

# THE WOODCARVERS *Gazette*



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Andrew Thomas

Archie Miles

Jon Mac & Chris Grant

Donna Menke

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The One Oak Project

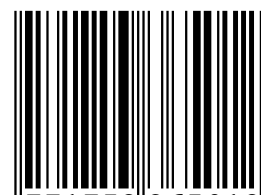
The MaChris Knife

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Cello by Andrew Thomas

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# NOTICES

## BWA Membership Renewal

This is an early reminder that membership renewal fees for 2014/5 will be due on 1st June. Payments should be made to your Regional Leader or to the BWA Membership Secretary. Cheques are preferable because they provide better 'visibility' to everyone concerned.

A renewal form will be included with the Summer issue of The Woodcarvers Gazette. Alternatively, you can print off a renewal form from the website: **[www.britishwoodcarversassociation.co.uk/join-us](http://www.britishwoodcarversassociation.co.uk/join-us)**

In order to save money on postage, no renewal notices or reminders will be sent out (except the renewal form included with the Summer issue of The Woodcarvers Gazette).

Please note that £10 Capitation (money returned to Regional Groups/Clubs for local use) will not be paid for memberships renewed after June 30th.

## National Council Motion for AGM Overseas Members

It is proposed that carvers from outside of the UK are allowed to join the BWA as full members. The membership fee for foreign members would be £30, at present to be paid via PayPal (for currency conversion) and would not attract capitation due to the high postage costs for sending The Woodcarvers Gazette abroad. They will also not be covered by the BWA insurance policy.

Proposed by Jason Townsend (No. 4286) and seconded by Mark Davis (No. 3294). Any opinions or comments are invited.

## BWA AGM 2014 17th May

The AGM this year will be hosted by the Shropshire region and will be held at the Mary Webb School, Pontesbury, Shropshire.

Please see the the application form and programme included with this issue of The Woodcarvers Gazette.

# EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Spring 2014 issue of The Woodcarvers Gazette. I hope that you enjoy this issue and that there is something of interest to everyone. I am aware that this issue is weighted quite heavily towards carving knives and hopefully I will be able to redress this with the next issue with some articles on gouges and chisels.

There are two supplements included with this issue: A programme and booking form for the AGM and a voting form for the post of BWA Membership Secretary along with the credentials of the two candidates. You can cast your vote by post or by handing your voting form in at the AGM.

Over the past few months I have been thinking about why there are so many carvers in the UK and why comparatively few of them are members of the BWA. When I am carving, it tends to be something that I do on my own, is it therefore because many see carving as a solitary pursuit? Even so, I'm sure that being part of a regional club and national association would be of benefit to most. Maybe it is the advent of the Internet becoming so ubiquitous that stops people seeking out membership? There are many websites like [www.deviantart.com](http://www.deviantart.com) where you can get a critique of

your artwork and social interaction. There are also the GMC forums on [www.thewoodworkersinstitute.com](http://www.thewoodworkersinstitute.com) as well. For me though, I like to be part of a group. Perhaps some national projects will help to bring together BWA members and swell the ranks.

On that note, I have devoted a page of this issue to a project to commemorate the start of World War I. I hope that this doesn't offend anyone, I just thought that as an association we ought to do something to remember the sacrifices that were made 100 years ago. I think that the size of the carvings should make it inexpensive and it shouldn't take up too much of anyone's time.

As always, do let me have your feedback on anything that I have written or anything included within these pages. Your comments are always welcome and highly valued.

The Summer issue of The Woodcarvers Gazette should be published at the end of May.



*Jason Townsend*



# OUT & ABOUT



During a walk around the fantastic historic town of Lavenham in Suffolk, I came across this house called 'Carvings', which was decorated with woodcarvings around the entrance. Have any members decorated the exterior of their homes with woodcarvings?

By The Editor

## A World without Trees

Famous landscape paintings have been recreated without trees by an Edinburgh University scientist Dr Iain Woodhouse. Here he has removed trees from Constable's *The Haywain* to draw attention to the value of woods and forests.

He hopes his work will highlight the threat of global deforestation. Quoting from BBC News, he said: "It is crucial that trees do not disappear from our landscapes." He added: "Trees are a vital global resource, providing fuel, shelter, clean water and food for many species including people, and helping to maintain a healthy atmosphere by harvesting carbon dioxide." You can read his blog here:

<http://forestplanet.wordpress.com/2013/01/08/imagining-a-world-without-trees/>

By The Editor



The Haywain by Constable

## BWA Hamlet Wood

Members of BWA Hamlet Wood from Maidstone in Kent will be representing the BWA again at the **The South East Woodworking & Power Tool Show** on 7/8 March 2014. Do go and visit them!

Hopefully we will have some photos and news from that event in the next issue

By The Editor



What a stark landscape Britain would have without trees... What would we carve from...

# From Paperknife to Polar Bears

After Christmas I spent some time watching Wood Carving Videos on the computer. Most of them were pretty rubbish but one which attracted my attention was Don Dailey's demonstration of how to carve a letter opener with a "roughing out" knife. His instructions on how to use the knife (and how NOT to use it) were excellent and inspired me to have a go as I have one of these knives which until now I hadn't known how to use properly. Instead of a paperknife I opted for a small project (with a reasonably long deadline!) of making a polar bear ornament for next year's Christmas tree.

Having found a suitable piece of lime in the cupboard – I drew (freehand) a polar bear on one side of it, put on my safety gloves, and got cracking. It all took a bit of time because I was unfamiliar with handling the tool. I soon realised I needed the outline of the polar bear on the other side and quickly traced it and transferred it. Once roughed out with the knife (see below) I thought it might have been easier and quicker to rough it out using my Proxxon motorised carver.



So I quickly traced the polar bear on to the other end of my piece of lime and roughed it out with the power tool. This was a noisy operation and not as quick as I had expected but it did save time and manual effort. On the down side it left gouge marks which were hard to eliminate and accuracy of cuts on such a small item was difficult. (see below)



From here I began to shape the bears. Soon I found having them attached to the

blank was an inconvenience. (see below)



Bears detached I carried on with the moulding and sculpting with the knife. Unbelievably for such a little project it took me altogether (from the starting point) over 30 hours to get to the stage pictured below.



More hours later I got them to nearly finished as shown in the following image.



At this stage I had a little reassessment of the work in hand and made the decision to leave the bears "stylised" without detailed noses, paws, eyes and ears (too difficult) and not to sand smooth, leaving them with a tooled finish (with hindsight this may not have been not the best decision because it left me with a bumpy surface to mark the fur with a small V-tool). I hate using a V-tool because of the difficulties of keeping it sharp – after this exercise and a few struggles my sharpening/honing technique had improved!



Next question: The Finish – Do I opt for oil, wax, gesso & acrylic paint or something else?

By Janet FR

## The Solway Woodcarvers

The Solway Woodcarvers club has decided to leave the BWA at this time, so there is going to be one less regional group in the North of England.

I believe that their feelings were that they were a bit too far away from most of the events that other regions take part in and the BWA insurance doesn't cover a club's tools or premises against damage.

Any individual member of The Solway Woodcarvers are most welcome to be a member of the BWA still and maybe the club as a whole will re-join the BWA again in the future.

In the meantime, on behalf of the BWA I would like to wish them well in all their endeavours and hope that they all carry on carving!

By The Editor



March 21st is World Wood Day - a celebration day organised by the International Wood Culture Society. I am not aware of any events in the UK but I'm all up for celebration our wood culture!

Here's a link to their website if you fancy a look: [www.worldwoodday.org/2014/](http://www.worldwoodday.org/2014/)

By The Editor





# CENTENARY OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

This year marks the centenary of the outbreak of hostilities in World War I. It is one hundred years after the start of the bloodiest conflict the world has known. Across the country, many events will mark the occasion in order to remember the fallen and the great sacrifices that were made. Find out more by going to [www.1914.org](http://www.1914.org)

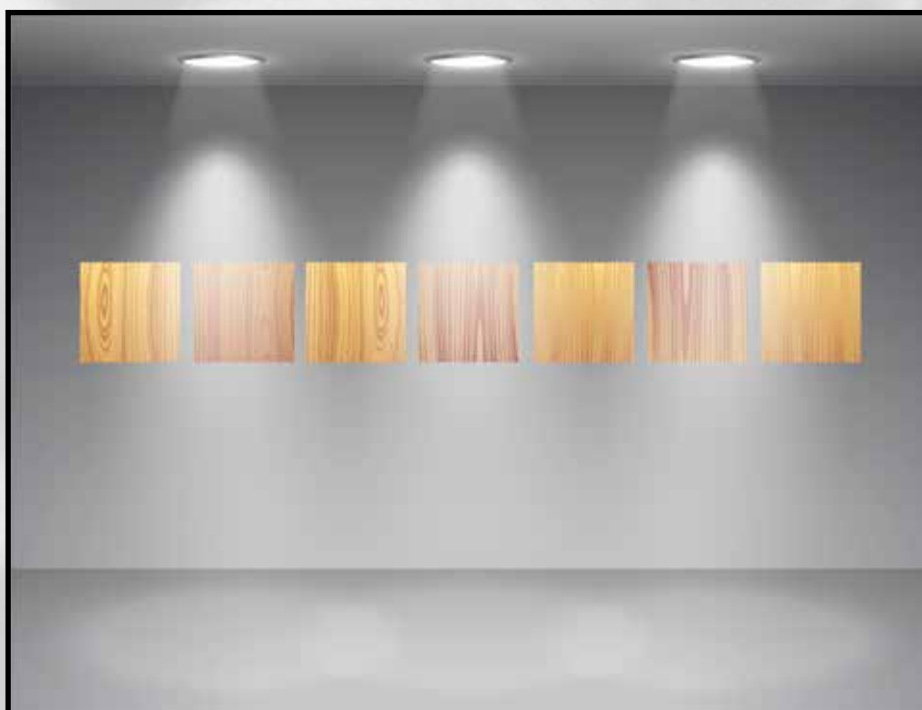
I would like to propose a national BWA carving project to mark the occasion - A commemorative project to mark the First World War Centenary.

