portray. I produced some very weird and complex designs, which all seemed very impractical. I eventually settled on one plant, the vine. Christ as the true vine. He would be formed out of vine stalks and leaves, with bunches of grapes to show the abundant life he brings. This was all well and good, but oh, horror! He would look like the pagan god Bacchus. How could I, beyond doubt, make him at least represent Christ? I asked myself: 'How do you know a figure in church is that of Christ? What sets it apart from being a figure of any other man?' I realised then that there are a number of iconic poses and representations which belong only to Christ. He may be shown on the cross, suffering, or in kingship. He may be pointing



Carving begins to take shape



Main features begun



First attempts at a leaf



The carving begins to wake up



The finished work



Back view



Right side view



Left side view



Close-up showing ladybird



Close-up of butterfly



Close-up showing caterpillar

to his Sacred Heart; ascending to heaven in glory; or as the Good Shepherd. I decided then that a crown of thorns would indicate beyond doubt that my figure is Christ. However, I wanted the figure to look joyful and triumphant and I wasn't sure if a crown of thorns would be appropriate for this. It then occurred to me that the crown should be integral with the vine, and so it would in fact be formed from vine tendrils. In this way there would be no thorns; Christ would not be suffering; but it would be obvious who the figure represented.

I then set to work carving the figure, from a piece of silver birch that had been cut down in a neighbour's front garden. By the time I had finished I had carved a good many leaves and had no wish to do any more for quite a while. Although I knew what I wanted it to look like and had even made a rough wax maquette (model), I really had no clear idea where all the leaves and branches etc., were to go. I did, however, get some inspiration from the negative of the Holy Shroud of Turin, and decided that some of the trickles of blood could indicate the position of some of the tendrils. I also decided that the big clots of blood on the front and back of the head could indicate bunches of grapes,

I started carving with great trepidation, but all the while a voice in my head seemed to say: 'I will honour every cut you make in good faith.' I was quite well on with completing the work when I decided I would like to add one or two creatures as well.

First, I carved a ladybird, and gave it four spots. I don't actually think there is such a thing as a four-spotted ladybird, but I wanted it to have more than two, and seven spots would look too crowded (a 22-spot one, no way). This ladybird would represent the Good News, and the four spots, the four evangelists. I always thought of the evangelists as carrying the Good News, but never that the Good News carried them.

I then carved a caterpillar, and this represents mortal humanity feeding from the true vine.

Lastly, I carved a butterfly to represent resurrection. This was the most difficult to carve as it is near the end grain of the wood, and I wanted it to look delicate.

Once the head was finished, I had to mount it somehow. I could have mounted it on a pole, plinth or slab of stone, but I thought it would look rather dead on these. I finally decided to have him bursting out of a tree trunk, for which I chose a piece of redwood (I'm not sure if it is Californian redwood, but this piece came from Little Neston a few miles away). I carved it to look (I hope) like the trunk of an old vine. The big cracks in it are genuine and I felt they would add to the effect of something bursting out. This would be the 'stock of Jesse'. The trunk also contains a secret. I had to hollow it out in order to fix the head on, but before sealing it up I enclosed a piece of paper on which I had written the first verse of the 11th chapter of Isaiah.

Unintentionally, the expression on the Green Man Christ appears to change as it is viewed in different lights, and at different angles, and although I intended to give it a triumphant expression there are times when I have noticed in certain conditions it is definitely more serious.

Although I have taken nearly three years to complete this work there have been extensive periods when I have let it rest, which I find is an important part of the creative process. I finally presented the finished work to Fr. Simon on the Vigil of Corpus Christi, 2010.

Tom Herbert



Good enough to eat

The breakfast platter – this is an experiment using largely hand carving techniques involving individual items of food carved from various offcuts of wood. The only colouring used was on one piece of toast, which was dyed. The display can be added to, subtracted from and rearranged.

