

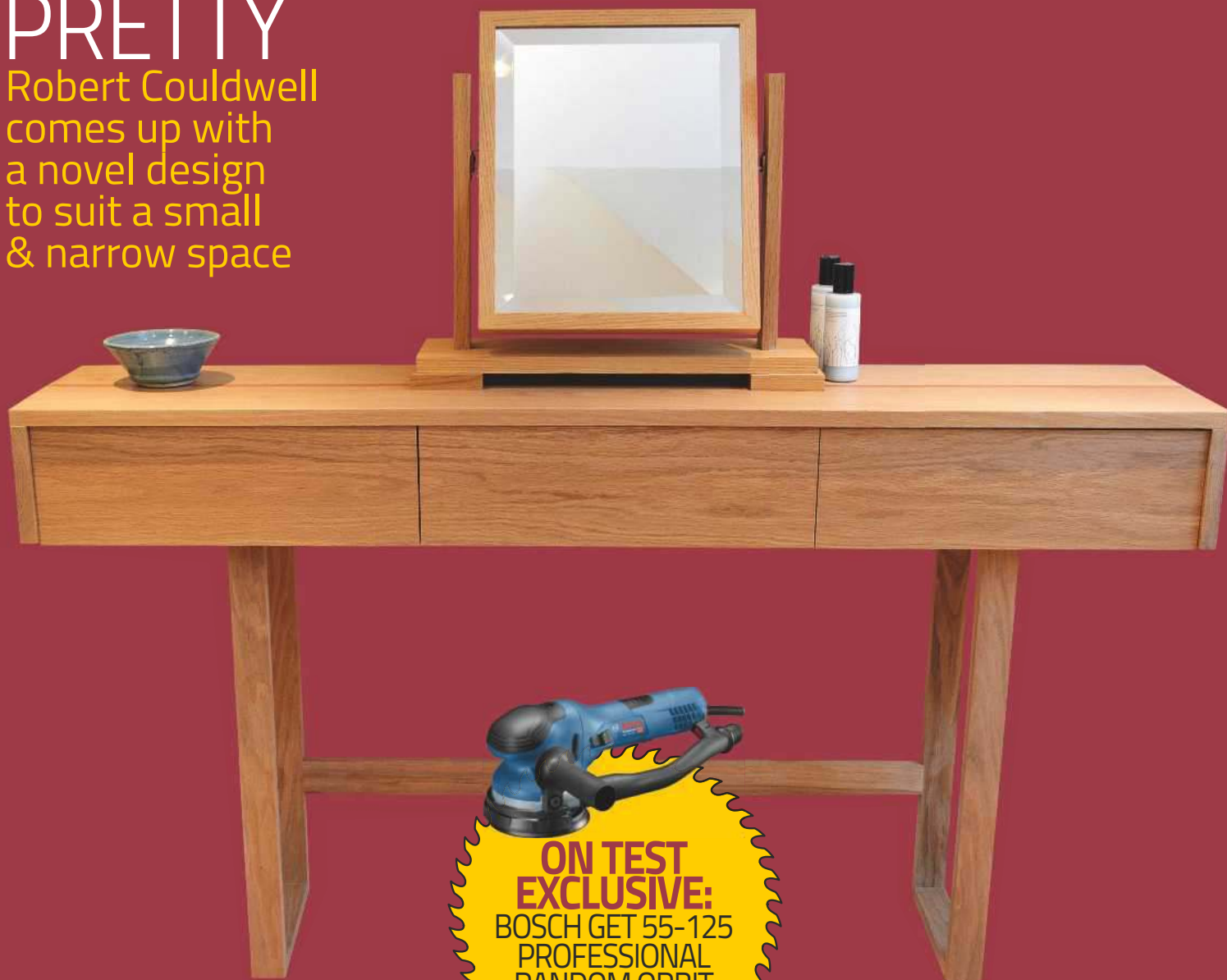
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# The North of England Woodworking & Power Tool Show 2019

## Welcome

Well, another 'Harrogate' show has been and gone and it seems almost impossible that an entire year has passed in the blink of an eye. For those of you who attended the event, I hope you all enjoyed it as much as we did, and early reports show that visitor numbers were up on last year, which is fantastic news.

### Meeting readers old & new

Thank you to all who came and visited our stand, offering Christmas gifts (Gavin); beautiful turned pens (Terry); and words of encouragement (various) – your support really does mean a lot! It was also great to finally meet Alan Peters Furniture Award 2020 judge, Andrew Lawton, authors Ken Moore, Michael Forster and Geoff Ryan, as well as lots of readers. We were also very pleased to welcome a whole host of new subscribers to the magazine and I hope you'll enjoy getting your very own copy each month, as well as your complimentary pair of Dickies socks, hat or backpack, which we offered on the stand as a thank you for signing up.

The event raffle gave all visitors the chance to win some fantastic prizes, including Robert Sorby 842GLH 3/8in Excelsior bowl gouges, a bread board pyrographed by Bob Neill as well as various gift vouchers. A big congratulations to all the winners!

### New authors & woodworking royalty

As well as manning the stand for the duration of the event with my colleague Rhona, it was also great to have the opportunity to wander round and chat to some familiar faces in the industry, as well as many, many new ones. One of the highlights of the show for me was meeting the esteemed founder and president of Lie-Nielsen Tools, Tom Lie-Nielsen, and discussing a profile focusing on him and the formation of the business, so look out for that! I also met woodturner Martin Saban-Smith, the man behind Hampshire Sheen finishing products and a fantastic craftsman in his own right. Martin will be writing a series of articles for us over the coming months, so stay tuned for those.

### The Alan Peters Furniture Award 2020 – image guidelines

Seeing so many wonderful projects and meeting a raft of talented craftspeople during the show got me thinking about the upcoming Alan Peters Furniture Award 2020. Despite the entry deadline not being until the end of May, we all know how quickly time flies, so don't delay! If you haven't done so already, do make sure you visit [www.woodomain.com/alanpetersaward](http://www.woodomain.com/alanpetersaward) and download your application form in readiness. Speaking to award organiser and judge, Jeremy Broun, he commented on the importance of supplying work in progress shots, and how these are key to authenticating your work. He's written a dedicated feature on this subject, which can be found on pages 32-33, so do take a look and make sure you're fulfilling the brief. One such applicant is Thomas Eddolls, whose chest of drawers is used as a point of reference within the article. Remember, if you have any questions regarding the award, please email either



myself or Jeremy and we'll be happy to offer guidance and support.

### Anyone for a Veritas apron plane?

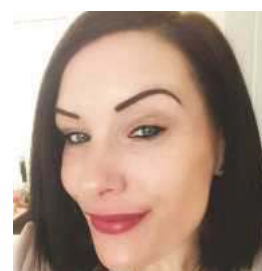
Another exciting announcement is that as of the next issue (Feb 2020), we'll be switching things up with our readers' hints and tips and offering a Veritas apron plane fitted with PM-V11 blade. Also, instead of just sending in your top hints and tips, we're asking you to think outside the box and pass on any advice/pointers that may help others on their woodworking journeys, so get your thinking caps on and email Oin as soon as you can! As before, don't forget to send photo(s) along with your hints/tips/pointers, and just email them to the usual address – see below.

Well, it certainly looks like 2020 is shaping up to be an exciting year in the woodworking world and here at the magazine, we can't wait to see what it has in store!

Enjoy!

*Tegan*

Email [tegan.foley@mytimemedia.com](mailto:tegan.foley@mytimemedia.com)



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**Phil Davy**

Technical & Consultant Editor

*We endeavour to ensure all techniques shown in this issue are safe, but take no responsibility for readers' actions. Take care when woodworking and always use guards, goggles, masks, hold-down devices and ear protection, and above all, plenty of common sense. Do remember to enjoy yourself, though*

## 70 AN INVITATION TO TEA

Pinkies out! Dave Roberts takes tea in fine style with his faux bamboo cake stand

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Stepping sideways

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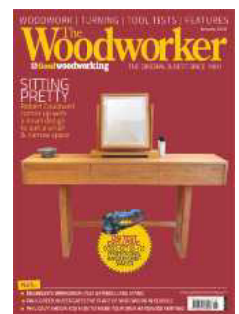
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- 22\* Wood finishes
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## PYROGRAPHY ACCESSORY DELIVERS TWO-PEN FLEXIBILITY AT THE FLICK OF A SWITCH

Thousands of woodburning enthusiasts will now be able to use two pens simultaneously following the launch of the Pyrography Pen Splitter for the hugely popular Peter Child Pyrography kit.

The unit means users won't need to unplug and wait for tips to cool before changing nibs when they want to use a new shape or size tip.

Designed to enable pyrographers to easily and safely switch between pens, the pen splitter allows users to maintain work at high levels of efficiency using the ultra-high responsiveness of the parent machine's temperature control. Simply flick the switch to turn each pen on or off and the response is instantaneous.

The Pyrography Pen Splitter has the additional benefit of allowing a second person to use another pen at the same time without compromising the ability to deliver excellent quality finished pieces. Ideal for a parent and child or those wishing to pass on the skill to a friend.

Built to the same exacting standards as the Peter Child machine, the pen splitter features two cradles to hold pens in place safely when not in use.

Professional pyrographer, Lisa Shackleton, described the pen splitter as a wonderful addition to the Peter Child machine, saying:

"I love the new pen splitter. It's neat and compact and something you can take anywhere. The real bonus of course is the fact I can keep two pens hot and ready to use, so I don't have to switch my tips as often, which is a big time saving bonus for me. I like this."

Manufactured in Sheffield, England by Robert Sorby and built with the same sturdy attention to detail as the Peter Child Pyrography Machine, the splitter is the result of high demand for two-pen operability among pyrographers.

David Green, Craft Supplies Manager, said: "This is a great convenience tool for those serious about their pyrography, and judging by the popularity of the Peter Child machine, that's a lot of pyrographers. The splitter also allows two users to work at the same time with a minimum of power loss, which is great for those wanting to work with a friend."

The splitter will be distributed in the UK and Europe by wholesaler Craft Supplies and is supplied with a pen. For those that already own two pens, the splitter is also available as an individual unit. Both units come with a range of tips and a coil of SWG wire so users can make their own nibs.

Prices are as follows: pen splitter and pen – £55.99; pen splitter – £32.99 (please note prices inc VAT) – see [www.turners-retreat.co.uk](http://www.turners-retreat.co.uk).



## MAKITA LAUNCHES 18V BRUSHLESS ROTARY HAMMER

Adding to its impressive range of cordless tools, Makita has launched its DHR182ZJ 18V Brushless rotary hammer LXT. Benefitting from a brushless motor and patented battery technology, the tool features excellent run times and extended life.

Powered by a single 18V lithium-ion battery, the new rotary hammer benefits from three operating modes – Rotary only (RO), Hammer only (HO) and Rotation with Hammer (RH) – to suit a range of high performance demands. This heavy-duty tool also comes with a variable speed trigger, constant speed control, and forward and reverse rotation.

The DHR182ZJ is also supplied with anti-vibration technology (AVTTM), an ergonomic soft grip handle and Makita's new Auto-Start Wireless System (AWS), which connects to compatible dust extractors via Bluetooth, ensuring the tool minimises the hazards of vibration and dust, while meeting construction site regulations.

The machine can also be fitted with the DX05 dust extraction attachment, which is recommended for use when conventional dust extractors are not available – see [www.makita.com](http://www.makita.com).