In order that the project is accessible to as many members as possible and to get as many carvings in the project as possible, submissions for the project will be small relief carvings, with the aim of mounting them all on a display together.

- The carving can be from any kind of wood, not just Lime
- The carving blank must measure 100mm x 100mm x 10mm, this is so that it is inexpensive to post to me to put the project together. You can post it recorded second-class delivery as a large letter in a padded envelope with a layer of cardboard covering each side, this should be about £3.
- A carver of any skill level can submit a carving as long as you are a BWA member. Even if you can only manage to relief carve a simple poppy or if you want to practice letter carving to carve 'World War I' or something like that.
- Once you have completed your carving, please post it to me 'Jason Townsend, 66 Wisbech Rd, March, Cambs, PE15 8EF'
- Submit as many carvings as you like
- Group/Club submissions are welcome, if you want to tell a story across several carvings

The aim is to have the carvings on display (possibly permanently) in a national public space. Please offer any suggestions that you may have about this. I shall attempt to get funding to remunerate each submission for postage costs and possibly a contribution to your time/wood but remuneration may not be possible unless I can find funding from somewhere. There may be a competition and prizes but I can't promise that yet. This project is not about finding a winner but trying to produce a large piece that we can exhibit and use to mark 100th anniversary of the tragedy of the first world war.

By The Editor



Artist's impression of a part of the project on display



Some images for inspiration



# BWA Essex

Our meetings at Mountnessing Village Hall are going well. The hall is a considerable improvement on the previous one being warmer, larger and with better windows/lighting. Storage of items is a bit tight but we are managing. Fortunately although the car park is used by many people on Sundays it's big enough for all of us and so far it has not been a problem getting in or out at any time.

The hall is a little more expensive to hire than the previous one but we are getting average attendances of around 25-35 so this should be manageable. All in I all a very nice venue to attend and nice people as well....what more could you ask?

Our meetings in Westcliff Monday meeting in September with are also going well. If you have never made it to Westcliff I can tell you it's a well-lit, delightfully warm and welcoming venue.



A full house at Mountnessing in November 2013

A classic rugby tableau in lime by Ted Green



By Ken Veal



An industrius meeting at Westcliff in September 2013

## TIPS

A Rapid Rasp: To reach difficult areas in a carving, take the blade from a Ceramic Tile Handsaw, break one of the ends off, then gently bend the blade to whatever shape is needed. It gets into lots of tight spaces.



By Bob Preston



The main problem with some knives is that the part of the blade the goes into the handle (the tang), is too short - less than 25mm and is only held in with glue. When you stick the point of the blade into the wood you are going to carve and then pull the knife back the blade may loosen and come out. The remedy I have used is to drill the blade and put a brass pin through, glued and peened over to stop it coming out.

By Roland Laylock

# An Interview with Donna Menke

Donna Menke is the author of *The Ultimate Band Saw Box* book and has contributed many articles to American woodworking magazines.

## **How did you get into woodcarving?**

I think of wood as another art medium. As an artist, I have run the gamut of media from pencil to oils, and clay to metals- and I have found each one to be an interesting challenge. When I saw a display of carvings it seemed to be something I could do, and so I started working with an Austin, TX carving group in 1995, and just kept on learning and carving.

## **What is the best tip you could give someone starting out in woodcarving?**

Take some classes, read some books, and don't get too excited about getting all the tools on earth. Granted that some of the finest carvers have many, many gouges and knives, it is a fact that if necessary they could do with a handful of tools. When you take a class notice what tools the teacher uses most often, and then buy one of those. For most every project I use 3 gouges (1/8" #9, 3/8" #7, 3/4" #3) and 2 knives (one hefty and one fine- both razor sharp), but I have a few others for the tricky parts.



Naïad in Butternut

## **What is your favourite wood to carve?**

Basswood is by far the easiest wood to carve with hand tools, but I have enjoyed the beautiful colors in Butternut, walnut, and cherry too. Basswood is great if you are going to paint your piece, but for a natural finish the highly figured and colorful woods are best.



Emily in Mahogany

## **What is our favourite piece that you have carved so far?**

That is difficult to say, because I like all of them, but not a one is as good as I would like it to be. When I look at my completed piece I usually want to start all over again to get it better. So I like the 'Emily in Mahogany' piece, but think I could have worked on the anatomy better; and the 'Naïad in Butternut' pleases me from some angles, but not from others. I am currently very happy with the 'Wren in My Hand' carving because it was very difficult to make both the bird and the hand. I especially like the positioning of the hand so that it is supported on the base just at the one knuckle. That looks good.

## **Where do you draw inspiration from?**

Nature. I always think that I am not very creative, because I am just copying



Carving on the Alaska Woodcarving Cruise in 2008

nature. Whether it is a cute chipmunk or a beautiful butterfly, I want to be able to reproduce it in wood with as much skill as I have. Other woodcarvers have been very inspirational too. I study their works and try to make my pieces so as to live up to their standard.

## **Where do you do the majority of your carving?**

My favorite carving spot is in my art studio. It was a bedroom, but now it is 'a room of my own'. The light is good from big windows, and the stereo is near to hand. I have a workbench that is big enough to spread out my tools, and a comfy chair to sit in. I can spend hours working there in complete comfort and peace- and have no idea where the time has gone. I also have a bench in the



Eastern Swallowtail Butterfly





Torpid Hummingbird

basement where I keep my power tools and dust collection. I prefer hand carving but sometimes you just need to use power.

**What is the best woodcarving event that you have been to and why?**

That is an easy question to answer- the International Woodcarvers' Congress, in Maquoketa, Iowa. I attended the Congress in Davenport in 2001 as a student. It was so exciting and inspiring to see all the wonderful carvings and to take classes from some first-rate instructors. It was also encouraging to do quite well in the competition. Imagine my delight, 10 years later, when I was able to teach

there! I instructed for 3 very enjoyable years in a well organized and well run venue. What could be better than that?

**Why do you carve wood?**

I love to work with wood. Both my grandfather and father had shops in their basements in Massachusetts, and so it just feels right to have one too. I like to make things with wood, like the two harps I've made and the boxes I have made with the band saw. Carving is an extension of this essential comfort with working in wood. Wood is not very expensive and it carves relatively easily, but it also has a certain permanence about it. I like to challenge myself with projects like the butterflies where it is wood- and looks very like a real butterfly. That is fun.



Peeking Mouse on Swiss Cheese with a Purpleheart base

**Do you remember the first thing that you carved?**

Yes, although it was not very good. In my dad's shop I found a piece of scrap pine board 2x6x10" long. It had a small knot in it and to me it looked like a fish's eye. I worked for days hacking with a dull pocket knife at that wood to give it the shape of a fish. It didn't look much like a fish, and I was discouraged. Once I understood about proper woods, tools, and techniques I realized that I had attempted a practically impossible job. Now, 50 years later and with a bit more experience, I'll bet I could make a much better fish carving.

For more information about Donna, to purchase one of her instructional DVDs or to see more of her work, please visit: [www.woodworks-by-donna.com](http://www.woodworks-by-donna.com)

By The Editor



**21 March  
International Day of Forests**

March 21st also the International Day of Forests, promoted by the UN. Again, I'm not aware of any events here in the UK that might be relevant but the more we can promote the value of forests the better!

Here's a link to their website if you fancy a look: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/international-day-of-forests/en/>

There's a good infographic on the website which might be worth a look.

By The Editor



## ~ A Tree from a Tree ~

### The story of the One Oak project



Some time in the year 1788, an acorn fell to the ground in the estate of Blenheim Palace, in Oxfordshire. Nobody noticed.

222 years later, that acorn had grown into a mature oak tree 24 metres tall and weighing over 14 tons. In 2010, the story of its afterlife began, thanks to the work of an organisation called Sylva.

The Sylva Foundation is a charitable trust based in Oxfordshire, supporting forestry science, promoting trees and their management to the public, and encouraging the production and availability of home-grown timber. Its director, Dr. Gabriel Hemery, had the idea of using an oak tree to further the foundation's aims by working directly with school children and the public, and at a series of national exhibitions. It was named the One Oak Project.