Leaves – having largely hand carved a number of leaves, in the round, from offcuts of wood not connected with the types depicted, I have tried a variety of ways to display them effectively. This photograph shows my latest attempt. For practical reasons, not every individual leaf can be seen in the most effective way, while in a group setting, in one photograph.

My latest food carving – all made from pieces of wood together with some glue. No paint or other colouring was applied. Some clear Danish oil and some polyurethane varnish was applied to parts of the burger. *Tony Wilson*



Show and tell

What a surprise to see some of my carvings in WC187 and WC188. Here are some photographs of my other work.

John Williams



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Snails

Paolo Frattari carves three snails and makes gift boxes to present them in



PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAOLO FRATTARI/COURTESY OF LEGNO

The idea of wooden snails is not new, I have seen them in for sale in the South Tyrol, Italy, usually positioned on a branch, a leaf or a stone, and I made one myself several years ago. This time, however, I made three, slightly larger than normal, not at all stylised and each with a different movement of the body. In an attempt to offer a complete and captivating gift idea, I gave each one its own box, which, in addition to ensuring safe transport, is beautiful to look at, especially with its inlay.

The drawing and timber choice

I began by making a sketch to obtain the measurements of the piece of wood, base and height from the side elevation and thickness from the front. I drew this from memory but if you want to draw from life, it shouldn't be too hard to find a snail, particularly if it has been raining. Just place it on the table, wait for it to come out of its shell and draw it in different positions and from different points of view. Another option is a quick image search on Google and printing out your chosen pictures. These are just two different methods with relative pros and cons.

If you want to make an object that is not just a replica of something you've already seen, I recommend memorising the simple forms of the snail and adding them to your sketch. These are not traced on the wood; this means that each copy is drawn freehand, ensuring that the carvings are slightly different each time. The design must be oriented with the two thin tentacles along the grain of the wood, in this way the risk of breaking these fragile parts is greatly reduced.

When making small objects you have to think about how to keep them still on the workbench; usually there is an excess part where you can insert a screw, which is then removed when the work is finished. For these snails it is located low under the shell and is 25mm high.

For this project I used scraps of 100mm-thick linden wood that were left over from larger projects. Since snails are a small subject, I recommend using this harder and more beautiful wood, which often has a striking grain, but there are many options.

Things you will need

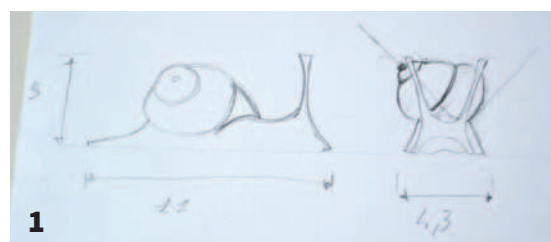
Tools

- Planer and thicknesser
- Bandsaw
- Tablesaw
- Router on bench

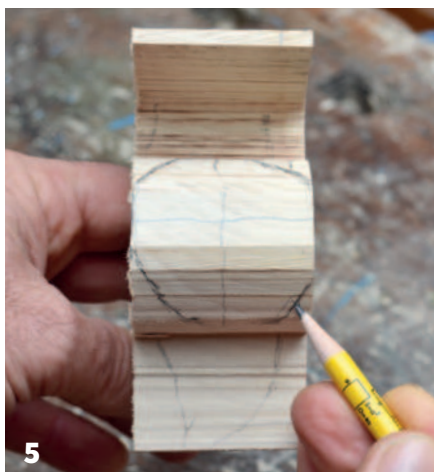
- Hand tools (chisels, gouges, rasps, files)

Materials

- Small leftovers of linden



1 My sketch of the front and side views; this snail is larger than normal **2** When freehand drawing on wood, make a clear, decisive pencil line to reduce the risk of making a mistake when following it during the cut. The bottom centre is where to insert the locking screw