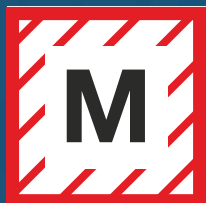
## HIKOKI POWER TOOLS ANNOUNCES AUTOMATIC HEAVY DUTY THREE-YEAR WARRANTY

HiKOKI Power Tools has introduced a convenient, automatic Heavy Duty three-year warranty on its electric and cordless tools, meaning HiKOKI customers will no longer have to register their tools online to activate a warranty.

"The new automatic warranty makes life easier for tradespeople," explains Nick Chan, Marketing Manager. "It means less time registering tools and more time on site. In the unlikely event of a warranty claim, as long as there is proof of purchase, we will of course sort the issue out. No worry, no hassle, just great service."

The automatic three-year warranty applies to all tools, excluding batteries less than 4Ah, gas nailers and hire tools. All the usual HiKOKI Power Tools warranty terms and conditions apply and proof of purchase will be required in the event of a claim being made. To find out more, see [www.hikoki-powertools.co.uk](http://www.hikoki-powertools.co.uk).

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VC4210M



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See our full dust extraction range at [www.makita.com](http://www.makita.com)

## NEW 18V CORDLESS COMBI DRILL FROM BOSCH PROFESSIONAL

A new generation of increased efficiency, the cordless combi drill GSB 18V-55 Professional from Bosch offers professionals a brushless motor in the entry-level segment for the first time. They have a high-level of efficiency, are more durable than DC motors, and are maintenance-free at the same time. Carpenters, electricians, plumbers and air conditioning installers drilling into wood, metal and masonry on a daily basis, will find this combi drill particularly useful.

With a maximum torque of 55Nm and up to 1,800rpm, this combi ensures increased efficiency at work. It is suitable for mid-range applications or screw diameters of up to 8mm, drill diameters up to 35mm in wood and 13mm in metal. The GSB 18V-55 Professional also reliably drills up to 10mm in masonry. This combi drill is more robust than comparable competitor models as it is the only cordless combi drill in the entry-level market with a metal drill chuck. This ensures maximum torque transfer. The two-speed gearbox is made of metal too and contributes to the robustness of the tool. The equipment also comes with an integrated work light and belt clip.



### Full compatibility with the Bosch Professional 18V system

The new cordless combi drill GSB 18V-55 Professional is operated by powerful 18V batteries, which are part of the Bosch Professional 18V system. Tradespeople can use different batteries – from 2Ah to 5Ah. For even the toughest jobs that need a longer runtime, high-performance ProCORE18V batteries are available in 4Ah, 8Ah, and 12Ah. The Bosch Professional 18V system guarantees compatibility with new and existing power tools and chargers in this voltage class.

The GSB 18V-55 Professional cordless combi drill is now available and comes supplied with 3 x 4Ah batteries, GAL 18V-40 charger and L-CASE. Priced from £307.27, see [www.bosch-professional.co.uk](http://www.bosch-professional.co.uk).



## NEW SELF-ADJUSTING TOGGLE CLAMPS FROM AXMINSTER TRADE CLAMPS

The beauty of these new toggle clamps is that they are quick to lock and unlock, as well as being very versatile. They will clamp different thicknesses and require no adjustment. As and when necessary, you can adjust the pressure with a screwdriver and adjust the arm piece to increase the throat. They are perfectly suited to small-scale production situations.

They come as two types: those that apply force down towards the base of the clamp (horizontal) and those that drive a plunger laterally away from the base of the clamp (push and pull). Each clamp requires minimal operating effort to give maximum clamping force.

The toggle clamp is ideal for work situations involving a router, spindle moulder, table saw or when constructing custom made jigs; in fact anywhere you need a fast, firm hold down.

The horizontal toggle clamp comes in three sizes: you simply press the handle down and the clamp locks securely in position, holding the workpiece in place.

The push and pull toggle clamp comes in two sizes. It converts the movement of the handle to an axial movement of the piston. The piston pushes the workpiece against a fence or stops and locks with the handle in the horizontal position.

These clamps are European made from quality steel, galvanised and passivated against corrosion.

To see the full range, visit [www.axminster.co.uk](http://www.axminster.co.uk). Prices range from £21.65 (inc VAT).

## ALL GOOD THINGS ARE... TWO-PLUS-ONE

The GearKlamp from Bessey conveniently masters clamping applications, also in tight-spaced situations. The innovative GearKlamp is now available as a special limited-edition 'GK30-SET' set. This includes two GearKlamps with a 300mm clamping width and 60mm throat depth, as well as a handy multi-tool in a special colour design.

"The set offers woodworkers a unique opportunity to expediently expand their range of tools", says Rainer Steinle, Head of Product Marketing at Bessey. "As a practical everyday aid, or as a complement to existing tool equipment, we are confident that the GK30-SET makes the eyes of craftsmen light up!"

However, anyone who wants to buy a set for themselves or as a gift for someone else should not delay, as the GK30-SET is only available in limited numbers.

### We've got this covered!

Be it in front of closed surfaces or in intermediate spaces, on rounded, pointed or sharp edges, thanks to the intelligent design, the globally unique GearKlamp GK masters clamping

work with greater ease than ever before, fits every workpiece perfectly using elements such as the quick-release button for fast movement or swivelling pressure plate, and is therefore a must for every craftsman. "As is the customary Bessey tradition, we want to make the lives of our customers easier – anyone who is not yet familiar with the GearKlamp has the perfect opportunity to add a new favourite tool to their range thanks to the set," continues Steinle.

And as the icing on the cake, the two GearKlamps in the GK30-SET are accompanied by an appealing multi-tool. This impresses with typical Bessey elements, such as extra-large shears and is not available separately in this version. Each of its seven tools are black, making the multi-tool a real eye-catcher and collector's piece.

### Simply better, simply Bessey!

"The GearKlamp is patent-registered and falls perfectly in line with the tradition of Bessey as an innovation pioneer with high clamping technology expertise," explains Steinle. "It results in greater working safety, added comfort and protects the joints and tendons. It has no protruding handles, which minimises the risk of damage or injury, and the enclosed design protects against dust and dirt." So a typical Bessey tool. To find out more, see [www.bessey.de](http://www.bessey.de).



# OAK & TEAK EPOXY WOOD GLUE

Oak and Teak glue, the all-wood glue, is a two-part epoxy resin made largely from the resins of wood itself; that is why it can dissolve the natural oils of oily hardwoods, and why it bonds all oily hardwoods such as teak, cocobolo and ebony. Epoxy glues made from petrochemicals cannot do this. Oak and Teak Epoxy Wood Glue will of course bond all non-oily hardwoods and softwoods that lesser epoxies are also capable of gluing. The product is unaffected by the natural acids common to many woods, which is why it bonds oak so readily.

It will also (with proper chemical surface preparation) glue a wide variety of metals, glass, rubber as well as many plastic materials. The cured adhesive is completely waterproof and weatherproof. Oak and Teak Epoxy offers a very long working time – two hours at 20°C – and will not smoke off like other epoxy adhesives if mixed in large quantities.

The Epoxy Cleanup Solvent will dissolve and clean up the glue before it has gelled, and once cured, there is no clean-up solvent. The cured adhesive is easily sanded back, and leaves an unobtrusive glue line. It is a translucent orange in colour, so blends in nicely with natural wood colours.

## Mixing

1. The Oak and Teak Epoxy wood glue needs to be measured out in a 1:1 mix ratio. It is very easy to get right, and very forgiving of mix ratio errors. Use 10 parts A to 12 parts B if measured by weight.
2. Mix the product thoroughly – all two-part adhesives require very thorough mixing in order to set properly. Wait around 10 minutes until the mixed glue turns from white to amber before using it.

## Application

Never clean the surfaces with solvents even if you are gluing very oily wood, such as cocobolo or teak. Solvents will be absorbed by the wood, which will interfere with the penetration of the glue and thus weaken the resulting joint. Oak and Teak Epoxy will not be affected by the oils in the wood. This is a major advantage over competitor products, which require the use of solvents that inevitably reduce joint strength.

Apply the epoxy to both surfaces of the joint and allow the wood to soak up as much as it wants to. End-grain and porous woods, such as the edges of plywood, will soak up more. Scarf and butt joints are especially prone to soaking up glue because of their end-grain surfaces. Allow the wood to soak up the adhesive: deep penetration gives strong joints, and it stops the joint being starved of glue after assembly as the wood soaks the glue up then. Oak and Teak Epoxy has a long working time – you do not have to rush this stage. Next, clamp the joint using moderate pressure. The use of too much pressure will starve the joint of glue and thus weaken it.

## Finishing

Clean any excess glue from the joint area using paper towels. Avoid the use of solvents if you can as they can penetrate the wood and weaken the joint. If you must use solvents, use Epoxy Clean Up Solvent sparingly.

Allow the glue to harden before stressing the joint. All Smiths Epoxy resins use their Dual Synergistic Catalyst, which will ensure a full dependable cure at temperatures as low as -2°C (28°F). The epoxy dries to a translucent pale orange, is easy to sand and leaves very inconspicuous glue lines once finished. It will also fill gaps in joints.

## Packages

Oak and Teak Epoxy is available in packages from a 25ml twin barrel syringe up to 7.6l packs. It can be ordered online – [www.makewoodgood.com](http://www.makewoodgood.com) – and is supplied with comprehensive instructions.



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# What's new from

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## RECORD POWER CORONET ENVOY & CORONET REGENT HEAVY-DUTY LATHES

**MANUFACTURER:** Record Power  
**D&M GUIDE PRICES:** Coronet Envoy (1.5kW) – £1,599.99; Coronet Regent (2kW) – £1,999.99 (prices inc VAT)

Two new additions to the Record Power Coronet range of lathes have been added: the 1.5kW **Coronet Envoy** and the 2kW **Coronet Regent**. These new lathes, which differ only by their motor power, are perfect for the woodturner who regularly requires the power, stability and capacities necessary for large-scale work (1,000mm maximum bowl diameter with optional outrigger).

Designed as a natural progression from the Coronet Herald, they are supported by large and heavy integral cast-iron legs to give ample protection from vibration while turning out-of-balance timbers.

The overall heavy-duty construction of these machines, along with their finely engineered and machined components, make these lathes a pleasure to use.

They offer unrivalled value-for-money in their class without compromising capacity or features. Both offer the benefits of electronic variable speed, a rotating and sliding headstock, reverse function and solid cast-iron build throughout, yet at a cost more commonly associated with either much smaller or less well-specified lathes.



Shown with optional outrigger and bed extension



Three-step pulley and 24-point indexing



Rotating and sliding headstock



Self-ejecting tailstock



Repositionable magnetic control box



## SABRE BANDSAW FENCE UPGRADE KIT

**MANUFACTURER:** Record Power  
**D&M GUIDE PRICE:** £144.95 (inc VAT)

This new kit from Record Power upgrades the bandsaw rip fence on **BS300E**, **BS350S** and **BS400** bandsaws to the same specifications as the SABRE series bandsaws, giving cam-action fence adjustment and a double-sided fence mount, meaning the fence can be supported on either side of the blade.