Planks in the sawmill. The red outline defines the piece selected for the One Oak carving

His Grace the Duke of Marlborough, whose home is Blenheim Palace, kindly allowed the felling of the tree in January 2010. The first product made from the

felled tree was actually firewood from the smaller branches. Then the wood chips from the felling were bagged to be used for bioenergy. The trunk was taken to a nearby sawmill and cut into planks for use in making numerous products including chairs, doors, ornaments, sculptures, wooden spoons, printing blocks, and beams for housing. To achieve this, students and experienced carvers from around the country were invited to contribute their skills. Some of the wood was also made into charcoal. First off the mark was Brian Eastoe, our Ox & Bucks tutor, who carved a massive acorn from one of the branches.

In 2010 my carving of Blenheim Palace had been on display at Art in Action, one of the country's top showpieces for painting, sculpture, glass, woodwork, textiles, ceramics, metalwork and jewellery. Gabriel from the Sylva Foundation noticed it and asked if I would participate in the One Oak Project by carving an image of the tree using one of the planks.



Having selected a plank some 48 x 60cm in size, weighing 11 kilos, I first had to decide whether to represent the tree in summer or winter. As anyone who has attempted to carve trees will know, a major challenge is to render the foliage realistically without carving every single leaf. A winter scene would bypass this problem, but it would create another – how to carve the hundreds of small branches and twigs, many of which would be too delicate to stand proud of the background with no support. (Oak is a

coarse-grained wood not conducive to delicate carving.) So the decision was taken to represent summer.



A recent photograph was used to sketch the design. The outline and details were then transferred to the wood by way of carbon paper. A router was used to remove the wood down to the 'ground line' outside the outline of the tree.

Traditional woodcarvers' chisels were used to shape the tree, but when it came to the leaves, a different means of rendering the detail was adopted. Using a Dremel drill with a small dental burr enabled me to shape the leaf masses with greater intricacy and speed than if I had relied on chisels alone (Fig. 6). At times I felt this work might almost qualify me for dental practice, but none of the Ox & Bucks woodcarvers was willing to take up my offer to try out my skills! Finally, I made a small steel punch of a leaf and applied it over the surface of the leaf masses to give the whole tree a uniform finish.



As the work progressed it became increasingly apparent that the wood had not fully seasoned before I had begun, despite several months in a drying kiln. A large crack developed through the centre of the plank. Our Ox & Bucks tutor, Brian Eastoe, used his sixty years of experience in woodcarving to fix the problem by splicing in two dowels across the top and bottom of the wood to hold it together. On completion of the carving we then



filled the visible cracks with a mixture of oak dust (conveniently saved from the Dremel exercise) and PVA glue. It did the trick – see if you can spot the cracks!



Learning by doing: a young enthusiast at Art in Action helps with the tree

The oak tree carving was used in educational projects and the carving was demonstrated at the 2012 Art in Action exhibition (see above). It was then exhibited at the Royal Botanic garden in Edinburgh. It has finally returned to its original home in the Blenheim Estate, where it will be on exhibition to the public. Let us hope it will enjoy at least another 222 years there.



The finished carving

By Terry Hardaker

## BWA Lancashire Xmas Jacobs Join

In December, BWA Lancashire had their Christmas Jacobs join, where members submitted carvings into our annual competition. This year the rules were 'any carving not seen before in one of our competitions!' which attracted 11 entries. In previous years we have asked

for set pieces but abandoned this after requested leaf carvings one year and only attracting 5 entries!



We score the competition by asking all present to mark down which of the entries should be 1st, 2nd and 3rd - then using a complicated mathematical formulae, we allocate points based on the results! They are judged purely on what the viewer sees rather than technical specification, and all the entries were very well received.

The winner was Mick Sellars with his lovely green man, and only 2 points behind was Dave Griffin with his ornately pyrographed snipe, followed by one of our newest members in third place Travall Towries with a beautiful love spoon.



Added to the fun of the competition was a table laden with pies, sausage rolls, sandwiches, cake and trifle, lemonade and crisps, and hopefully a good time was had by all!

By Sarah Lawrenson

## BWA Rockingham Forest 'Twigs'

The new club based in Bedfordshire, has continued to meet regularly on Friday afternoons, and members were challenged to try to carve heads. Not the easiest thing to do, especially for beginners but everyone tackled this with enthusiasm. Everyone started with the

same sized piece of wood, but the results showed vast variations. Even though some 'heads' were not totally finished to the individual's satisfaction, everyone was willing to have their masterpieces photographed. I think they all did very well and, hopefully, they will feel able to tackle future models which include faces. No longer will they have to shy away from taking on such challenges.



By Barbara Beard

## 25 years and not out!

Ron Burn has been a member of the British Woodcarving Association for 25 years. Mr Burn was one of the original founder members of a local group at this time and which continues to this day. Introduced to wood carving and wood turning by his grandfather nearly 80 years ago, Mr Burn has continued to practice these crafts since. Mr Burn is an integral member of this local group sharing his skill, knowledge and expertise to carvers from novice to expert.

As well as being made an honorary member (local group), Mr Burn was presented with original oil on canvas painting of the classroom and local group members. This brilliant painting was completed by one of our members Karen Pittaway.



By Mick Kitchen

# An Interview with Archie Miles

Archie Miles is a master photographer who has captured the beauty of trees and woods on camera for many years. He is the author of many books, notably *Silva* and *The Trees that made Britain*.

## **Why did you choose trees as the subject of your photography?**

It wasn't so much 'choosing' trees to photograph, more a subject that evolved from my other landscape work. Back in the mid 1990s I could see that trees were increasingly becoming key elements or dominant features in the landscapes I was shooting. I had a rudimentary knowledge of British trees, but wanted more information. I looked for a book to give me all I sought, but couldn't find one. So, I devised a book called "Silva", a cultural overview of British trees, that was published in 1999, and that seems to have mapped the last fifteen years of my life in the world of trees. There are so many stupendous trees out there that I never run out of inspiration.

## **Do you have a favourite photograph of a tree that you have taken?**

Difficult question, there are so many to choose from. The ancient yew at Linton, on the Gloucestershire/Herefordshire border, is an absolute cracker. I'd visited several times and never quite found the light I wanted (the dense, dark canopies of yews make them very difficult to photograph anyway). Then, one day, heading home from Gloucester, with the sun setting I thought I'd give it another look. The low evening light striking the old bole made it glow warm and orange – the sort of colour that only lasts for a few minutes. In fact many people think I've slapped a filter on the camera or manipulated the image in Photoshop to get the remarkable colour, but it is totally natural.

## **What has been your favourite location for photographing trees?**

I suppose that since most of my tree photography has been within the British Isles I should choose a British location, but after the trip of a lifetime last year to see the great trees of California I'm going to have to plump for the bristlecone pines, over 11,000 feet up in the White Mountains on the California/Nevada border. These are the oldest living things in the world – many are over 4,500 years old, and 'Methuselah' (the oldest) is over

4,700 years old.

To be alone in these groves at daybreak is a deeply moving, reverential experience; to walk among these truly astounding, incredibly ancient trees, sculptured by millennia of ice and gales, that have survived in one of the most challenging and extreme environments in the world.

## **What do you think it is about working with wood that people find so appealing?**

I think working with wood is a way of returning to our roots. Prior to the 20th century wood of all kinds was fundamental to survival, but this was slowly edged out by the increased use of steel and plastics and alternative power sources, so that most of us have forgotten the significance of wood, lost our feel for it. However, I do believe that it is locked away inside most of us waiting for a release trigger. Our elder daughter's boyfriend, a confirmed city boy all his life, started to visit us here in rural Herefordshire a couple of years back, and very soon he wanted to be in the orchard pruning or doing a bit of hedge maintenance. His latest passion, after visiting Barn the Spoon in London, is carving spoons. One of the most enjoyable experiences I've ever had was doing a week-long chair making course with Gudrun Leitz in the woods close by. I found that I was completely absorbed all day long and completely and utterly exhausted by the end of each day, but I have a wonderful chair to show for it.

## **Do you have a favourite tree near to where you live?**

The two remarkable trees that are probably closest to home (within about 500 yards) are a huge old walnut that was once laid into a hedgerow, and has grown up twice to create three stems – a difficult tree to age, but at least 200 years I'd say. In the bottom of the valley there's a splendid old ash pollard, again probably in excess of 200 years old. At the bottom of our orchard there are four splendid oaks in the hedge line, all about 12 feet



Archie with the Moccas Ash

in girth, and also around 200 years old. These are very special – I have observed them throughout the seasons and loved them for the last 24 years.

## **Do you think that we should be doing more to support trees and forests?**

Certainly the groundswell of opinion in recent years, particularly when we were at risk of losing public access to so many of our woods and forests, shows how much these places mean to us. Protection of individual ancient and heritage trees is a continuing concern, with little or no legislation to protect these historical and cultural green monuments. The government needs to wise up and give them the same level of protection as other scheduled ancient monuments.