3 In tight curves, proceed by removing a little wood at a time, making cross cuts so that you can complete the job even using a wide blade **4** A sculptor's screw, shown here, is used to fix the snail to the workbench. By making the hole with 3, 6 and 10mm gimlets, there is no risk of exceeding the 25mm height of the snail **5** Looking from above, you can see the circle of the shell, which helps you to visualise the shape; it is not easy to draw on a curved surface, it is preferable to proceed with small strokes that can be joined later **6** The first quarter of the tail is rounded, and the tail is defined; the small thickness of this part requires the diagonal use of the gouge and a movement from the bottom up **7 & 8** The ample thickness of the wood allows the head to be off-centre, in this case so it doesn't include a darker streak in the wood that appeared at the end of the shaping. Approach the mark by working along the grain, first from below and then from above to eliminate excess wood. With the 7/10 the typical shell shape of the body is established, wide at the bottom and tapered at the top **9** The vertical diagonal passes through the centre and is then traced around the two halves of the shell

Cutting out the initial forms

The bandsaw is always the machine I use to start shaping the wood; with this I cut out the shapes of the snails, always keeping to the outside of the line without worrying about small inaccuracies. First planing the material flush and thick is useful but not essential.

Carving the shell

The shell is the most difficult part to make and is placed in the centre of the piece of wood, from which the head on one side and the tail on the other branch off. Seen from above it is a circle with a slight indentation at the opening. I recommend finding an empty snail shell to copy the shape. Once the circle has been drawn, you begin to eliminate the excess parts with the gouge.

For this job I used the 2/16 gouge but a chisel of the same size is definitely preferable; I rounded the first quarter after marking the parts with a pencil and I also thinned down the tail to gain access to the shell. When working on more complex pieces like these, I decide which gouge to use through trial and error: if the gouge hesitates or if it tries to get itself between the fibres of the grain it is the wrong one, so I change it for another one.

After finishing rounding the shell and the tail, I sketched the remaining body parts, not to see the object being defined but to gain access to the shell from the waste areas. With the 2/16 I outlined the contours of the head and with the 7/10 I created a slight indentation along the body that goes from the head to the end of the shell.

The snail is more beautiful if its shell is inclined towards the



opening, 30° is sufficient. I drew the angled vertical through the centre and around this I traced the two halves.

The best way to eliminate these portions of wood is to sit down, fix your eyes at the same height as the wood and work with the gouge, moving it parallel to the observation plane.

Some carvers prefer not to use rasps and I've never had my pupils use them, but in my opinion, using a rasp helps to eliminate those imperfections that would require careful and long work with the gouge.

On this project, I used a type of rasp used by marble stonecutters, small in size and produced in various shapes, with fewer protruding teeth than normal wood rasps.

By dividing the new shape into four parts once again, it was much easier to round it off. The vertical lines helped in the operation, where one proceeds one quarter at a time until completion – imagine many arcs of circumference placed between the two vertical lines and converging upwards. I used the 2/16 but the chisel would be more suitable or, even better, the 3/16 upside down.

The shell is a spiral shape which, as it rises, wraps around itself and becomes thinner. The spiral line starts from the opening below, climbs in ever tighter coils and ends at the pinnacle above. I helped myself when marking the shape by observing a real snail. I proceeded by making slight interrupted marks which I then joined with a single line once their accuracy had been verified.

After marking, I took a 9/5 and made the long groove; with a sharp gouge it's quite simple to make a single clear, safe and clean pass. As I climbed, I gradually decreased the depth of the groove until it ended at the top.