# MAKITA DTM50RM1J1 CORDLESS MULTI-TOOL

Supplied with a MakPac carry case and a multitude of accessories, this cordless multi-tool from Makita benefits from a robust build quality and is able to work in awkward spaces, says **Phil Davy**

**T**he term multi-tool can be slightly misleading, implying that it's the Swiss Army knife of power tools. Although you can obviously sand, saw and scrape, there's not a huge amount more you can do with an oscillating multi-tool, however. It's more to do with the variety of materials that can be cut or abraded – wood, metal, plasterboard, masonry – that best sums up its function. That and its ability to work in awkward spaces, such as sanding tight into corners or cutting through architrave when laying timber flooring. That's not to deny it's a useful product across a wide range of tasks, and it's a favourite tool with bathroom fitters. When sanding painted woodwork before decorating, I usually reach for a multi-tool, particularly where surfaces are poor. The triangular pad makes life a lot easier when preparing skirting and architrave especially.

## Storage & accessories

This new multi-tool from Makita is a no-frills, 18V battery version, available in several options depending on whether or not you already have

Makita cordless products. This particular kit includes a fast charger and one 4.0Ah battery, which will give around 50 minutes of sanding time. If you're unfamiliar with Makita batteries, they feature a red LED ladder display to indicate remaining capacity.

Packed in a capacious MakPac storage case, you could easily stow a drill or other tool here as well, handy for site work. A smaller box is included for the various accessories supplied, which consist of a triangular backing pad and 20 sanding sheets (60, 80, 120 and 180 grit). There's also an 85°, semi-circular cutting blade for wood and metal.

## Ergonomics

Immediately noticeable when you pick up the DTM50 is its bulk, a reflection of the robust build quality. With a 4.0Ah battery fitted the tool weighs 2.1kg, not exactly lightweight. For horizontal use this isn't a bad thing, though for vertical sanding I found myself supporting it with both hands after a few minutes.

Encased in the usual plastic shell, there's limited soft-grip rubber around the palm area,



though most of this surrounds the front end of the tool. Mounted centrally, the on/off slider switch is convenient whether you're right- or left-handed. Soft-start electronics mean there's no sudden kick when you fire it up, though this is rarely a problem with a multi-tool.

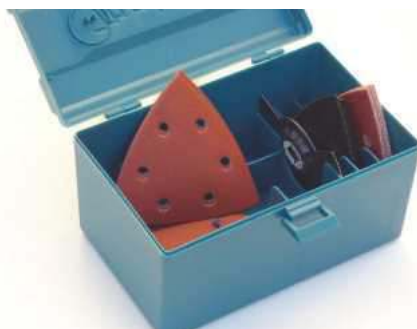
A white LED worklight is activated when the tool is switched on, a welcome addition where lighting is less than ideal. Apparently this will flash and the DTM50RM1J1 shuts down if overload should occur, though it kept going without any problems during testing.

Towards the rear of the tool is a ribbed speed dial, which has a click action as you adjust, so it's difficult to alter the setting accidentally. Speed range is from 6,000–20,000rpm, with an oscillation angle of 3.2°, which is fairly standard.

A red warning LED alongside the dial starts flashing when there's about five minutes of life remaining in the battery. This may seem a bit over the top, but it's quite handy if you've forgotten



This particular kit includes a fast charger and one 4.0Ah battery, which will give around 50 minutes of sanding time



A smaller box is included for the various accessories supplied, which consist of a triangular backing pad and 20 sanding sheets (60, 80, 120 and 180 grit)



There's also an 85°, semi-circular cutting blade for wood and metal



For horizontal use this isn't a bad thing, though for vertical sanding I found myself supporting it with both hands after a few minutes



Mounted centrally, the on/off slider switch is convenient whether you're right- or left-handed



Towards the rear of the tool is a ribbed speed dial, which has a click action as you adjust



An 85mm rubber sanding pad is standard, attached to the head with a hex screw and washer

to recharge that second battery. Older Makita batteries don't have an LED display to indicate capacity, so this feature makes sense.

### Fixed head

An 85mm rubber sanding pad is standard, attached to the head with a hex screw and washer. The pad accepts hook-and-loop sanding sheets, as you'd expect. There's no quick-release, tool-free locking here, though the hex key included is stored neatly at the base. Actually changing the angle of a blade or pad is straightforward, with no need to remove the screw completely. Once tightened up, everything remains rock solid.

Accessories use the OIS interface and with a universal adaptor thrown in, most blades should fit. There's a Makita Starlock pad available as an option if you prefer. Although only one toothed steel blade is provided it's effective in softwood, though tougher going in hardwood.

The extraction system is quite elaborate and consists of four plastic components, which fit together. Once dust is sucked up through the six holes in the pad it passes through a



Although only one toothed steel blade is provided it's effective in softwood, though tougher going in hardwood



A collar fits over the shaft, together with a felt insert to seal any gaps



The pad accepts hook-and-loop sanding sheets, as you'd expect

plastic tube underneath the tool. This is clipped underneath, ending in a 25mm diameter port for connecting a vacuum extractor. To ensure maximum dust is collected a collar surrounds the shaft behind the sanding pad. This fits over the shaft, together with a felt insert to seal any gaps. It does a pretty good job, though the tube adds to the bulkiness of the tool, noticeable with small hands.

### Conclusion

I found the Makita became fairly warm after a time, possibly because my left hand was partly obscuring the cooling vents. I'm used to Ryobi's multi-tool with a tilting head, so the Makita is more limited in that respect. Sanding architrave around several doors and bullnose skirting could be awkward, though expect that with any fixed-head tool. With an extractor hooked up it becomes an efficient sander, though slightly cumbersome.

If you already have Makita batteries, this heavy-duty tool is available bare for around £78, making it excellent value. No extraction kit is included at this level, though. ✖



Once dust is sucked up through the six holes in the pad it passes through a plastic tube underneath the tool



With an extractor hooked up it becomes an efficient sander, though slightly cumbersome



There's no quick-release, tool-free locking here, though the hex key included is stored neatly at the base



Accessories use the OIS interface and with a universal adaptor thrown in, most blades should fit

### SPECIFICATION

**Battery type:** Lithium-ion

**Voltage:** 18V

**Oscillation angle:** 3.2°

**Oscillations per minute:** 6,000-20,000

**Vibration K factor:** 1.5m/sec<sup>2</sup>

**Vibration:** Cutting metal – 5m/sec<sup>2</sup>; cutting

wood – 9.5m/sec<sup>2</sup>; chiselling – 7.5m/sec<sup>2</sup>;

sanding – 2.5m/sec<sup>2</sup>

**Weight:** 1.8-2.2kg

**Kit contents:** Makita DTM50RM1J1 cordless multi-tool; BL1840 18V Li-ion battery; DC18RC compact charger; MakPac connector case (type 3); inner tray; Hex wrench; dust extraction attachment; accessory set; B-21537 sanding pad; P-21624 60 grit wood × 5; P-21630 80 grit wood × 5; P-21646 120 grit wood × 5; P-21652 180 grit wood × 5; B-21325 85mm seg blade; universal adaptor

**Typical price:** £240

**Web:** [www.makita.com](http://www.makita.com)

### THE VERDICT

#### PROS

- Build quality; battery level warning light; LED worklight

#### CONS

- No tool-free accessory fit; heavy with 4Ah battery

**RATING:** 4.5 out of 5

# BOSCH GET 55-125 RANDOM ORBIT SANDER

Described by **Phil Davy** as a first rate sander, the Bosch GET 55-125 features a perfectly designed ergonomic palm rest and handle along with two sanding modes



**E**ven though a mains-powered sander may not be so convenient as a cordless equivalent, there are several advantages. Whether in a workshop situation or on site you obviously don't need to consider recharging batteries. If you use a range of cordless tools it's more than likely these will share the same battery platform, with a drill/driver probably among the most frequently used. If that's the case, you'll know how pricey two or three batteries can be. A couple of pro high capacity lithium

batteries is likely to set you back well over £100. Unless you're well disciplined, it can get frustrating should you forget to keep batteries on charge. A cordless sander can drain batteries quickly, while a 230V version will give constant performance and power.

## Body grip

The smaller of two new random orbit sanders from Bosch, the GET 55-125 features a disc diameter of 125mm, or thereabouts. If you need to sand big areas, the GET 75-150 may

be a better bet, with 150mm disc. Surprisingly at this price there's no heavy-duty plastic storage case, just a cardboard box. Fine if you rarely need to use tools away from the workshop.

A long, slim plastic body makes the tool comfortable to hold, while at the front there's a large hand grip that's shrouded in rubber. Below this are cooling vents for the 550W motor, which features constant electronics to maintain consistent orbital stroke rate. You also get a removable auxiliary handle, which can be fitted to either side of the sander. Attached with a large machine screw, an oversized hex key is included, though there's nowhere to store this.

Located on the left side of the body, the positive on/off slider switch is operated with your thumb, not so convenient for left-handers. At the rear of the tool is the speed dial, easy to see and use. With a speed range from 3,300-7,800rpm, orbit diameter is 3.5mm. Overall weight of the tool is 2.5kg, while cable length is a generous 4m.

## Bosch backing pads

One of the differences between budget and professional sanders is often the backing pad, which can be on the thin side on cheaper tools. On this Bosch model it's 13mm thick, consisting of dense polyurethane cushioning attached to rigid plastic. Fixed to the tool with a hex screw, it has a protective rubber rim and contains an array of holes for dust collection. These work particularly well with mesh sanding discs, of which just one (120 grit) is included. A medium grade pad is standard with the tool for general sanding applications. Options include hard pads for heavy sanding tasks and soft ones for polishing and working curved surfaces. All feature hook-and-loop fixing.

A plastic guard ring clips around the front of the pad to protect it when sanding close to vertical edges. It's easily removed if you don't need it.



A long, slim plastic body makes the tool comfortable to hold, while at the front there's a large hand grip that's shrouded in rubber



You also get a removable auxiliary handle, which can be fitted to either side of the sander



Located on the left side of the body, the positive on/off slider switch is operated with your thumb – not so convenient for left-handers



At the rear of the tool is the speed dial, which is easy to see and use



The backing pad is attached to the tool with a hex screw; it has a protective rubber rim and contains an array of holes for dust collection



A plastic guard ring clips around the front of the pad to protect it when sanding close to vertical edges



On the Bosch sander there's a ribbed dust port (about 25mm) built into the alloy casing



The dust port connects to a long plastic tube, which is clipped on to the rear of the sander and ends in a similar port



Hooked up to my Trend vacuum extractor, there was hardly any dust visible when sanding an oak kitchen worktop



On the GET 55-125 sliding a beefy switch on its right, just above the backing pad, changes it over to a far more aggressive action

Professional sanders seem to be moving away from removable fabric dust bags, which are not always that efficient and can deteriorate over time. Instead, larger tools now tend to have dust outlets designed to be used with a vacuum extractor. No doubt manufacturers are keen to sell you another product for the workshop, though these portable systems are generally healthier and more effective. On the Bosch sander there's a ribbed dust port (about 25mm) built into the alloy casing. It connects to a long plastic tube, which is clipped on to the rear of the sander and ends in a similar port. Assuming you have a suitable adaptor, this gives two ways of connecting an extractor. Hooked up to my Trend vacuum extractor, there was hardly any dust visible when sanding an oak kitchen worktop. In fact, you could probably get away without wearing a face mask indoors.

### Turbo technology

But the major difference between these GET models and most of the competition is Bosch's

Turbo technology. This features direct drive mode at the flick of a switch, with up to three times the normal removal rate when sanding. A standard random orbit sander gives a relatively fine finish to a surface and can't be adjusted, apart from the speed.