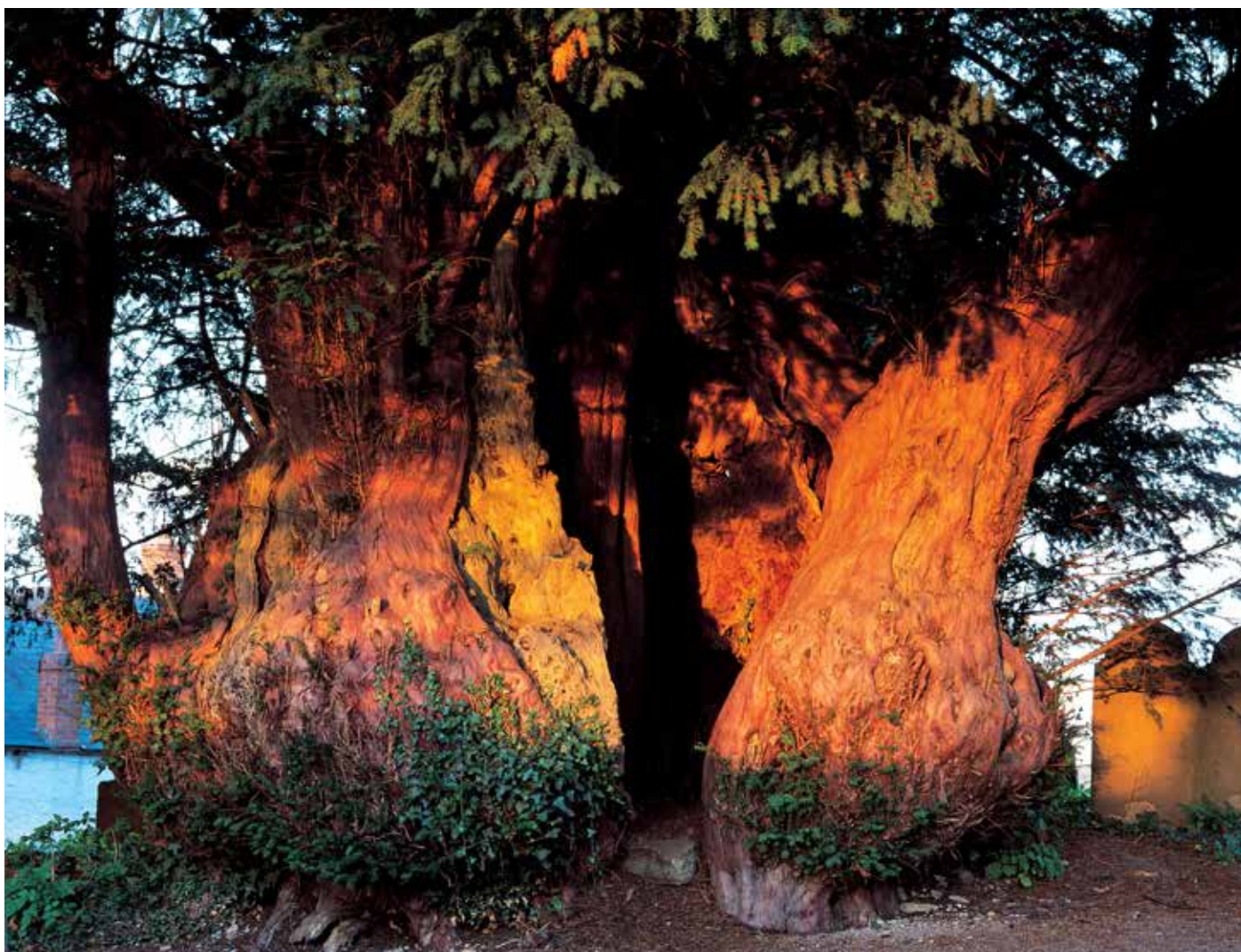
## **Can more be done to protect our woodlands from storms like those that much of the UK has recently experienced?**

Increasingly violent and extreme weather patterns seem to be a feature of our climate more and more these days. It is very difficult to actually protect woodland from the elements and usually the worst damage is seen in monocultural plantations where the domino effect often flattens great swathes; so perhaps mixed species woods, even with conifers, offers a better future. Good woodland management in other woods to remove damaged or dead trees, which will take out healthy neighbours when windblown is another positive angle. I am sure foresters will have a whole raft of suggestions, but ultimately I think we ignores climate change at our peril.

## **Do you have any treasured carved wooden items in your home?**

I own a beautiful olive ash wooden bowl with a lid, that was turned for me by a





The Linton Yew

Photo (c) and courtesy of Archie Miles

lovely man called John Bennison. We had lost a big ash tree from the corner of our land, largely because the power company had trenched right through several large roots while laying power cables to a new neighbour. I was furious. The tree began to die and had to be felled at great expense (to the power company – I insisted). The slight upside was that we were left with a lot of ash timber. Some was cut into boards, but the large lumps where branches forked were left in the garden. John stopped by one day and asked if he could have them to turn. I obliged, but asked if he might let us have something in return. Over two years later he suddenly turned up at the door with this splendid bowl – a lovely memento of our once magnificent ash tree.

#### **Have you done any woodcarving?**

I have never done any woodcarving, apart from whittling a few walking sticks out of hazel or ash (if that counts), but it is something that I'd like to try my hand at in the future.

#### **What is your opinion on 'flat-pack chipboard' furniture?**

Well, I suppose flat-pack fills a need for someone somewhere, but not for me. I seek furniture, usually old furniture, and often in charity shops or junk emporia, made of solid wood. A year or two back we were in a charity warehouse & we spotted a huge, six-foot high mirror mounted in a solid antique walnut wardrobe door. We didn't need it, but for £5 how could we refuse!

#### **Do you have any anecdotes about encounters you have had whilst photographing great trees?**

I was once photographing a yew tree, for a book, in the far north of Scotland in the garden of Sir Tim Rice's country home – I was there legitimately I must add – but nobody was at home & so I had simply walked in through the gate. Lost in my own little world, composing the picture, checking exposures and just enjoying the mighty tree I was suddenly growled at by the local gamekeeper (who obviously kept an eye on the property when Sir Tim was away). I jumped out of my skin, but managed to placate the chap when I

explained who I was and what I was up to. I have also been asked on several occasions, while photographing trees, if I am Thomas Pakenham. Sometimes I have been very tempted to say, 'yes,' just to see what happens next.

Archie's latest book is **The British Oak**, available from all good book shops and online. To find out more about Archie and see more of his work, go to: [www.archiemiles.co.uk](http://www.archiemiles.co.uk)



By The Editor



2013

On these two pages are some photographs of entries into last year's International Woodcarving Congress in the USA. The photographer Marc Featherly has supplied some of his favourite photos of the competition.

Marc Featherly is a professional photographer with 20 years of daily newspaper experience, now working as University Photographer at Illinois Wesleyan University. He began carving by attending an adult education class put on by the local carving club. He promptly joined the club, having served as vice president and currently as newsletter editor. He began as photographer for the Congress in the mid-1990s and recently became photographer for the Artistry In Wood Show in Dayton, Ohio.

### ***Salmon***

By Donald Lund



### ***Rocking Horse***

By Bruce Burkholder



### ***Raindrop Shirely***

By Donald Mertz







**Hope**

By Jerry Stockbridge



**Daughter Ball Glove**

By Bud Pipher



**The Brawl**

By Chris Hammack

**Blank Page Blues**

By Chris Hammack



**Missing the Point**

By Butch Clark



# An Interview with Andrew Thomas

Andrew Thomas is a master woodcarver who is a regular contributor to Wood Carving magazine among others.

## **How did you get into woodcarving, did it come from anyone in the family?**

My initial introduction to woodcarving came through my earlier work on horse drawn vehicles. My wife and I originally purchased a very old Bow Top Wagon that needed extensive restoration which involved learning both wood carving and turning.



Duet

## **You tend to bleach Lime sometimes, is this one of your trademarks?**

Not an intentional trade mark no, but the light finish is very effective for enhancing the shadows that strike over the surface of certain sculptural forms. It also gives a fine porcelain like effect but still retains the delicate grain pattern through the bleach which I find very attractive.