To soften the grooves on the edges I used an 8mm chisel, with this I gave the shell its distinctive shape. I removed a little material at a time, trying to accentuate the dividing groove. At the end I finished the work with files – there are many types and goldsmith's files are especially good. With these tools you can



10 The contours of the shell are created with the 2/16 chisel or gouge; with clean and decisive movements, remove the excess wood, then with a 9/5 dig underneath, first to the right then to the left **11** With the rasp it is easier to maintain the parallelism of the parts and the surface is smoother than that left by the gouges **12** The dome of the shell is best created a quarter at a time; cutting many small wedges that join the two vertical lines, wider at the bottom and smaller and smaller as they go up **13** Once again, the rasp helps to make the surface smooth **14** The spiral shell is a line that winds itself in ever tighter coils, starting from the opening and ending at the pinnacle at the top **15 & 16** The secret of carving the spiral groove that leaves no margin for error lies in the sharpening of the gouges and in the lack of fear. Easier said than done. The edges of the groove are then softened with a chisel



17 & 18 With the files the surfaces are smoothed in every nook and cranny; using rotational movements every little roughness can be eliminated **19** To round off the small lower portion of the shell it is better to use the gouge upside down, in this case it is a 2/16 **20** You need a small gouge to define small parts like the shell opening, in this case it's a 2/5 **21** The tail's shape is simple, it ends with a tip and has a convex surface. The base also falls to the left and protrudes to the right; in this way a slight movement is highlighted and where there is movement there is life **22 & 23** To make the body look like it has movement, it's necessary to create protrusions and accompanying depressions. It does not matter where and how extended they are but only that these are soft and smooth

reach the most difficult points, in particular with the round ones you can correct the small errors made in the lines of the parts.

The lower part of the shell goes inwards. To do this I drew a centreline and from this, with an inverted 2/16, I carved the part. The curve of the gouge is about the same as the shell and that helps.

The last operation I did on the shell was to mark its opening. I took a 2/5 and first scored the part, then from below I created a small undercut that brings it out.

Carving the body

The main characteristic of a snail's body is its softness; it takes on the shapes of the surface it crosses and, to make this effect in your carving, you need to make wide and perfectly regular curves. I started from the tail; its shape is quite simple, so it was enough for me to end it with a point and round off the surface. To give an idea of the movement, I cut the left side inside and the right side slightly outside. As you can see, the different shapes of gouges I used depend on the worked surfaces, the chisel is suitable for the concave ones, but this can also be achieved with a gouge. Over time, you develop an affection for your tools and you find your own preferences, even when logic may determine others should be used.

For the rest of the body, without going too far and leaving ample room for personal creativity, I created slight and scattered depressions with accompanying protrusions, the important thing is that these are large and regular. The suitable shape gouge for these operations is a 3 or 7 and the width is 5 or 10mm.

The base, or foot, should preferably not be straight; I created some indentations on them that look soft and not very pronounced.



24 & 25 There are two movements for the cuts for the tentacles: one vertical which cuts into the line that defines the tentacle and the other, with the chisel inclined at 45°, which when joining with the first cut eliminates the segment. The arch that separates the two tentacles is made with the same technique using a 3/8 gouge **26 & 27** The tentacles are highlighted with a small file, separating them at the bottom from the rest of the body, and with the 7/6 the arch is accentuated giving detail to the part **28 & 29** The upper tentacles are the most delicate part of the snail; before dividing them, it is advisable to complete them on the outside. Then, with a Japanese saw, two cuts are made to define the internal sides **30** A very curved gouge is sufficient to eliminate the little remaining wood that still holds the two tentacles together **31** The knife is particularly suitable for this operation because the sliding of the blade does not require the same pressure as the gouge

Carving the body

I started carving the head from the outside, from the two tentacles. With a chisel I notched the line that defines them vertically and, with a subsequent inclined movement at 45°, I removed the excess. For the more fearful carver this can be achieved by working with small gouges and removing a little material at a time, the part begins to get thin and becomes fragile, so caution is needed. The arc shape that joins the two tentacles follows the previous process, change the gouge to a 3/8 but also change your carving pressure.

With a 7/6 I made some small depressions on the sides of the small

arch at the bottom, which I assume is the mouth; with a slight removal of material an evident movement of the body is created.