On the GET 55-125 sliding a beefy switch on its right, just above the backing pad, changes it over to a far more aggressive action – direct drive, marked Turbo – more suitable for removing paints, varnish or taming rough timber. You can then flip back to a more sedate movement for finer sanding. This works really well and is a cinch to swap between the two modes without the need to necessarily change sanding discs. It's almost like getting two sanders for the price of one. With a fleece bonnet fitted over the pad (plus a suitable compound) the sander should become an efficient, effective polishing tool. No bonnet is included, so I wasn't able to check this function.

### Conclusion

This a first rate sander, but then you'd expect

it to be at this price. It's comfortable to use, though you'll need to use both hands when Turbo mode is selected. It can cope with pretty well anything from delicate, veneered boards to rough, reclaimed timber. Its high cost will probably restrict it to professional users, but shop around and you should find it for under £300. ✘

### SPECIFICATION

**Rated input power:** 550W  
**Sanding pad diameter:** 125mm  
**No-load speed:** 3,300-7,800rpm  
**Orbital stroke rate:** 6,600-15,600opm  
**Sanding pad speed:** 200-480rpm  
**Eccentricity:** 1.75mm  
**Sanding sheet/disc attachment:** Hook-and-loop fastening  
**Orbit diameter:** 3.5mm  
**Weight:** 2.4kg  
**Dimensions (LxWxH):** 349mm long x 147mm wide x 140mm

**Typical price:** £340.99

**Web:** [www.bosch-pt.com](http://www.bosch-pt.com)



Direct drive, marked Turbo, is more suitable for removing paints, varnish or taming rough timber



It can cope with pretty well anything from delicate, veneered boards to rough, reclaimed timber

**THE VERDICT**

**PROS**

- Two sanding modes; several grip options

**CONS**

- Few accessories included

**RATING: 5 out of 5**

# Clarke

## TABLE SAWS

LEG STAND KITS FOR CTS100 AND CTS111 ONLY £27.59 INC VAT

FROM ONLY **£72.99** EXC.VAT  
**£87** INC.VAT

INCLUDES LEFT & RIGHT TABLE EXTENSION

CTS100

MODEL MOTOR BLADE EXC.VAT INC.VAT

CTS800B 600W 200mm £72.99 £87.59

CTS111 1500W 254mm £149.98 £179.98

CTS100 1500W 254mm £169.98 £203.98

**BEST SELLER**

# Machine Mart

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WHERE QUALITY COSTS LESS

### Clarke TABLE SAW WITH EXTENSION TABLES (250mm)

CTS14

- Ideal for cross cutting, ripping, angle and mitre cutting
- Easy release/locking mechanism for table extensions
- 0-45° tilting blade
- Cutting depth: 72mm at 90° / 65mm at 45°

FROM ONLY **£129.98** EXC.VAT  
**£155.98** INC.VAT

SHOWN WITH OPTIONAL LEG KIT CLK5 £19.98 EXC.VAT £23.98 INC.VAT

### Clarke TABLE SAW WITH STAND

CTS16

- 1600W motor
- 250mm blade size
- 0-45° tilting blade
- Cutting depth: 73mm at 90° / 53mm at 45°

INCLUDES LEFT & RIGHT TABLE EXTENSION

FROM ONLY **£99.98** EXC.VAT  
**£119.98** INC.VAT

### Clarke WOODWORKING VICES

Record WW7

FROM ONLY **£14.99** EXC.VAT  
**£17.99** INC.VAT

MODEL MOUNTING JAW (WIDTH/OPENING /DEPTH)mm EXC.VAT INC.VAT

Clarke Bolted 150/152/61 £14.99 £17.99

Record TV75B Clamped 75/50/32 £22.99 £27.99

Clarke WW7 Bolted 180/205/78 £29.98 £35.98

### Clarke GARAGES/WORKSHOPS

IDEAL ALL-WEATHER PROTECTION

FROM ONLY **£229.00** EXC.VAT  
**£274.00** INC.VAT

BRIGHT WHITE INTERIOR

LENGTH UP TO 24'

Ideal for use as a garage/workshop  
Extra tough triple layer weatherproof coat  
Heavy duty powder coated steel tubing  
Ratchet tight tensioning

ZIP CLOSE DOOR

was £346.80 inc. VAT

MODEL SIZE (LxWxH) EXC.VAT INC.VAT

CG81015 4.5 x 3 x 2.4M £229.00 £274.80

CG81020\* 6.1 x 3 x 2.4M £279.00 £334.80

CG81216 4.8 x 3.7 x 2.5M £279.00 £334.80

CG81220 6.1 x 3.7 x 2.5M £349.00 £418.80

CG81224 7.3 x 3.7 x 2.5M £419.00 £502.80

### Clarke 4" BELT/ 6" DISC SANDER

- Dust extraction facility
- 4" x 36" belt tilts & locks 0-90°
- 225mm x 160mm table, tilts 0-90°
- 370W, 230V motor
- CS4-6E

FROM ONLY **£96.99** EXC.VAT  
**£116.99** INC.VAT

### Clarke 6" BELT/ 9" DISC SANDER

- Includes stand
- 1 HP, 230V/ 1ph motor
- CS6-9C

FROM ONLY **£259.00** EXC.VAT  
**£310.00** INC.VAT

### Clarke 1" BELT/ 5" DISC SANDER

- Includes 2 tables that tilt & lock
- Quality induction 250W motor
- CSB1-5B

FROM ONLY **£74.99** EXC.VAT  
**£89.99** INC.VAT

### Clarke 40" WOODTURNING LATHE

Ideal for woodturning in the workshop

- 1016mm distance between centres allows for turning longer spindles
- Inc. tool rest, tail stock, drive centre, face plate & 3 chisel
- Large turning capacity of 350mm
- 4 turning speeds

ONLY **£136.99** EXC.VAT  
**£164.39** INC.VAT

LOCKABLE TAILSTOCK BENCH MOUNTED

CWL1000B

### Clarke 13" MINI WOOD LATHE

CWL325V

FROM ONLY **£159.98** EXC.VAT  
**£191.98** INC.VAT

Ideal for enthusiasts/hobbyists with small workshops

325mm distance between centres • 200mm max. turning capacity (dia) • 0.2HP motor

### Clarke DUST EXTRACTOR/ CHIP COLLECTORS

CDE7B

FROM ONLY **£109.98** EXC.VAT  
**£131.98** INC.VAT

Powerful 1100W motor

50 litre bag capacity

Flow rate of 850M<sup>3</sup>/h

CWVE1

MODEL MOTOR FLOW BAG CAP. EXC.VAT INC.VAT

CGVE1 1100W 183 M<sup>3</sup>/h 50Ltrs £109.98 £131.98

CDE35B 750W 450 M<sup>3</sup>/h 56Ltrs £144.99 £173.99

CDE7B 750W 850 M<sup>3</sup>/h 114Ltrs £159.98 £191.98

### Clarke POWER PLANERS

NEW RANGE

CEP450

FROM ONLY **£34.99** EXC.VAT  
**£41.99** INC.VAT

Perfect for smooth and fine finishing along with hard to reach areas or curved surfaces

was £35.98 inc. VAT

MODEL WATTS EXC.VAT INC.VAT

PS105 105W £19.98 £23.98

CDS-1V\* 280W £26.99 £32.99

ALL MODELS INC. SANDING SHEETS

MODEL WIDTH OF CUT EXC.VAT INC.VAT

CEP450 60mm £34.99 £41.99

CEP720 82mm £44.99 £53.99

CON950 110mm £67.99 £81.99

### Clarke DETAIL SANDERS

CDS-1V

FROM ONLY **£19.98** EXC.VAT  
**£23.98** INC.VAT

Perfect for smooth and fine finishing along with hard to reach areas or curved surfaces

was £35.98 inc. VAT

MODEL WATTS EXC.VAT INC.VAT

PS105 105W £19.98 £23.98

CDS-1V\* 280W £26.99 £32.99

ALL MODELS INC. SANDING SHEETS

MODEL SPEEDS EXC.VAT INC.VAT

CDP5EB 350 / 5 £69.98 £83.98

CDP102B 350 / 5 £79.98 £95.98

CDP152B 450 / 12 £149.98 £179.98

CDP202B 450 / 16 £189.00 £226.80

CDP10B 370 / 12 £199.98 £239.98

CDP452B 550 / 16 £239.00 £286.80

CDP32F 550 / 16 £229.00 £274.80

CDP502F 1100 / 12 £549.00 £668.80

B = Bench mounted  
F = Floor standing

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- Range of precision bench & floor presses for enthusiast, engineering & industrial applications

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MODEL MOTOR (W) EXC.VAT INC.VAT

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CDP152B 450 / 12 £149.98 £179.98

CDP202B 450 / 16 £189.00 £226.80

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CDP32F 550 / 16 £229.00 £274.80

CDP502F 1100 / 12 £549.00 £668.80

### Clarke 4" BELT/ 8" DISC SANDER

- Includes two tables • 550W 230V motor
- CS4-8

FROM ONLY **£159.98** EXC.VAT  
**£191.98** INC.VAT

### Clarke DISC SANDER (305MM)

- Powerful, bench mounted • 900W
- Dust extraction port
- CDS300B

FROM ONLY **£129.98** EXC.VAT  
**£155.98** INC.VAT

### Clarke RANDOM ORBITAL SANDER

CROS3

FROM ONLY **£32.99** EXC.VAT  
**£39.99** INC.VAT

Adjustable front handle improves control

7000-14000rpm

INC DUST BAG AND SELECTION OF 125MM DIAMETER SANDING DISCS

CONSN18LIC

MODEL MOTOR RATE BAG CAP. EXC.VAT INC.VAT

CGVE1 1100W 183 M<sup>3</sup>/h 50Ltrs £109.98 £131.98

CDE35B 750W 450 M<sup>3</sup>/h 56Ltrs £144.99 £173.99

CDE7B 750W 850 M<sup>3</sup>/h 114Ltrs £159.98 £191.98

### Clarke ELECTRIC POWER FILE

CPF13

FROM ONLY **£49.98** EXC.VAT  
**£59.98** INC.VAT

Variable belt speed timing head

\*Black & Decker

BELT SIZE

MODEL MOTOR (mm) EXC.VAT INC.VAT

CPF13 400W/230V 13x457 £49.98 £59.98

KA900E\* 350W/230V 13x455 £59.98 £71.98

### Clarke BELT SANDERS

Ideal for surface removal, sanding and finishing

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Clarke CBS2 1200W 480 £79.98 £95.98

Makita 9911 650W 75-270 £99.98 £119.98

ALL MODELS INC. SANDING SHEETS

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Devil 900	24.9	£139.98	£167.98
Devil 1600	36.6	£169.98	£203.98
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Devil 4000	131	£429.00	£514.80

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**BEST SELLER**

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DEVIL 7003	230V	3	£59.98	£71.98
DEVIL 6005	400V	2.5-5	£69.98	£83.98
DEVIL 7005	400V	5	£84.99	£101.99
DEVIL 6009	400V	4.5-9	£109.00	£130.80
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**Clarke BENCH BANDSAWS**

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- 350W motor
- 7.5" throat size
- Cuts in all types of wood

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CBS190B

**Clarke PROFESSIONAL BANDSAWS**

Top Quality Bandsaws - ideal for professional workshop use. Strong steel body with solid cast iron table

- Table tilts 45°
- Adjustable blade guide
- Supplied with stand, 4TR wood cutting blade, rip fence, mitre guide, mitre gauge and push stick
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**MODELS ALSO FEATURE:**