## **What is your sanding technique and why is it your method of choice?**

My style of work requires a very fine finish by sanding, which shapes, softens and blends all of the details naturally together, to transform the modelled surface into life. Therefore all tool marks and surface blemishes are completely removed with the first grit, which is either 100g or 120g, depending on the size and form of the project. I then dust off the surface thoroughly and brush or pour hot water over it, which raises the grain again allowing the following grit

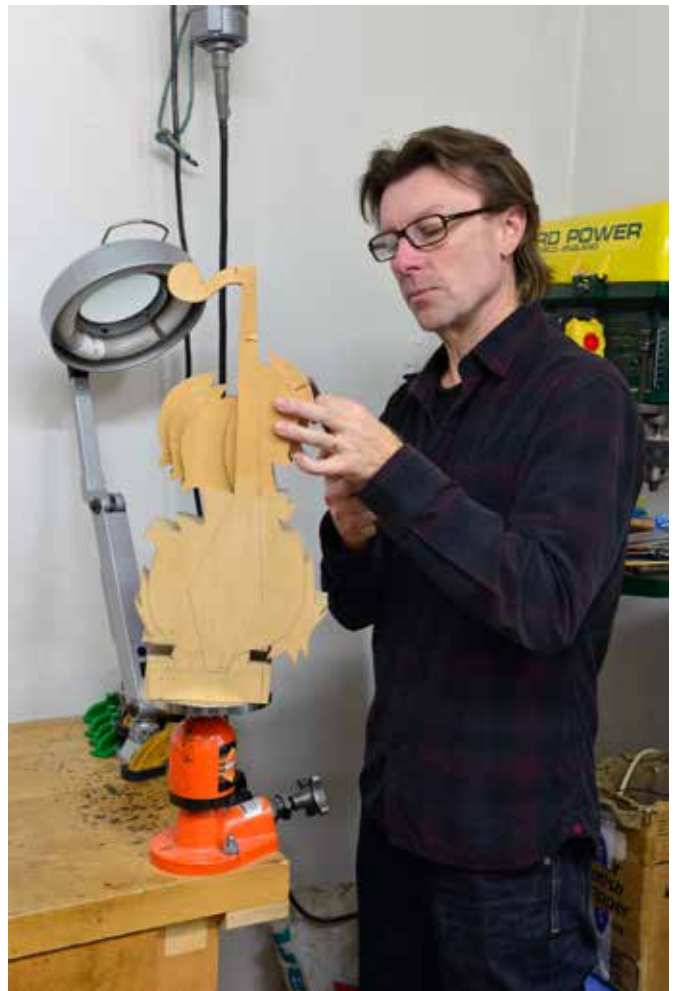
to be worked more easily and effectively. After the initial 100g I then work through grits 150, 240 and 400 repeating the hot water process in between each grit, and use a hair dryer to accelerate the drying process. If I start with 120g I then work through grits 180, 240 and 400. The final abrasive that I use in the finishing process, is a 1200 grit polishing disk, which is used to remove all of the minute surface scratches that are left from grit 400, to bring the surface to a completely perfect polished finish. Festool Platin disks or Abralon disks are very good for this purpose.

## **What is your favourite wood to carve?**

My favourite species of wood to carve are; Lime, American Black Walnut, English Walnut, English Cherry and Tulipwood. All of these have wonderful carving qualities and can be found with very beautiful grain colouring and patterns. If I had to choose just one



Odmedods Expression



that would definitely be American Black Walnut, as this is fabulous to carve, very strong and aesthetically beautiful with its grain colour ranging from dark chocolate and mauve, through to light tan.

## **What is your favourite piece that you have carved so far?**

It's very difficult to choose one individual piece as there have been many subtle turning points during my career, which have opened up fresh challenges and innovative areas to explore, resulting in many pieces that I am proud of. However, I would certainly say that 'Odmedod's Expression', a carving that I designed and made almost 20 years ago, was quite a pivotal moment in the development of my technical and creative skills, so this has to be right up there if I had to choose one.

## **Where do you draw inspiration from?**

Inspiration comes from all areas of life really. A concept soon becomes an internal flow of ideas and forms which I then bring out onto paper to design, balance and problem solve; Sometimes it is a statement that I wish to make through my art, other times I set myself the challenge of trying to interpret the





Lion

'essence' of a subject such as the power of the elements. Occasionally it could be something as simple as a dance pose that I have seen that has inspired me to capture dynamically in the medium.

**Where do you do the majority of your carving?**

I work and teach in a room that I have set up as a studio in the house where I have been living for the past 13 years.

**Do you think that more woodcarving should be on display alongside other works of high art?**

Absolutely! As a medium, wood requires the technique of deconstruction to produce a form, which is highly skilful and takes a lot of practice to become accomplished at. I regularly see the most

beautiful and exquisite carved works which I know must have taken the artist a very long time to produce, not only to execute the subject but the years of practice to gain that level of ability to do so. It is in fact quite ironic really that you can take your original piece, have it cast in bronze and sold through a gallery who would not entertain exhibiting the original work.

**Why do you work in wood?**

I like the density of the medium and the deconstruction process used to shape it, as opposed to soft construction materials such as clay. I love the endless learning process of problem solving various details of the designs to incorporate artistic innovations that can be applied to the medium in many different ways. I like the



Humpback Whale

wide variety of species to choose from with their many different colours and grain patterns, not to mention the tactile surface that is like a hand magnet to the viewer.

**Do you remember the first thing that you carved?**

Yes I do, my first carving which I still have, is a relief of an Angel holding a Dove, in mahogany – I was instantly hooked!

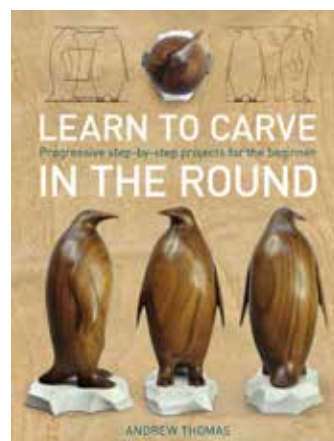
Andrew's book **Learn To Carve In The Round** is available now from all good book shops and online.



I - Spiritual



Serenity



By The Editor

# The MaChris Knife



After my interview with Nic Westermann in the last issue of The Woodcarvers Gazette, extolling the hand-forged knife blade, I thought it would be great to look at some more. Chris Grant is a knifemaker and has produced a knife along with woodcarver Jon Mac, which looks stunning and has an impressive specification.

This MaChris has been in Research and Development for approximately three years. Chris Grant and I have been working closely together to design and make the best possible knife for carving and camp work. I believe we have it in the bag. The MaChris Bushcrafter is a full tang knife, and is made using 52100 bearing steel. This steel is very tough and will not fold or chip in even the hardest of woods. The cutting edge can be kept razor sharp using a good water stone 6000 grit or above, and a light strop on leather with high quality compound. The MaChris has a Scandinavian grind, ideal for carving and skinning. The fine tip allows for the working of tight internal radii curves. The MaChris handle is of a fine ergonomic design that allows for long periods of use without fatigue or blistering. The handle is designed to give a high degree of comfort and deliver maximum power in forward and reverse grips. The design also allows for stable holds with just the small and ring fingers thus allowing a safe grip right at the fine tip of the blade, great for fine carving or skinning.

The overall length of the the MaChris is 8 3/4 inches. The blade length is 4 inches. The width at the spine is 1/8 inch.

The MaChris has a smaller brother we call the MiniMaC. The MiniMaC is a scaled down version and designed for smaller carving work. An ideal carver with a very comfortable ergonomic handle design. The blade has a pin tang and is again made from 52100 bearing steel. The fine tip allows for the carving of tight internal radii curves. And the tip is also fine enough for good quality chip carving.

The overall length is 7 3/4 inches. Blade length is 3 1/4 inches. And width at spine is just a smidge over 1/16 inch.

The knives are made by Chris in batches and to order one, please email Chris through his website **[www.makemethischristh.co.uk](http://www.makemethischristh.co.uk)**

For more information and photos of the knives in action, please visit **[www.spooncarvingfirststeps.com](http://www.spooncarvingfirststeps.com)**

By Jon Mac



The MaChris knife



The MiniMaC knife

I first encountered Jon Mac in 2009. I'd seen Jon's work and asked him what knife he used, we conversed about axes and Japanese laminated steel and it became clear Jon was interested in pursuing high(er) performance tools for his work, perhaps bespoke.

Jon had a few brand knives which he was very generous about, as well as his 'own knife', a multi layered stacked handle with a laminated blade hand forged by Julius Pettersen. Of all the things Jon and I talked about, it always got back to this knife, it was admittedly not perfect, but it just worked for Jon, so we had our starting point.

Jon sent me up this knife (call it a prototype for reference), while the handle was against my preferences at the time, I decided to leave it be as Jon was confident in it. The blade was well made but lacked finesse, I reshaped it more in line with a template that Jon had sent me, in addition to this I tapered the point.

Immediately after this I set about making what would become the first version of the knife, the MaChris No 1, A similar knife to Jon's Pettersen, but built for purpose. To be sure the handle was exactly right, I asked Jon to carve it (got me off the hook). I prepared a blade from 15N20 band-saw steel, chosen because of its keen edge and similarity to the steels Jon was used to using/ sharpening.

My main contributions to the MaChris design have been the tapered point on the original knives (and later the MiniMac), as soon as I mentioned this Jon was dead keen, he loves the fine point for delicate chip carving and we retained that feature on the small MiniMac knife. I also added a reversed 'thumb ramp' to the back of the blade, the spine scallops from the straight back of the blade to the





handle, meeting in a smooth transition. Jon was very happy with this design choice and the comfort it offered. The No.1 was a success, Jon loved the knife and I was delighted that it worked for him.

Job done? - No!