The upper tentacles are extremely delicate; it is the weak part of the snail, so for this reason before defining them inside I smoothed them outside with a file. To avoid stress, I separated the tentacles with a Japanese saw, two close cuts that follow the lines but do not join. With a 9/5 gouge I eliminated the wood that still joined the two tentacles; this part is close to the body and there is no risk of breakage. The rest is done with a knife, file and a lot of caution.



32 & 33 With the needle files you can get into small places to smooth them and with the abrasive paper you uniformly smooth the surfaces **34** The support is a stand with a hole at the top which allows the piece to be worked from below

Finishing touches

With various files and abrasive papers, P120, 180, 220 and 340 I smoothed all the parts of the snail, reaching the most difficult points; in these small carvings it is important that 'everything' is perfect.

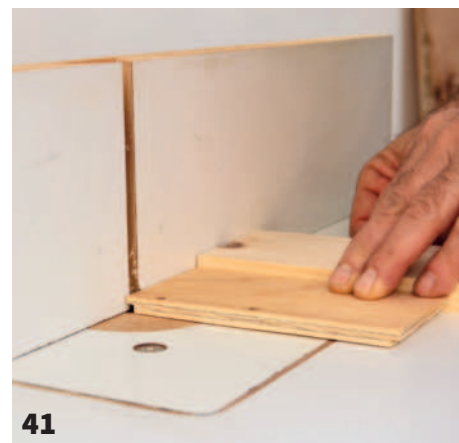
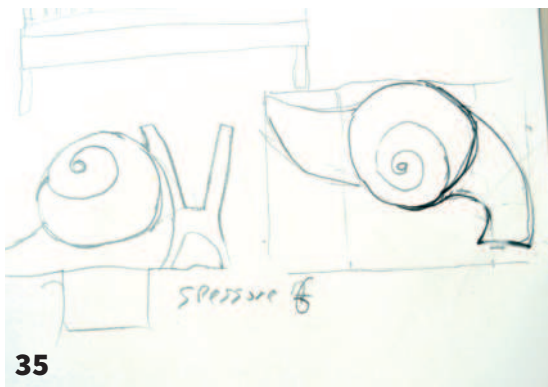
To finish the piece, the snail had to be fixed to another support: this is a simple stand with a hole at the top, where the sculptor's screw is inserted. This leaves the lower part of the carving visible and workable. With the new mount I was able to make a slight depression in the centre of the snail's foot, then I removed the screw and cut the sacrificial piece off and smoothed this part too.

Two more designs

The second snail has its head cocked to the side; I made the drawing first to obtain the measurements of the piece of wood and from the top view I obtained the necessary thickness, this time 60mm.

To speed up the work, I eliminated some initial parts with the saw. The rest of the work follows what was done on the first snail, although this one lacks the cut with the saw that divides the two tentacles.

The third snail has its body bent forward by 90°. This means that the upper tentacles are parallel to the base, the direction of the wood changes and the snail is drawn with the grain no longer vertical but horizontal. To make the head tilted forward I placed the piece in the new support.



The boxes

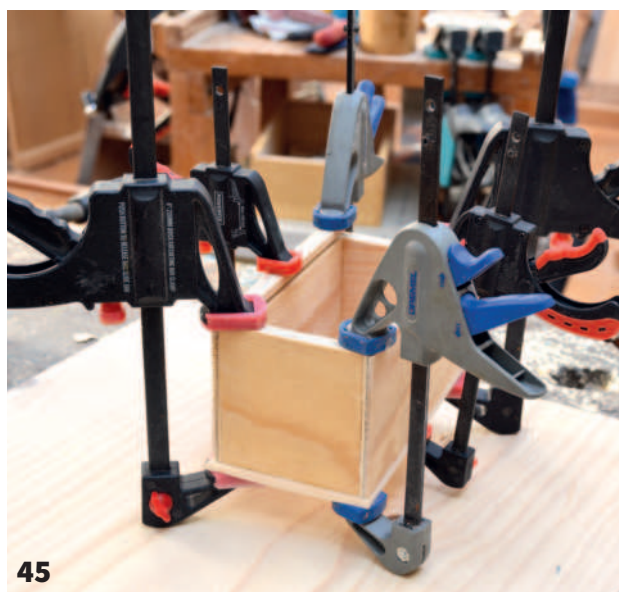
In addition to being beautiful, these boxes are necessary for transportation; the slender upper tentacles of the snails are too delicate to be wrapped or subjected to any other form of packing, the only way is to make rigid boxes with a small margin of movement inside.