- MULTI-STEP DUST EXTRACTION OUTLET
- FLEXIBLE LED WORKLIGHT
- REMOVABLE DUST TRAY
- BLADE TENSIONING CONTROL

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- For fast, accurate cross, bevel & mitre cutting in most hard & soft woods
- 1800W motor
- Laser guide

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CMS10S2

MODEL	BLADE DIA/BORE DEPTH/ (mm)	MAX CUT CROSS	EXC. VAT	INC. VAT
CMS210S*	210/30	60/120	£74.99	£89.99
C2MS210MP	216/30	65/305	£139.98	£167.98
CMS10S2	254/30	78/340	£139.98	£167.98
C2MS20S	250/30	85/250	£109.98	£131.98
C2MS250MP	255/30	90/305	£169.00	£226.80

**Clarke SCROLL SAWS**

- 50mm max cut thickness
- Air-blower removes dust from cutting area
- Table tilts 0-45°

**£79.98** EXC.VAT  
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CSS400C

**BEST SELLER**

MODEL	MOTOR	SPEED RPM	EXC. VAT	INC. VAT
CSS400D	120W	400-1600	£79.98	£95.98
CSS16VB	90W	550-1600	£94.99	£113.99
CSS400C	90W	550-1600	£119.98	£143.98

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- Run big 3 phase woodworking machines from 1 phase supply
- Variable output power to match HP of motor to be run

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PC60

MODEL	MAX. MOTOR HP	FUSE	EXC.VAT	INC.VAT
PC20	2HP	10Amps	£229.00	£274.00
PC40	3.5HP	20Amps	£269.00	£322.80
PC60	5.5HP	32Amps	£319.00	£382.80

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Powerful heavy duty machines ideal for trade and DIY use

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CR4

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STANDS FROM ONLY **£47.98** INC.VAT

6" & 8" AVAILABLE WITH LIGHT

WITH SANDING BELT \*8" WHETSTONE & 6" DRYSTONE

MODEL	DUTY	WHEEL DIA.	EXC. VAT	INC. VAT
CBG6RP	PRO	150mm	£32.99	£39.99
CBG6RZ	DIO	150mm	£42.99	£51.99
CBG6RSC	HD	150mm	£54.99	£65.99
CBG6SB*	PRO	150mm	£56.99	£68.99
CBG6RWC	HD	150mm	£59.98	£71.98
CBG8*	(wet)	HD 150/200mm	£58.99	£70.79

**TURBO AIR COMPRESSORS**

**airmaster**

Superb range ideal for DIY, hobby & semi-professional use

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8/260

\* V Twin Pump

MODEL	MOTOR	CFM	TANK	EXC.VAT	INC.VAT
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7/250	2 HP	7	24ltr	£94.99	£113.99
11/260	2.5HP	9.5	24ltr	£109.98	£131.98
8/550	2HP	7.5	50ltr	£119.98	£143.98
11/550	2.5HP	9.5	50ltr	£139.98	£167.98
16/1010*	3 HP	14.5	100ltr	£259.98	£311.98

**Clarke PLUNGE SAWS**

**NEW RANGE**

**£69.98** EXC.VAT  
**£83.98** INC.VAT

CPS160

MODEL	MOTOR	EXC. VAT	INC. VAT
CPS85	550W	£69.98	£83.98
CPS160	1200W	£139.00	£168.80

**Clarke 12" DOVETAIL JIG**

- Simple, easy to set up & use for producing a variety of joints
- Cuts work pieces with a thickness of 8-32mm
- Includes a 1/2" comb template guide & holes for bench mounting

**£54.99** EXC.VAT  
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CDTJ12

**Clarke ROUTER TABLE**

Router not included

**£69.98** EXC.VAT  
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CRT-1

Converts your router into a stationary router table

- Suitable for most routers (up to 155mm dia. Base plate)

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Professional woodworking tools and machinery from Record, Sheppach, SIP and more!

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- Great for sawing, cutting, sanding, polishing, chiselling & much more
- 250W motor
- Variable speed

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CMFT250

**Clarke JIGSAWS**

**£15.99** EXC.VAT  
**£19.19** INC.VAT

CON750

#DIY Professional

MODEL	POWER (W)	DEPTH OF CUT (WOOD/STEEL)	EXC. VAT	INC. VAT
CJS380*	420W	55/6mm	£15.99	£19.19
CON750*	750W	80/10mm	£27.99	£33.59
Bosch PST700E*	500W	70/4mm	£44.99	£53.99

**Clarke ROUTER TABLE**

Router not included

**£69.98** EXC.VAT  
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CRT-1

Converts your router into a stationary router table

- Suitable for most routers (up to 155mm dia. Base plate)

**Clarke ROUTER TABLE**

Router not included

**£69.98** EXC.VAT  
**£83.98** INC.VAT

CRT-1

Converts your router into a stationary router table

- Suitable for most routers (up to 155mm dia. Base plate)

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# CLARKE CPS160 160MM PLUNGE SAW

The new Clarke CPS160 is the latest in a series of plunge saws sent to *The Woodworker* for review, but will it be a match for its rivals? Jonathan Salisbury find out



I have come to appreciate the flexibility of the plunge saw, especially its ability to cut large sheets into narrow strips without the need for a table saw. Many 'budget' tools are considered a throwaway item, but I'm not in favour of this. Clarke aims to provide a good balance between quality, performance and price in the CPS160; at £166.80 for the saw and 1.4m of track, it's certainly an affordable model.

## Out of the box

The saw arrives ready to use, although there are no track clamps. Other brands' clamps can be used – and they are worth buying, as the 'proper' ones do not get in the way like G clamps. Tracks are extruded aluminium alloy plates with channels for saw guidance, to join track together and to house the clamps. Low-friction tape on top provides easily controllable and smooth saw travel and the edge has thick, soft black tape that gets trimmed during the first pass, providing a reference point for subsequent cuts. Kerf alignment can be more consistently and accurately achieved by using reference arrows moulded into the saw's casing.

## In use

Set the depth to the thickness of the material first. The gauge has clear markings, but when setting the centreline on the stop at 10mm and using the track, a kerf depth of 6mm is cut. It wouldn't take much to move the gauge to make the centreline the no-track depth and the top the depth with the track! Operation is straightforward; handles are comfortable, the plunge lock button/power switch combination is easy to activate, plunge action is smooth and the saw base glides along the track easily, as long as they are both kept clean.

The motor is noisy (you definitely need ear defenders) and goes from full speed to stop in about five seconds. With a new blade, the quality of finish when rip sawing was as good as expected. The cable is just about long enough to cope with full boards, but must be plugged in close to the work. Efficient dust extraction and chip collection is always going to be problematic with this type of saw, though. Use a vacuum to remove fine dust, but the 34mm/38mm extraction port is opposite the point at which the blade exits the material, so the chips are expelled at the front. There is no kickback

prevention, so it's important to plunge gently as you start; any slack in travel along the track can be taken up by rotating the locking bolts. The blade guard has reference points for starting and ending plunge cuts, although this needs careful planning as location depends on plunge depth.

## Mitre cutting

When tilted to cut a mitred edge, the centre of gravity shifts and the saw topples over. The supplied anti-tilt bracket is attached to the base to lock it onto the track, and can be left in place or slid out of the way when not required. The tilting mechanism was set carefully at 45° and the angle of cut is spot on.

## All change!

Changing the blade is a bit awkward. The plunge is set at 25mm, but without a depth lock this must be held manually at the same time as operating the shaft lock and loosening the screw. Blades are a standard 160mm x 20mm bore. The stated blade thickness in the instruction



2 x 700mm tracks might not be enough



A reference arrow indicates the inside edge of the kerf



Depth stop set at 10mm



But when using the track, the depth is only 6mm



The quality of cross cut finish depends on the wood. This is idigbo



Control handles, buttons and triggers are well placed and comfortable to use



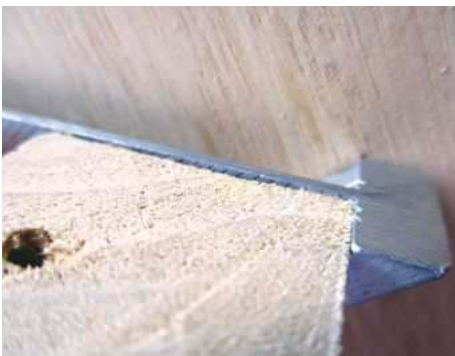
Dust extraction could be better

booklet is 2.4mm, which refers to tooth width and is different from the dimensions printed on the blade, which give the plate thickness of 1.4mm. There is plenty of choice in the replacement department, but check compatibility carefully. Maximum cut depth is 55mm, which is plenty for most jobs, and allows the cutting of several boards at the same time.

### Conclusion

The no-frills CPS160 saw is an entry point into the world of plunge saws and is not without issues, but none that impact significantly on its usability. Until an extraction port is positioned on the front of the guard chips will fly, and it is pretty noisy; the bolt-on anti-tilt bracket is a bit crude, but it works. You need to remember that there is no anti-kickback mechanism, so take your time and plunge gently to avoid issues. The provided 1,400mm of track may not be enough and Machine Mart does not list them, but they are available by contacting the parts department, as are the clamps.

Despite this, it feels right in use, with well-balanced, smooth operation and, since it is



Mitre cuts are accurate – the one here is 45°



The dimensions on the blade and in the manual don't match

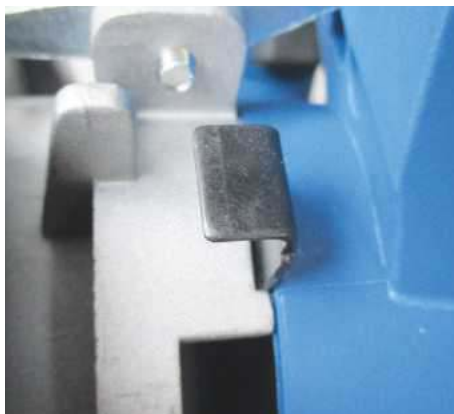


Locking bolts take up slack, if it occurs



Tilting during mitre cutting would be a problem...

a basic model, maintenance is low – keep it clean, give moving parts a light oil every now and then, check that the saw blade screw is tight (but don't overdo it) and inspect the teeth to make sure they are in good condition. If you are looking for a good quality, simple, affordable plunge saw, then the Clarke CPS160 is certainly well worth considering. ✘



The shaft lock doesn't make blade change very easy



Form follows function – the no-frills plunge depth latch



Triangles provide guides for starting and ending cuts



... if it wasn't for the anti-tilt mechanism

### SPECIFICATION

**Rated voltage:** 230V

**No load speed:** 5,500rpm

**Maximum depth of cut:** 55mm at 90° or 41mm at 45°

**Blade dimensions diameter:** 160mm; bore – 20mm; thickness – 2.4mm

**Length of track:** two pieces @ 700mm each

**Sound pressure level:** LpA 95 dB(A)

**Sound power level:** LWA 106 dB(A)

**Weight:** 7.4kg

**Vibration (main handle):** 5.72m/s<sup>2</sup>

**Dimensions (L x W x H):** 340 x 235 x 260mm

**Included:** Plunge saw; guide rail assembly (two halves and a joining bar); TCT blade – 160mm Ø; tilt protection clamp; tilt protection clamp nut