Jon came to visit me in September 2010 and while out in the woods I mentioned making a 'full tang knife for him', based on his design, Jon said 'No. I don't want any blisters'.

So... I had to prove him wrong...

I sneakily made a full tang version of the knife from CS80 steel with birds-eye maple slabs, and sent it down with another blade in silver steel.

The latter quickly became the top performer, even though Jon was initially suspicious of it... I also made another in O1 (which Jon did not think much of!). Much to my delight and surprise Jon loved the full tang knife and it soon became his favourite for everyday tasks and for most carving, I was surprised,

vindicated and motivated to keep going with this knife.

Months later I got some fabulous feedback about the knives and their various steel performances from Jon. He has been a fabulous resource of testing the edge retention and edge strength of different blade steels. His research and testing feedback independently and exactly matched mine! Jon dearly loved the 15N20 and the CS80 knives, but they rolled on hard woods, the O1 fared ok but Jon never got the fine edge he desired and was not particularly impressed with the edge retention.

With a few modifications, the silver steel MaChris became Jon's go-to carving knife, it kept the sharpest edge for the longest time, again he was won over!

Later on I found a source of 52100 ball bearing steel. I had used bearing steel for tools before and used some continental tools made from them and was very impressed. I was very excited to be able to use it, especially for this project. Bearing steel is a relatively simple steel it's alloy allows for a very fine edge which is very strong and tough, often the two don't go together... to my mind it is perfect for woodcarving. I made Jon a small knife blade from the bearing steel and he was delighted, it even outperformed the silver steel... another step forward!



After a discussion with woodcarver friends Patti Landman and Sean Hellman amongst others, Jon decided a smaller, dedicated precision carving knife was needed. He worked with me to make a smaller (slojd type) version of the MaChris, Jon had a very strong idea of the handle proportions (as usual) and the blade shape was to be the same, but smaller and with a tapered point like the No.1 prototypes. He called it 'The MiniMac' In 2012 I finally delivered the final versions of the MaChris Knives to Jon Mac, he has the Final versions of the full Tang MaChris and the MiniMac in 1/8" thick 52100 steel, I harden them to HRC 59 +/-1. We are now totally happy with the final versions of the knives. It's been a lot of fun! We learned a lot. I hope you like the knives.

By Chris Grant

# An Interview with Jon Mac

## **How did you start carving?**

Well, that's a question I've been asked many times, and I'm not too sure what the answer should be. I have, over the years, found great pleasure in being out doors and in the countryside. I have spent much time tramping over Dartmoor and exploring it's wooded valleys and hidden industrial archaeology. I have learned many skills that enabled me to navigate accurately and enjoy my environment in any weather. I served with my local Search And Rescue team ( Dartmoor Rescue Group ) for seven years, where I soaked up technical expertise and added a little personal development to boot. I felt as if I was still missing something. That something was an involvement with nature and art combined. We all have an artistic spark, I wanted to fan mine. The first thing I carved was a rudimentary drinking vessel. I used only a small knife, a Finnish puukko made by H.Roselli, his carpenters knife ( a nice knife ) and one of his axes. I had no hook knife at the time. I think I learned an awful lot carving that vessel; knife holds and how to chisel and plane. Well, the wood was seasoned oak, incredibly tough, the wrong wood for this project, but you live and learn. I went on to carve some fish shaped toggles for my friend Keith's Canadian canoe, and then re visited the kuksa, followed by some spoon work. I had caught the bug. I learned by my mistakes, I've made many, but over the years I have evolved and developed my own style. I have stuck to my original idea that my carving tools should be portable and useful not just for carving

my folk art, but for use around the camp as well. To this day I limit myself to Axe, knife and hook knife. I use the MaChris bushcraft/carver or the MiniMac carver. Super comfortable, efficient, sharp. I sit on a stump and have a stump for my axe work. I keep the whole process as simple as possible, nothing mechanical to hold the work, no chisels or gouges, no shave horses or draw knives.

## **Do you prefer to work green wood or seasoned wood?**

I carve, in the main, green wood. The tools I use are low impact, it's easier on my hands and edge tools if I use green wood. The spoon or kuksa will slowly dry as I carve, the trick, especially with kuksa, is not to let them dry out too quickly.

## **What is your favourite wood to work?**

Ah, that's an easy one. My favorite wood is green Birch. It's an easy wood to carve and has an unassuming quality that suits my simple designs, nicely understated. Birch has been used for treen work in northern Europe for centuries. The carvers that came before me knew a thing or two. The Birch is important to me as it has many uses. The bark is used for firelighting, bark tar can be produced for glueing and sealing. Birch bark vessels can be formed and even canoes can be made. The bark will also give up an aspirin like substance, handy for headaches. Not to mention the sap which can be tapped, reduced in a pot over a fire, to make syrup. The wood, for treen, snowshoes, the list goes on...



## **What sort of things do you prefer to carve?**

I prefer to carve kuksa or noggin, then spoons. I have a unique kuksa design that I like to call my own. Rather than the standard fair, my 'Beaver tail kuksa' sports a broad, thin handle. It's hard to carve, lots of end grain work, but if done nicely, the form flows. I try not to follow the crowd, favouring unique, clean and simple designs. I have designed a Bushcraft/carving knife which is made by my good friend Chris Grant. We call it the 'MaChris Bushcrafter'. Made using 52100 bearing steel. We have sold these to folk around the world. I use this knife for my kuksa carving as it has good reach, a fine tip and most importantly a very unique and comfortable handle, a knife that can transfer both ones power and delicacy to the work. Again, the kuksa is blanked out with an Axe and hollowed with a hook knife. Incidentally, the hook I use was made for me by Nic Westermann. At the moment I am carving a batch of 'Rams head' kuksa.

## **Where do you do most of your carving?**

I can carve pretty well anywhere. I have recently moved home, and I presently have an old stone barn where I can rough out blanks. I can pop a blank into my pocket and take it for a walk, although with the almost constant high winds and rain we've endured recently, I haven't done that for a while. I prefer to carve out doors if possible, under a tree, with a drink and something to eat.

## **What is it about spoons that**



Kuksa and Spoon



### ***makes people enjoy carving them so much?***

I think people enjoy carving spoons because at first look, carving a spoon seems easy. Once your first spoon is carved comes a realisation that there is more to it than meets the eye. To carve a spoon you need to learn how to sharpen, carving will put this skill to the test. I have met many folk who where keen to let me see their bushcraft knives, I can tell you, not many were sharp. I decided to spread the word as much as possible in the bushcraft world about spoon and kuksa carving so as to encourage folk to use their knives well, learn to sharpen, learn new knife holds, create art with the tools they carry into the forrest. To some small extent I have had some success in spreading the word through my blog at [www.spooncarvingfirststeps.com](http://www.spooncarvingfirststeps.com). More and more folk get in touch every week for tips on how to start. It's great. Once you have your first spoon under your belt, you'll soon move onto the next, you may keep the first one, or give it as a gift to a friend or family member. You'll come to realise that wooden spoons have been used by folk throughout history. Wooden spoons have been carved by folk around the world, for every day use and for use in ritual. Some folk have regional designs, with meaning, that they will incorporate into the spoon shape. A spoon from Romania might look very different to a spoon from Sweden, or a spoon from Dartmoor. There is a mind buckling range of spoon designs you can fit into a six inch piece of green wood. If you try it, you'll be hooked.

### ***What is your favourite piece that you have carved so far?***



Applewood Spoons



Ram's Head Kuksa

My favourite piece. Well, to be honest, it's usually the piece I'm working on at the time. Once finished I will leave it for three days or so and take another look. If I still like whatever it is, I'll add it to the list of carvings I think work. I have many designs stored in the memory that I will not re-visit. And a few that I'll reproduce. I work from memory, I can't draw. But thinking about it I'm pretty keen on my Viking longboat inspired ale hen.

### ***Where do you draw inspiration from?***

I draw my inspiration from my surroundings. I live in a beautiful part of the world here on Dartmoor, in the Westcountry (UK). I often wish I was lucky enough to live in a country where wood carving was commonplace, it would be easier to draw inspiration from what has come before. It must be

great to be immersed in design from a young age. It would probably make the process slightly easier too. I try not to look at designs if possible, preferring to make my own way, and learn by my own mistakes and triumphs. I'm self taught and I learn something new every day. I have a supportive partner, Sarah, who has put up with 'Jon droppings' for many years now. I also have a few friends who keep in contact, my friend Ralph Hentall has helped my journey, as well as an ex student of mine, Alan Robinson. I learn a lot from sitting with him and going through issues met along the way. He's a super carver, very prolific.



# An Interview with Chris Grant

## **How did you start carving?**

I studied sculpture in Aberdeen for a few years, and had experimented with wood. I got much deeper into wood when I began a wood carving class in Perth in 2003 run by my late friend and mentor, Michael Provan. He was a Heraldic Woodcarver to trade and the best teacher ever, I learned masses about wood, oiling, but particularly relief carving. Mike started my toolmaking adventures.