The inspiration for mine is quite simple, I copied it from a box I had in the workshop. One of the four sides is 10mm lower, here the lid is inserted which slides into the other three sides and ends with a strip which, in addition to acting as a knob, fills the void. On the opposite side the bottom is glued. For convenience and low cost, I chose 10mm-thick pine plywood for the sides and 3mm plywood for the lid and bottom.

After preparing the pieces, with the router mounted in a table, I made a 5 x 5mm rebate at the ends of the verticals with which to join these pieces together; simple, fast and effective. The lid slides in



35 The second snail's head is bent to the side, which leads to an increase in the thickness required of the piece of wood, from 43mm to 60mm **36 – 38** After cutting out the snail, you can use a hand saw to eliminate some large parts of waste. Photo 38 shows the snail at an advanced stage of processing; its tentacles were split in the initial bandsaw cut **39** With the third snail, the upper tentacles determine the direction of the wood, in this case the grain runs parallel to the base **40** With the new support it is easier to make the head bent forward **41 & 42** During the routing of the sides to make the corner joints, a scrap piece placed at the exit to prevent unwanted chipping. The same pieces are then grooved to insert the lid



43 – 45 After assembling the edges, the box lid is inserted. The strip which acts as a knob for opening the box and reassembles the edge of the box is then glued on. Lastly, the bottom is glued; it is slightly larger and is brought flush with the sides using a plane when the glue has set **46** The snails in their presentation boxes

a channel 10mm away from the edge; the blade of my saw bench has a thickness slightly more than that of the plywood, with it I made the 5mm-deep grooves.

With glue and clamps I assembled the edge parts, making them perfectly flat on the work surface and checking they are square. I then cut the plywood strip that serves as a knob for the sliding opening and then I glued it to the plywood.

Finishing the boxes

After sanding the boxes with a random orbital sander, I gave it only two coats of neutral water-based sealer, interspersed with a light sanding with P220 grit paper. I added a figure of a snail on the boxes that I traced with carbon paper and highlighted with brown acrylic diluted with water.

I gave my daughter the task of telling a story about the snails, she wrote three short pieces which I printed on special cards containing other technical information, naturally signed by the author. ●

Carving Countries





William Barsley concludes his carving adventures with a tour of Iceland

In this series, William Barsley looks back on the journey that inspired his career change from an office worker to a professional woodcarver. In this article William travels to Iceland, meeting local woodcarvers and visiting the national museum to see some stunning medieval woodcarving.



◀ The journey

In this article, we fast-forward two years from the end of my previous trip, which culminated in my exploration of woodcarving in India. Arriving back in the UK following my travels and feeling inspired to learn about woodcarving in my own country, I enrolled on a three-year course in Historic Woodcarving & Gilding at the City & Guilds of London Art School. In the second year of this course, I was awarded a travel bursary to continue my Carving Countries journey and visit Iceland to document and learn about woodcarving there. I was excited to continue the Carving Countries journey but through a new lens. Having now studied carving for a year, my hope was that I would have a much deeper understanding of the methods and techniques being used in other countries.