**Typical price:** £ 166.80

**Web:** [www.machinemart.co.uk](http://www.machinemart.co.uk)

### THE VERDICT

#### PROS

- Safe, convenient way of cutting large boards without a table saw; no frills, easy to maintain; good performance; value for money

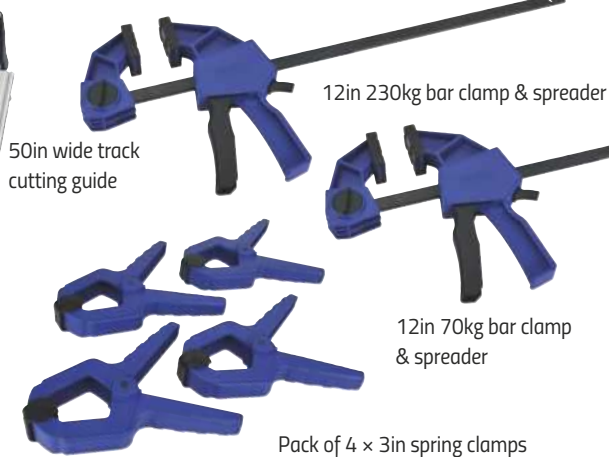
#### CONS

- Awkward blade changing; creates a lot of dust, not all controlled by extraction; clamps need to be bought separately; cut depth does not match that set on the gauge

**RATING:** 4 out of 5

# WIN! 1 OF 7 FAITHFULL BAR & SPRING CLAMP PRIZES

Faithfull Tools' clamping range is one that holds the pressure, and we're giving seven lucky readers the chance to get their hands on products from this fantastic range



For a tool brand with over 3,500 lines you'll be surprised to hear that Faithfull's clamping range has only ever consisted of G clamps, T bar and sash clamps. So, when they introduced their new range of clamps and accessories, it was a welcome addition to the range. These new products include bar clamps and spreaders with clamping pressures ranging from 70kg up to 230kg. It also consists of other popular clamps including F, ratcheting and smaller spring clamps.

### High standard performance

The hero products of this range are the bar clamps, which have been tested against leading competitors to ensure their performance is to the highest standard. Each one is designed as both a clamp and spreader for singled-handed use. A powerful clamping mechanism allows the clamp to hold the desired pressure once released. All

featuring ABS plastic jaws that can be set at any position on the high-tensile steel bar, each has a large thumb lever that releases the force, thus freeing the clamp jaw for adjustment. The tool-free head release allows the clamp to be quickly turned into a spreader. With six sizes to choose from, with varying capacities and pressures, there is a clamp for virtually every application.

Two wide track cutting guides also feature in the range; these simply clamp into place onto plywood, MDF and most other sheet materials, allowing a quick and straight cut.

### Five-year guarantee

Overall, Faithfull's new clamping range offers a variety of professional quality clamps and accessories at competitive prices. With durable engineering plastics and powerful clamping mechanisms, this versatile range boasts some high quality features. The complete range is covered by Faithfull's five-year guarantee, giving added brand confidence.

There's a total of seven prizes up for grabs, so see details below and don't hesitate in entering!

## THE PRIZES AT A GLANCE

### 1ST PRIZE:

1 x 50in wide track cutting guide  
– worth **£68.94**

### 2ND PRIZE:

2 x 12in 230kg bar clamp & spreader  
– worth **£63.60**

### 3RD PRIZE:

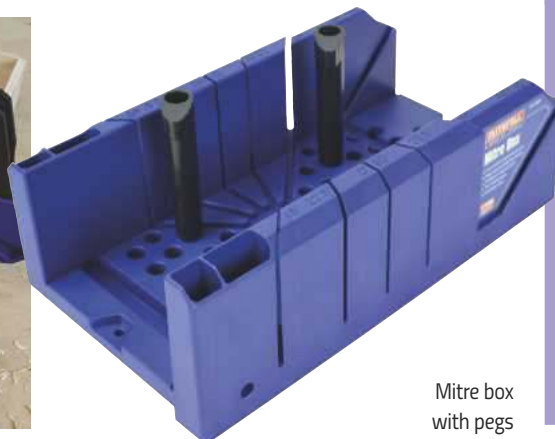
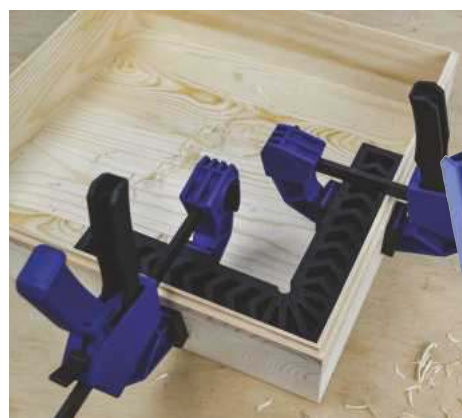
2 x 12in 70kg bar clamp & spreader  
– worth **£29.90**

### 4TH PRIZE:

1 x pack of 4 x 3in spring clamps  
– worth **£22.76**

### 5TH PRIZE:

1 x mitre box with pegs  
– worth **£15.49**



Mitre box with pegs

## HOW TO ENTER

To be in with a chance of winning 1 of 7 bar & spring clamp prizes, just visit [www.getwoodworking.com/competitions](http://www.getwoodworking.com/competitions) and answer this simple question:

**QUESTION:** How many product lines does Faithfull Tools have?

The winners will be randomly drawn from all correct entries. The closing date for the competition is **28 February 2020**.

Only one entry per person; multiple entries will be discarded. Employees of MyTimeMedia Ltd and Faithfull Tools are not eligible to enter this competition

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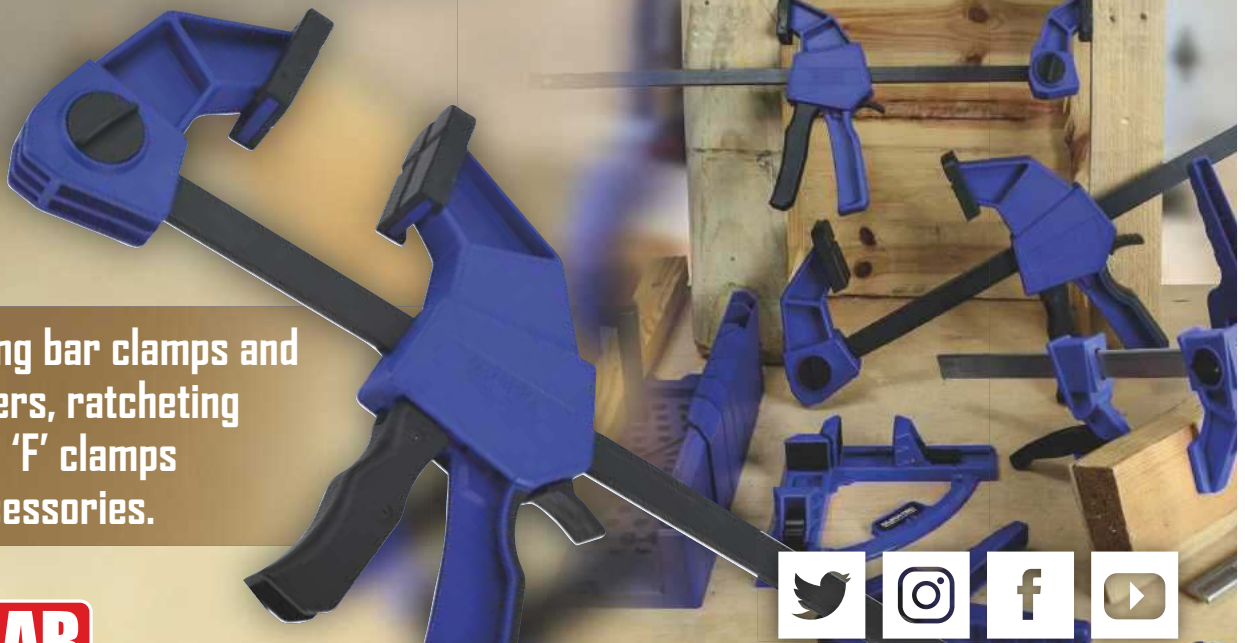
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# SERENDIPITY

Working with what turns up unexpectedly, **Robin Gates** makes natural hones from rocks, experiments with ivy wood and sloe, then shapes a side bead scratch tool from a rusty saw found on the riverbank

One of the joys of amateur woodwork is the freedom it allows to follow a whim, to saw, plane and chisel for no more profit than to satisfy curiosity. Projects spring to life out of nowhere, then develop a momentum all of their own – it's pure serendipity. If there's a skill gained or useful artefact to show for my efforts, so much the better, but sometimes the experience alone is reward enough.

The trade-off for working with what turns up unexpectedly is that things already planned down to the last screw and coat of paint often don't get built. But never mind them – look at this: I'm sharpening knives on rocks!

## Precious hones

The last time I walked Hergest Ridge, a high path crossing the English-Welsh border, I returned home with a palm-sized piece of mudstone I'd carried for most of the way. In wooded country I'd find a fallen branch to make a walking stick, but on this thinly vegetated track, trimmed short by rabbits and wild ponies, there's little woody stuff besides old gorse. Rock, on the other hand,



1 The mudstone hone and pocket knife

is abundant, and highly evocative of the upheavals which have shaped the land through millions of years – a suitable talisman for the journey.

Turning this piece as I walked, dusting my hands with its mud-coloured grains, I was reminded of a technique I'd been meaning to revisit for ages – using found fragments of rock as natural hones for sharpening tools. I'd had some success with slate, which cleaves naturally along planes of weakness producing conveniently flat surfaces, but subsequent attempts had been frustrated by rock that was too hard or rough to achieve a usable flat surface without resorting

to power tools. A further requirement, beyond moderate hardness and at least one reasonably flat face, is uniform texture. For a hone that'll sharpen and wear consistently, you need a fairly even grit size without random inclusions of harder or weaker material.

This new piece of rock from the borderlands (**photo 1**) boded well, feeling soft but not crumbly, and already flat as a cheese sandwich. Clearly it wouldn't be a stone to grind the nicks from a work-worn axe, it was too fine and giving for that, but when I sprinkled water onto it, then circled the edge of my pocket knife on its



2 Scraping a flat surface on slate



3 The scraper is a sawn-off screwdriver



4 Flattening on aluminium oxide abrasive

flattest face, I could already sense its gentle bite refining the cutting edge. The rudimentary honing was assisted by a slurry of loosened grains suspended in the water. In essence, what I had was something I'd never afforded nor quite understood – a natural water stone.

Making a hone is remarkably simple, requiring only scrapers, abrasive paper and effort. My scraper is the sawn-off shank from an old screwdriver, shown here while scraping down the high points of a piece of slate (**photos 2 & 3**). I'd found this sea-smoothed piece on a



5 Honing the home-made whittling knife



6 Working the back of a chisel on slate

Pembrokeshire beach and almost skimmed it out to sea. Having roughly levelled a surface with the scraper, I move to coarse aluminium oxide paper (**photo 4**). It isn't worth the effort of progressing to finer grades.

The larger the surface and the harder the rock, the more laborious is the work, so I've contented myself with small pieces, and they've become my most precious hones – natural working tools ingrained with memories of the landscape. And there's something else: sharpening with a hand-held rock is an intimate process. It connects with the way our ancestors have whetted their edge tools over thousands of years.