## **Do you remember the first thing that you carved?**

In university it was a cityscape on an upturned root (which is hidden away in a loft somewhere)

## **What is your favourite wood to work?**

It's almost impossible to answer! Different woods for different things... I haven't carved in a while, but I enjoy things like boxwood, birch, but I like most woods (and dislike one or two). I have meddled with many, many woods over the years and loved every second that I had to experiment and learn. In regard to knife handles, I can use almost anything, if it's too soft or deeply spalted, it can be stabilized and waterproofed with methylacrylate in a vacuum chamber, so the customer is spoiled for choice!

## **How did you get into making blades?**

In 2003 Micheal Provan gave me some Silver Steel which started it all, I was then given a one day forging demo by master Blacksmith Jake McBride and

back I ran to the shed! And significantly, I had an accident in 2005, in which my left wrist was broken, carving was a struggle, so I delved in to one-handed tools like carving/slojd knives and spoon knives, I hated the ones I bought, so with a plaster cast, I began to grind and heat treat my own blades and I was hooked! And then one day someone wanted to buy one...

## **What is your favourite carving to date?**

Not one of mine for sure! A tie between the work of several friends, I know some real pros and artisans that continue to amaze me.

## **Why would you recommend a hand-made knife over a more commercially-made knife?**

Well, I have carving experience, so I guarantee that I can address comfort, ergonomics and high performance to produce an efficient, balanced tool. Also; I will make you what you want, if you have your own design for a carving knife, great!

I use the best materials, I use a different blade steel than most others for my carving knives, 52100, ball bearing steel, which is not as readily available as other



steels, and it isn't cheap, but it's high performance on wood, first class.

Ultimately I can produce something that will perform better than most. Experience taught me the best hardesses for various blades and I have taught myself to achieve the best standard of heat treatment. It's the most important part of tool/knife making and I am passionate about making it superior. I don't rush my work, I really care about making it the best it can be, and I like to enjoy what I am making.

## **What sort of things have you carved?**

Various things from stylised relief carving of faces to teak hands for feeding birds, to driftwood sculptures. Carving Kuksa got me into knife-carving and my interests were hi-jacked!



By The Editor





## Some more thoughts on Knives

*Further to the interview last issue with Nic Westermann, Roland Laylock has some thoughts on knife construction and who does it the best!*

'The Americans make better knives than we do', what a blasphemy! The number of American knives I have had to repair because of their poor construction is very high for a small club like ours.

If you want a good knife the first thing to look at is the steel it's made of: Chinese, English, French, German, Swiss, Japanese - they all come to mind as first class steel makers.

A large number of modern blades that I have seen are stamped out and ground rather than forged and there is no difference between them and a

good quality hacksaw blade - apart from the cost.

When it comes to hardening and tempering today, a lot of it is automated and no problem unless it's hand forged like the good old days with steel of unknown quality - then as my old foreman would say, practice makes perfect.

When I was taught the art of hardening and tempering it had to be done in dim light, watching for the colour to run up the steel. After that we used to do a hardness test to see if it was just right or there was a thick ear on the way - the good old days! The second is its construction (I like some nice rivets through the blade and handle), if fitted well it will last you a life time; the handle should feel

comfy and fit your hand, remember that you will rotate it in your hand from pushing to pulling and back again, then it is the blade length and shape - these should be down to the type of work done and its delicacies.

As for the Distal taper, as I remember it was more for larger and longer blades like swords and daggers than for small blades. This was more for balance and weight than anything. The Bevel taper is the important one, for the cutting edge has to be sharp but not too sharp, like a gouge. This all depends on what you are going to cut - soft or hard wood, plastic, wire etc.

By Roland Laylock

## BWA North Wales and Borders Christmas Competition 2013

The members of the North Wales and Borders branch of the BWA know what to expect from their annual "bring a plate of goodies" day; lots of good food, good humour and plenty of smiling faces. We also expect the standard of work shown in the entries to be of a good standard, but this year's display exceeded

all expectations (probably why I didn't win). The subject was "motherhood" or "mother and baby", it didn't matter what; human, animal, bird or fish, anything. It obviously caught the imagination as there were some excellent pieces on view.

Bob Breakwell won with his Elephants and Bob Pritchard took second prize with his Kangaroo. Jack gave a prize to the person whose entry has in his opinion shown the most promise for a comparative newcomer, and this year it was awarded to Laurence Clayton; well done Laurence!



Bob Breakwell's winning entry

There was quite a guessing game in progress as to what Bob Pritchard had used as the floor on which his kangaroo stood. Suggestions ranged from shavings to an old doormat that had been cut up. The answer took most people by surprise; it is Shredded Wheat. Wonderful, and very realistic.



Bob Pritchard took 2nd place

Jack had said previously that he would announce the theme of this year's competition after the winners had been decided, and what he had to say had a few more of us saying "I don't believe it". It is to be a "Santa Claus", a Father Christmas; something on a par with woodturning in Jack's view. The instruction to make it as humorous as possible didn't do anything to lessen the shock - I look forward to the results.



Newcomer prize - Laurence Clayton

By Ron Cannell

## ~ Helping Hands ~

### Woodcarving for Children with special needs



Early in 2013 I contacted Harry Tams (BWA North Staffordshire) requesting his support for a special school in Manchester for children with severe learning difficulties.



The project was a wood carving of their school logo – a pair of helping hands. The sculpture is 98cm wide and 28cm high carved from larch. It will be located in the main reception area of the school.



The finish is extremely smooth since touch is very important for these children and for many the only way in which they can access the world.



It is interesting to note the position of the thumbs – the hands can only be two separate left hands. The children in this project need the support of a helping hand if they are to achieve the very best in life. The left hand is, of course, the hand closest to the heart.



Taking shape – a photograph of the hands at the mid way stage.



Nearly finished the hands prepare to leave Harry's garage.



By Matthew Wright

## Carving a Logo

I am a volunteer for my local Nature reserve comprising of flood meadows in the middle of our town. Last year our Volunteer group needed to replace a bridge over a Brook which runs through the reserve. We had great difficulty getting the necessary Insurance cover to do it and probably due to Health and Safety concerns, it took the Insurance Company about 3 months to decide whether we could build it. Fortunately they did not watch us actually do it. It took us several months to complete during which at least one of our members did fall into the Brook and apart from a few sore thumbs and some colourful language we achieved a splendid result without serious injuries.

The bridge was built with green oak which so far seems to be doing well apart from a few minor splits in the wood. When it was finished the Committee could not decide how to mark the bridge to let the public know we had actually built it. The land is owned by the local Council but the work on the reserve is managed by our volunteers and we do all the hands on work.

The reserve is a much appreciated green space in the town and is used for recreation by schools, dog walkers and the general public. Buying a brass plaque was discussed but wording was not agreed upon and anyway we did not think anyone would be able to read what was written on it over time.

To save argument I decided to wood carve our Logo which we use on all our correspondence. I bought the largest piece of green oak I could find when I was at Westonbirt Arboretum and with the help of my woodcarving tutor set to work. The Logo depicts the Town Hall (as the Council own the site), the Brook running through the reserve and the wild flower comfrey which is common on this area of flood meadows.

I realised I had to work in layers so a router was used for the deepest level which was the Brook. Once that was done I carved the next layer which was the Town Hall leaving the highest level, the wild flower comfrey. I did the lettering last of all, 2013 being the year we built the bridge and CBCV standing for Cuttle brook conservation volunteers. I used a weatherproof oil to finish.





I really enjoyed carving the piece especially as I knew it did not have to be perfect because as it was destined to be on a bridge in all weathers and would soon change in appearance. I think I had the easiest job in carving it because the men who actually had to put it on the bridge found it very difficult to fix it. We do have a problem with vandalism on the reserve so it was thought best to put the plaque on the water side of the bridge, so to get it level and permanently attached took some dangerous acrobatics and several helpful onlookers to give advice. I am very pleased with the result and it will be interesting to watch it over time to see how it weathers.



By Gill Deacon

## Production of The Gazette

With the Winter 2013 issue of The Woodcarvers Gazette, I posted a poll on the website [www.thewoodcarversgazette.co.uk](http://www.thewoodcarversgazette.co.uk) asking whether there should be any changes to the way it should be printed.

The options I gave were to have it printed on recycled paper or to keep it the same but drop the lamination on the cover or to go for 'carbon balanced paper'. We didn't have many people vote but the majority in a ratio of 4:1 said that it was fine just the way it is.

If you have any further comments or suggestions on the matter, do please email me on [editor@britishwoodcarversassociation.co.uk](mailto:editor@britishwoodcarversassociation.co.uk)

By The Editor



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# Boxing Clever

There are a lot of wood sculptors out there, many of whom get very little recognition. The photographs below have been emailed around a bit and have been helping to showcase the work of Randall Rosenthal from USA. Maybe we might see an interview with him in the future but for now, here is his carved box of money...



Once the adhesive cured, he was ready to begin carving the block



He slowly whittled it down into an interesting shape



The edges were jagged. What could it be?



Hmm...