I travelled to Iceland in the summer holidays, taking my tent and cooker to save costs (being a poor student at the time), but this time leaving the bike at home and hiring a car to travel around the island due to time constraints. What I hadn't fully realised when packing my bags is that, during summer in Iceland, the sun rarely sets given its proximity to the Arctic Circle. I learnt this very quickly during my first night in the tent and made sure that an eye mask was my first purchase. I grew to really enjoy the long days, allowing more time to travel and explore the island. And what a stunning country Iceland is. Although I didn't venture inland, I travelled around the island's main ring road (approximately 825 miles – 1,328km), which follows the coast all the way around and passes stunning waterfalls, glacial lagoons, moss-covered lava fields and steep mountains. It is a country steeped in legends and mythology.

Iceland National Museum

Flying into the capital, Reykjavík, my first port of call was the National Museum of Iceland, which contained some beautiful woodcarvings and would help to provide the context with which I could start to understand Iceland's woodcarving history.

Although not as rich in traditional Nordic carving as Scandinavia, the influence that Viking culture had on Icelandic carving was fascinating and evident to see throughout the island. Iceland was settled in around 874AD by Viking explorers from Norway. They soon established one of the oldest parliaments in the world, called the Althing. Not long after this – in the 10th century – Christianity came to the island and had a huge influence on the island's culture and art. Iceland later came under the rule of the Norwegian and Danish monarchy in 1380, becoming independent only in 1944.

It is said that Iceland's relatively small population means inhabitants can network more easily and have fewer degrees of separation with cultural organisers, allowing for creativity to blossom.

While researching woodcarving in Iceland there was one main artefact on my list to see in the National Museum – a carved church door from the 11th century, said to be the oldest woodcarving in Iceland. The fact this door has survived since the 11th century is incredibly rare, with most timberwork either succumbing to fire or decay, and sometimes used in other construction, given the limited supply of timber in Iceland. This impressive piece is carved in the Romanesque style out of pinewood and sits over 6ft tall. The door has a semi-circular arch at the top and contains two large roundels, with intricate carvings within both. The upper circle contains a fascinating scene said to be a depiction of the medieval Lion Knight saga from Chretien de Troyes, in which the Knight slays a dragon to free a lion who becomes his companion. The lower circle contains a beautiful and almost geometric pattern of intertwined dragons, locked in a fierce fight.

In addition to seeing Iceland's historical carvings, I also wanted to meet some of its modern-day carvers, and I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to meet renowned carvers Jón Adolf Steinólfsson and Sigga A Grund, as well as to see up close the work of Ríkarður Jónsson.



1 A reproduction of the Valþjófsstaður door in its original church location
2 The Valþjófsstaður door at the National Museum of Iceland



2



Jón Adolf Steinólfsson

My friend and fellow woodcarver Alistair Park, based in Bristol, visited Iceland a few years previously and met local woodcarver Jón Adolf Steinólfsson. On his advice, I connected with Jón prior to my trip and arranged to meet him at an exhibition he was holding in the famous Pearl building that overlooks the capital. Jón's work is a wonderful mixture of contemporary sculpture that reflects his cultural heritage, and Nordic mythology that touches on technological changes in society.

He began carving in 1986, studying at a woodcarving school in Iceland and spending three years working with the world-class sculptor Ian Norbury in England. He carves both wood and stone, creating some huge sculptures out of large boulders, inspired by the Viking arts. Jón was full of life and incredibly welcoming, inviting me to see his workshop after the exhibition. I remember the brilliant light that flooded the workshop, with huge windows and an array of different projects on the go. Jón explained that he imports most of the timber he uses, as Iceland isn't known for its forests, with most being cut down by settlers. I was grateful for the time Jón gave me and for the tips he shared for exploring the island and meeting other woodcarvers.

Sigga A Grund

Leaving Reykjavík I set off around Iceland's ring road and about two or three hours out of the city I reached the home of Sigga A Grund, who my tutors had strongly recommended I visit. Sigga had been carving for more than 40 years and is clearly a highly accomplished carver who, like Jón, combines traditional and contemporary styles in her work.