I use the mudstone for keeping an edge on my folding Opinel pocket knife, and also the short carving knife (**photo 5**) made from a piece of saw plate stuck in a hazel handle. Slate seems to lend itself to flattening a chisel's back (**photo 6**), while for the axe, concerned with removing wood fast rather than leaving a smooth surface, I use a coarser sandstone (**photo 7**). Sharpening has grown in complexity to spawn a confusing array of devices and techniques, filling whole treatises on the subject. Making hones from found rocks may be quirky, but they work and they're free.

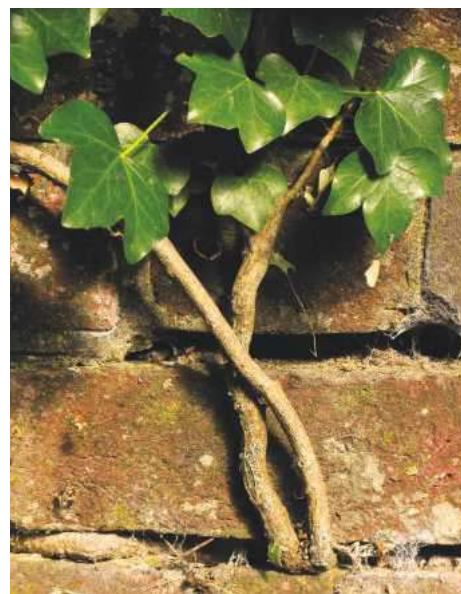


7 Honing the carpenter's axe

### Ivy wood

Our tiny garden yields little in the way of workable wood. The largest tree is a crab apple planted when we moved here five years ago, barely 10cm around its trunk. There's an inconveniently sited but stoutly upright holly that'll make a walking stick one day, otherwise mere trimmings I weave into hurdles around the compost heap. What it does have in abundance is ivy.

Ivy's habit of spreading far and wide has earned it an unfortunate reputation as a tree-killer and destroyer of buildings. Certainly ivy's aerial roots, dense as bristles on a toothbrush, cling so firmly to walls that they'll often rip old mortar from between the bricks if stems are pulled away. Shoots infiltrating brickwork and expanding with age (**photo 8**) can dislodge mortar to such an extent that a wall may even collapse.



8 Ivy stems wedge mortar from brick walls



9 A Red Admiral nectaring on ivy flowers



10 The Wingfield & Co pruning saw



11 Stripping bark with the Opinel knife

With regard to killing trees, the evidence against ivy is less clear. Trees smothered by it and felled by strong winds are often found to have been diseased or already dead – elms, especially. Ivy itself is not a parasite. Its aerial roots used to climb the trunk are there for attachment; they don't sap the tree's nourishment.

In any case ivy is vital to wildlife, sheltering beneficial insects, even supporting birds' nests among its knotted stems. For bees and butterflies emerging in autumn its nectar-rich flowers are life savers (photo 9). That's why I delayed pruning the ivy until its evergreen shade was encroaching on our living room.

The popularity of Japanese saws in Western woodwork is a relatively recent thing, but gardeners have been using pruning saws with similarly backward-pointing teeth for generations.



13 Working over the ivy with the short knife

Mine is a centenarian, made by Wingfield & Co of Sheffield, with typical sickle-shaped blade (photo 10). While sawing through sappy, pinching ivy stems growing hard against a wall, I was reminded of the advantages of a saw cutting on the pull stroke – chiefly, no risk of buckling.

Most of what I pruned was no bigger round than a pencil, and twisted like helical strands of DNA (the Latin name *Hedera helix* is very apt) but with the last cut of the day I salvaged a more substantial piece, and felt the urge to make something with it. For weeks the bend of ivy defied a use, lingering on the bench while I returned in odd moments to strip the bark with my pocket knife (photo 11). Then, pulling back the bathroom curtain as I'd done a thousand times before, and wishing the curtain opened further to let in more precious winter sun, I saw this loop of ivy's exact place and purpose – as a curtain holdback.

Holding odd shapes like this always calls for some improvisation, and while planing a flat for the ivy to sit firmly on the window sill I cobbled together a set-up of holdfast, clamp and blocks (photo 12). The end-grain carved neatly (see main photo) leaving well-defined



14 Ivy's starburst of medullary ray

facets, but for the bathroom I imagined a surface like driftwood, and worked over it with my short knife to create dimples as though weathered by wind and waves (photo 13).

In cross-section ivy's medullary ray shows like a starburst (photo 14), and if not for its contorted growth the pale fine-grained timber could make a substitute for holly.

But in terms of practicality, the problem with ivy lies in finding wood large and straight enough to make more than a shapely detail. Still, it's a satisfying twist that the ivy, which had been



12 Improvised clamping for planing the ivy



15 A holdback for the bathroom curtain



16 Sloe blossom massed around thorns



17 Sloes resemble plums but are sour



18 A branchy log found beneath a power line



19 Sawing into lengths convenient for splitting



20 The wood split into twisted pieces



21 Medullary ray like driven sleet



22 Using the corner vice with supporting block



23 Working around the twist with the Stanley 53



24 The sloe spatula finished with walnut oil

darkening our home, is now working to let in more light (**photo 15**).

### Sloe spatula

Another species yielding awkward timber is the sloe or blackthorn. Defended by thorns like 3in nails, sloe is a natural equivalent of barbed wire – as it's Latin name (*Prunus spinosa*) suggests – 'spiny plum tree'. Its best-known use is for the shillelagh, the Irish fighting stick, and I imagine a knotty piece of sloe crowned by a hammer head of swollen root would be a persuasive ally.

Sloe does have its agreeable side. Before other trees have put out so much as a leaf the sloe is already dazzling with its pure white blossom (**photo 16**), massing around the dark thorns, and then in autumn come its namesake fruits

– the purplish black sloes (**photo 17**). Pricked all over and steeped in sugared gin, these sour fruits are the magic ingredient for sloe gin that whets the appetite for Christmas.

But for a peaceful spell of woodwork, why bother with thorny sloe? For one thing, I just happened to find some portable logs beside a footpath (**photo 18**), evidently the work of an electricity company maintaining access to its power lines. And for another thing, an occasional battle with untamed timber is a much-needed antidote to the bland plantation 'whitewood' to be found at my local DIY store.

Back home I sawed the branchy logs into tidier lengths (**photo 19**) convenient for splitting with the froe. Upholding its near relationship to the plum and cherry, sloe's sawdust sweetened

the dry shed air like marzipan, but the splitting proceeded less sweetly as the wood revealed its tortured soul, pulling apart in twisted billets (**photo 20**). Looking into a cross-cut end, the sun, rain and wind seemed etched into the light and shade of its annual rings, with medullary ray driving through it all like sleet (**photo 21**). These splintered pieces looked no better than firewood, but they deserved a better fate than burning.

The sloe lay in the shed for months, sheltering spiders, only becoming drier and more difficult to work, until I happened to be reading about 'slow food', grown locally and cooked with care, and I thought: why not a sloe spatula? It was an awful pun, but potentially a useful one in the kitchen.

Embracing the ruggedness of the wood, I chose a piece twisted through 90°, gradually working its torn surfaces flat with planes and spokeshaves, rounding one end into a handle while thinning the other as a blade for shunting food around the pan.

A tool I find invaluable for taming wildly shaped wood is my corner vice, which has enough play in its jaws to swallow almost anything. It clamps exactly where needed in seconds, holding the wood at right angles to the edge of the bench. For longer wood, it's supplemented by a supporting block placed further into the bench (**photo 22**). Of the various spokeshaves I used the Stanley 53 (**photo 23**) was the most useful because its adjustable mouth could be tuned to the vagaries of the grain. As far as possible, I wanted to preserve the sloe's natural twist showing so nicely in the rich brown streak of its heartwood.

After gentle abrading with a handful of shavings, the only finishing required was a wipe over with food-friendly walnut oil (**photo 24**). Then it was off to the frying pan for this sliver of sloe, where its 90° twist has turned out to be quite effective at flipping mushrooms and sliced tomatoes to fry both sides evenly.



25 The rusty saw found on the riverbank



26 Cutting the blade with Gilbow metal shears



27 Filing down saw teeth to make a straightedge



28 Shaping the side bead profile



29 Squaring up oak to make the stock



30 Notched L-shaped pieces sandwich the cutter



31 Keeping the fence up to the edge of the wood

### Side bead scratch

In a year of litter-picking, filling bags with empty cans and plastic bottles, the only reusable items I found were elastic bands dropped by the postman, the odd pencil fallen from a school bag, and the inevitable woodscrews in the gutter wherever building work was underway. Then I found a hand saw (photo 25).

It was February, on a footpath beside the River Lugg, when its yellow handle greeted me through the leafless vegetation like a lop-sided smiley face. My excitement was short-lived. This wasn't a saw I might have wished for – wooden handle, steel you can sharpen with a file – but an exhausted Stanley Fatmax with hard-point teeth, heavily rusted and caked in mud. The saw was designed to be thrown away, but surely not here beside the burbling river. Being a litter-picker and a woodworker to boot I could hardly leave it there, and carried the saw for the rest of the walk, impatient to dispose of it properly at the first opportunity.

But as I walked I couldn't help wondering if the saw might still cut, and instead of sending it on its way to landfill via the litter bin, I took it home. That idea proved a non-starter, however. Scraped free of mud, and missing several teeth, the saw barely scratched the surface of a log. But never mind, because another idea was hatched – the blade could provide the steel required to make a scratch tool.

The scratch tool consists of a profiled cutter adjustably mounted in a wooden stock that's also shaped with a notch working as a fence. With the fence against the edge of the wood, the tool is worked back and forth literally scratching a detail into the surface. Often the detail is no more than a quirk, a single groove scraped by a pointed cutter, but the shadow it makes can lift a surface to another dimension.

My first step was to cut the blade into workable pieces, which was tough on the hands despite using heavy-duty Gilbow metal shears and wearing gloves (photo 26). The pieces were then submerged in white vinegar for two days to remove rust, followed by rubbing with wet-and-dry abrasive and WD40. The years lying on wet earth had left the steel severely pitted, but after filing down the teeth (photo 27), I found an edge strong enough to shape the profile for a side bead (photo 28), as frequently used at the overlap of cupboard doors. I filed the edge straight across, similar to a cabinet scraper but without a hook.

For the stock I planed up a piece of oak (photo 29), sawed a notch to make the fence and then sawed through the thickness to leave two L-shaped pieces for sandwiching the cutter (photo 30).

I joined them with brass screws because, in oak, steel screws would rust. The edges of the notch were chamfered to allow the tool to be leaned slightly in the direction of scratching, and also used around bends. A finishing coat of Danish oil and this tool was ready to scratch.

Good moulding planes don't come cheap, and the techniques of using them are surrounded by mystique, but this home-made equivalent brings the subject right down to earth – quite literally, having sprung from a rusty saw scavenged from the riverbank. Using a scratch tool is as simple as scribing with a marking gauge. It's important to keep the fence up to the edge (photo 31) and to stop occasionally to clear the build-up of tiny shavings, but in no time the cutter has scratched a tidy side bead into the wood (photo 32). ✂



32 The scratch tool and its side bead

# Photographic guidelines for THE ALAN PETERS FURNITURE AWARD 2020

Organiser of the Alan Peters Furniture Award 2020, **Jeremy Broun**, gives his advice on photographing submitted pieces and ensuring you're selling your work to the very best of your ability

**A**nyone who remembers the classic film *To Kill a Mockingbird* will remember the famous quote by Gregory Peck: "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view..."