This is where the project began looking like the final project



By hollowing out different sections, he was able to create the illusion that it was containing something



He spent hours carefully carving the sides to give the illusion of corrugated cardboard



The effect was incredible



He took a break from the hours of carving to begin adding paint to the piece



He carefully painted what was to be inside of the box: stacks of money



After painting the bills and their details, he began slowly adding color to the cardboard



Cardboard isn't something you can paint on in one sitting, he added light and washed out layers





13  
He was able to carve something with so much depth and texture out of a simple block of wood



14  
The finished product, "Old Money," is incredibly realistic



The project here started with three pieces of white pine he glued together. What he turned that block of wood into is impressive.

By Roland Laylock

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# MEMBERS GALLERY

## **Cat & Mouse**

By Judith Matthews



A John Hillyer project, carved from Lime

## **Jewellery Box**

By Steve Worrall



A great little jewellery box with celtic carvings, carved from Poplar

## **Fantasy House**

By Cherry O'Connor



A charming fairy-style house, carved from Lime

## **Abstract**

By Ted Gordon



An abstract, carved from Mahogany

## **Woman**

By Gerry Guiver



Reclining woman, carved from Lime, with Mahogany base, copper armband and a 6" glass ball



## **Butterflies**

By Ken Griffiths



If you would like to submit one of your recently completed carvings to the gallery for the next issue, email [editor@britishwoodcarversassociation.co.uk](mailto:editor@britishwoodcarversassociation.co.uk) or use the form on the website [www.thewoodcarversgazette.co.uk](http://www.thewoodcarversgazette.co.uk)



### **Relief**

By Jerry Hughes



### **Wedding Lovespoon**

By Jason Townsend



A Lovespoon that I designed and carved for my sister's wedding, carved from Silver Birch

### **Celtic Eagle**

By Mark Gwilliams



The blue background really sets off this Celtic Eagle, carved from Lime

### **The Hunt**

By Ann Lewis



A shallow relief, carved from Lime

### **Woman with Scarf**

By Ted Jeffery



A study of a woman wearing a scarf, carved from Lime and Padauk

There are no special requirements to be featured in the Members Gallery, it doesn't matter what your skill level is, as long as your carving has been recently completed.

## The Gentle Craft

A poet said he'd never see a poem lovely as a tree.  
Much lovelier a tree becomes when to the woodsman's axe succumbs!  
So to his craft we must give thanks for all those lovely carving blanks  
in oak, and lime, and sycamore, that we acquire, and carefully store  
in cupboards deep with shelving wide, in workshops built with care and pride.

We find ourselves, with some unease, coveting our neighbours' trees,  
with restless ear we listen for the raucous sound of the chainsaw.  
So, when some seasonal pruning starts, we're round there with our little carts,  
begging for each useful chunk (and possibly a slice of trunk),  
which we bear home with joyful cry, and put in store, for years, to dry!

But what is all this hoarding for? So why keep all that wood in store?  
The simple answer, I must state, is just the craving to create,  
to take a virgin block of wood and turn it into something good,  
a thing of function, charm or beauty, by using patience, skill and duty.  
Whether for profit or for pleasure, this process gives us things to treasure.

Results are easy to achieve! So come on, roll up each shirtsleeve,  
and work towards your just reward. Choose one piece from your timber hoard  
and draw your plan on front and side that you can use to be a guide.  
Your radio tune to something nice, and clamp your workpiece in a vice,  
each chisel sharpen up and hone, pick up mallet, switch off phone!

With chisel gripped in sturdy hand, you can begin, the feeling's grand!  
Your mallet swinging to and fro, you cleave the wood with every blow,  
a feeling that is oh so good – to vent your spleen on lumps of wood –  
so therapeutic, satisfying, that you will never give up trying!  
Then, when you've hacked, and hewed, and rended, you get the shape that you  
intended.

As you've achieved the basic form, now you are really getting warm!  
The project time is almost halved, for now the detail can be carved.  
The mallet blows become light taps, the wood removed in tiny scraps –  
take off too much and oh! the pain! You cannot put it on again!  
Here care and patience are required, so be encouraged, be inspired!

With all that careful carving done, that's not the end of all the fun –  
effect a finish so worthwhile, with sandpaper, perhaps a file –  
your carving you must never spoil with too much polish, too much oil.  
The masterpiece is now complete, you have performed the perfect feat  
by using mind, and hand, and heart, to make a unique work of art.

From workshop carry it with pride up to your house, then go inside,  
place it on a prominent shelf, this heirloom that you carved yourself.  
Enjoy the praise of all your friends – but there the adulation ends.  
Just disregard it if you can, you have your next project to plan!  
And loudly now its praises sing, the Gentle Craft of Woodcarving!

Keith Hardisty

A Woodcarving poem by Keith Hardisty of BWA Durham & North Yorkshire

## BWA Patches & Badges

In the past, the BWA has offered embroidered patches that can be sewn onto clothing and enamel pin-badges that can be pinned onto clothes and hats.

They haven't been on offer for a while but is there demand for offering them again? There are some embroidered patches still in stock and can be ordered directly through the membership secretary on **membership@britishwoodcarversassociation.co.uk**

If you would like to register your interest for a number of patches or badges for you or your club, please email the editor with your details and quantities. If there is sufficient interest, we will order new stock. To contact the editor, please email **editor@britishwoodcarversassociation.co.uk**

The pricing is likely to be about £3 for a single patch or badge.

BWA Enamel Pin Badge



BWA Embroidered Patch





## Value & Woodcarving

I am struck by the strange set of values we seem have in this country of ours. My concern is about how people VALUE different things.

Many folk seem happy to cheerfully spend over £3 or more on a milky coffee, labelled with a fancy Italian name at one of the many coffee chains strangling our high street, even though they know that the cost to make it is perhaps 10p. Ah, they say, the shopkeeper has his overheads.

True of course. But how differently those same people react when it comes to considering the purchase of a woodcarving.

A recent practitioner who exhibited at a show captured the imagination of a visitor. She was with him for an hour as he explained the complicated processes required to produce a walking stick with a carved bird's head handle.

After this patient discourse, the lady asked him how much the finished item was.

'£40' came the reply – for an item that had taken a huge amount of thought and well over half a day to make.

She recoiled in horror. '£40! - but it's only a lump of wood!'

No doubt she went off to buy a Starbucks coffee to console her troubled mind.

For me, there's a certain sadness here - it would seem that many of the Great British Public has got so used to Primark prices that it can't or won't recognise real quality and craftsmanship, and generally seems unprepared to pay for it.

Maybe over time they can be educated and certainly when carvers demonstrate their craft to the public at shows and exhibitions, it must surely must help the great unwashed to understand the monumental efforts many of us go through to produce our modest wares. Perhaps there is even more we should do to, for example getting people to think about comparing the longevity of our handsome products to fickle society trends – perhaps for example thinking about a limewood masterpiece, which can be enjoyed forever, compared to an £500+ iPhone, guaranteed to be yesterday's toy in less than five years. After all, a thing of beauty is a joy forever, as someone once said.

In years to come your carving will still grace someone's home and be admired, long after the coffee has gone stale and the iPhone become obsolete.

There's a certain satisfaction in dwelling on that point.

It's one of the many things that spurs us on to pick up a gouge and make a start that next carving...



By Clive Nash

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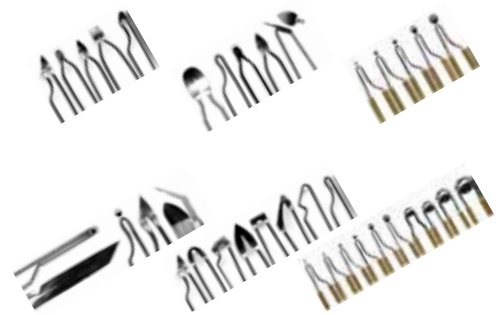


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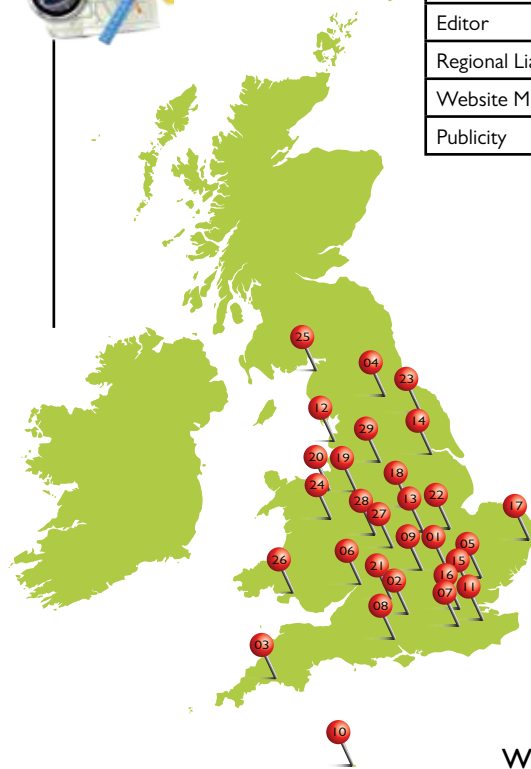
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