While looking around her studio, it took me a minute to realise that I recognised a lot of the carvings. Many of them were projects I had been carving that year at college. Amazingly, it turned out that Sigga spent time studying woodcarving at the City & Guilds of London Art School back in the 1990s. This goes to show the sculptures and casts at the school haven't changed much over the years, many of them being treasured replicas from sculptures in the V&A and around the world.

When visiting Sigga, her work was on display at a nearby gallery called Treoglist. If you ever find yourself in Iceland, do visit this wonderful gallery, which holds a treasure trove of impressive sculptures and woodcarvings. One such sculpture was Sigga's carving of a pregnant woman on display in the centre of the room. Carving the human figure is no mean feat, and Sigga captured amazing detail and nuances in the piece, making it feel alive. Everyone I had met in Iceland was so welcoming and Sigga was no different. Upon leaving, she suggested I visit a cultural centre on my travels that is dedicated to a famous Icelandic sculptor called Ríkarður Jónsson.

3–5 Jón Adolf Steinólfsson's work on display in the Pearl gallery, Reykjavík

6 Mouldings by Sigga A Grund, the same ones I've been carving at college

7 Sculpture by Sigga A Grund in the Treoglist gallery



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Ríkarður Jónsson

One of the highlights of my travels around Iceland was visiting the village of Djúpvogur. The sculptor Ríkarður Jónsson was born in the oldest house in this village, called Langabúð, which has since become a cultural centre dedicated to Ríkarður's life and work. Born in 1888, Ríkarður was trained as a woodcarver from a young age. What propelled Ríkarður's career was winning a competition to design the new coat of arms for Iceland in 1918, which he had based on one of the best-known Norse king sagas, Heimskringla.

Visiting the cultural centre was like walking back in time. The building felt incredibly old and contained Ríkarður's old woodcarving tools, workbenches, and some of his sculptures. Ríkarður produced a huge quantity of woodcarvings throughout his career but was also very well known as a leading portrait artist in Iceland at the time, with many still surviving on gravestones.

At the end of my busy two weeks travelling Iceland, I felt enchanted by the country and have very fond memories of its welcoming people, stunning scenery, impressive natural phenomena, and of course, its woodcarving history. It was inspiring to see the passion of those continuing the country's woodcarving tradition and it was particularly special to meet Sigga, who had trained at the same art school as me in England, showing that geography shouldn't be a barrier to following your dreams.

Iceland was the last stop (so far) of my Carving Countries journey. Next time, in the final article of this series, I'll reflect on what I learnt on the journey, how this influenced my decision to re-train as a historic woodcarver, and what I have gone on to do since. ●

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**Guest editor Steve Bisco creates
a Tudor Gothic wainscot panel**

Carve Alan Denham's dragon mirror

**Zoë Gertner carves a garden trug
in boxwood**



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The Gold State Coach

As the nation prepares for the coronation of King Charles III, we take a look at the ornate carriage that will play an important role in the event



PHOTOGRAPHS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

The Gold State Coach is an iconic symbol of the British Royal family; it has been used at every coronation since 1821 as well as other high-profile events, such as Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee pageant in 2022. The coach was commissioned on behalf of George III and was built in 1762; it was designed by Sir William Chambers and constructed by Samuel Butler. The first coronation it was used for was that of George IV. Weighing around four tonnes, the coach has to be pulled by eight horses and is too fragile to move above walking pace.

It is made from wood covered in a thin layer of gold leaf, with a richly upholstered velvet and silk interior. The eye-catching carvings made by Sir Joseph Wilton include three cherubs – representing England, Scotland and Ireland – and four large triton figures above the wheels. The roof is framed by eight gilded palm trees, while the four corner trees are decorated with symbols of Britain's victory in the Seven Years War with France.

The coach is kept on public display at the Royal Mews, the stables of Buckingham Palace. For information about visiting the Royal Mews, see: www.rct.uk/visit/the-royal-mews-buckingham-palace





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