If you're a woodworker considering entering the Alan Peters Furniture Award (see pages 34–35) and in particular choosing images to submit for your application, please put yourself in the shoes of the judges and consider what they are looking for.

What would you look for when considering buying a car or bicycle? Evidence of rust? Evidence of wear? The state of the tyres, etc.?

A piece of original contemporary furniture that is being judged initially on photographic evidence, is done so on its functionality, visual appeal, innovation and quality of craftsmanship. It has to convey a lot of information in just a few images. Anything that involves flat and curved features and intersections of pieces of wood (e.g. joints) has to convey a lot of detail and it is detail that a professional photographer is unlikely to have the knowledge to look for.

## Six required images

So the first question to ask is whether you need a professional photographer for the six images required for this award? The answer is no, because it is unlikely the photographer would know the piece as intimately as you and the purpose of the images is not for publicity material where plain backgrounds and creative lighting is required.

Save yourself time and money by doing your own photography and you may be able to use your mobile phone or consider borrowing a friend's digital camera.

What is required for this award is a collection of clearly lit high resolution shots. In my travels among furniture makers, I am almost dumbfounded that so many woodworkers know the correct pitch of a dovetail joint on furniture that costs a megabuck, but do not understand what a megabyte is!

All you need to know is the minimum image quality required, which is 3MB. Anything with lower resolution means that when we, the judges, zoom into the shot to look for an important detail, the image does not become blurred or 'pixelated'.

Please bear in mind that if you submit a high resolution image that captures important features, that those features can be zoomed in on by the judges. So in effect those six images, if the angles and shots are comprehensive, will offer sufficient information for the judges in order to see how well the piece is made, or how it has been made.

Let's take an example: the chest of drawers shown here depicts a good 3D view (**photo 1**) and there are various features that will need zooming in on. Points of interest are the scalloped carving, the drawer joint and



1 In this chest of drawers, you can clearly see a good 3D view



2 The front face is well lit so the detailing is easy to see





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# THE ALAN PETERS FURNITURE AWARD 2020

Don't miss out on the opportunity to be part of this prestigious annual award, which champions UK furniture designing and making talent while celebrating the life and work of the late Alan Peters OBE



Alan Peters' 'Fan table'

This newly evolved annual award celebrates the legacy of one of Britain's most prominent furniture designer-makers of the late 20th century – Alan Peters OBE – while aiming to encourage emerging talent in the craft of furniture design and making.

Any woodworker who is a resident UK citizen over the age of 18, and who has a passion and talent for designing and making contemporary furniture, is invited to submit up to two items of furniture that echo the philosophy of Alan Peters. Judging is based on the appropriate use of wood, the quality of workmanship, functionality and originality of design. Both one-off designs and potential batch-produced designs are encouraged.

Applicants should be familiar with the work of Alan Peters prior to applying and are encouraged to read Jeremy Broun's 64-page video-integrated online e-book, which is offered free-of-charge (via the website link opposite).

### The man behind the award

Alan Peters OBE (1933–2009) was one of Britain's most prominent furniture designer-makers of the latter part of the 20th century. He was apprenticed to Edward Barnsley and had a direct link to the English Arts and Crafts Movement. He was hugely influential internationally in his practice, teaching and publications. Above all, his respect and understanding of how wood behaves and the value of hand skill, yet moving tradition forward, resulted in the creation of many timeless pieces. He created affordable functional furniture, which was made to last, making an art of his craft in some of his subtle innovations.

### History of the award

The original award was called 'The Alan Peters Award For Excellence' and was initiated by Jason Heap in 2010. The prize was offered to three winners, each of whom were given free exhibition space alongside the professionals at his annual furniture exhibition in Cheltenham. The award ran for eight years, and some of the past winning pieces are shown here. The judges were Jason Heap, Keith Newton and Jeremy Broun.



Alan Peters chest with silver inlay



Anais Dancet's '10 Degrees' stackable stool – a 2012 winner of The Alan Peters Award For Excellence

### Award judges

**Jeremy Broun** (organiser) – designer-maker and co-exhibitor with Alan Peters 1978–2002;  
**Andrew Lawton** – designer-maker who worked with Alan Peters and on his last commission;  
**Keith Newton** – early apprentice and employee of Alan Peters for 21 years.



Chris Wiseman's 'Oak Within' sideboard – 2016 winner of The Alan Peters Award For Excellence



Alan Peters and Jeremy Broun in 2005

## PRIZES OFFERED

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£1,000 Axminster Tools & Machinery voucher

### 2nd prize

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### 3rd prize

£300 Judges' prize

Winning pieces will be exhibited at Axminster's Nuneaton store and then at The Wilson Gallery (Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum).

Award deadline is **30 May 2020**. Entries can be submitted any time up to this date. A £20 entry fee applies and a maximum of two entries can be made (£20 per entry).

The judging ceremony will be held at Axminster's Nuneaton store on 29 June 2020, and an exhibition at the store will run from 1–13 July 2020.

Following this, the pieces will then be exhibited at The Wilson Gallery – dates to be confirmed.

To download an application form and the 64-page e-book, please visit [www.woodomain.com/alanpetersaward](http://www.woodomain.com/alanpetersaward). The form can be found at the right of the page. Payment for entry can also be made securely via the website.

For further information, please contact either Group Editor, Tegan Foley ([tegan.foley@mytimemedia.com](mailto:tegan.foley@mytimemedia.com)), Organiser, Jeremy Broun ([jb@woodomain.com](mailto:jb@woodomain.com))



Alan Peters chest

# Unboxing imagination

A screen of wood shavings from *The Woodworker* of July 1967 has Robin Gates pondering the relationship between form and technique

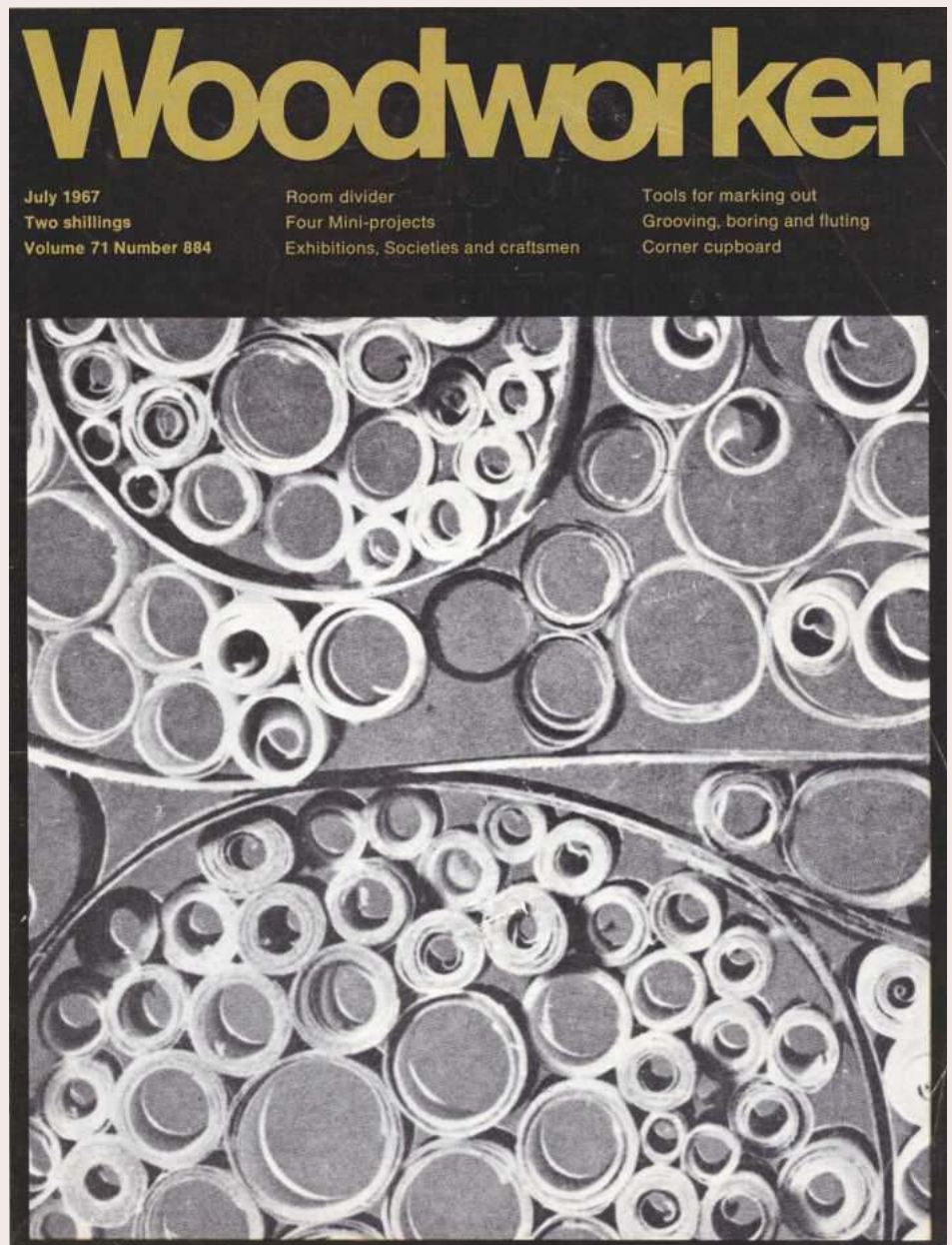
This intriguingly abstract image from the July 1967 cover of *the Woodworker* shows part of a screen made by Sally Ann Cook using wood shavings and veneer strip. Representing just a detail of the structure, the much-enlarged grain of the film stock of the day only adds to the mystery and charm of the image.

Mystery because the uncertainty of what I'm seeing makes me think of plant cells under the microscope, crop circles (remember those?), clock springs, the tracery of ecclesiastical carving and bus tickets I wound around my fingers on a Southdown double-decker. And charm because the infinite pixels in a photograph today capture a subject so clinically as to almost suck the life out of it, and so easily, leaving me longing for the grainy days of black and white film photography when, as a boy, I'd develop negatives in a little black tank in the kitchen sink, then to spend an evening printing under the red safety light of our attic darkroom.

## An experimental decade

I digress, the subject being woodwork, yet woodwork can be so much more than the mere sum of its parts. Thinking only of materials and tools, we're in danger of making perfectly four-square structures and that's all, boxing in our imagination with boxes of our own construction. Which is why I'm invariably excited by the form of something and the thoughts it triggers before turning to the methods used to make it. It's a craftsman's skill to affect the onlooker in that order, although some exponents of the Arts and Crafts seem to engage us with both things at once – solid, enduring furniture evoking old England's rural past yet with joints and hardware as plain as the workings of a steam locomotive. Historically, where there was a job to do and less fussing with aesthetics, in timber buildings and wooden ships for example, we find the two things – form and technique – given equal prominence purely as a consequence of necessity. The most practical techniques for building barns and boats out of trees just happened to result in appealing shapes bearing visible treenails and marks of the adze.

Returning to Sally Ann Cook's screen, this must resonate with every woodworker who's used a drawknife or plane, watching translucent shavings peel from the edge and fall in golden



curls to the floor. The idea of making an object of such functional beauty from what's normally discarded is delightful, turning the dry precepts of the textbook on their heads.

The 1960s was an experimental decade, flowering in weird, wonderful and sometimes best forgotten ways, yet allowing the handwork of traditional crafts to grow obsolete under relentless pressure for newness and ease. Consequently, were a likeness of this screen to be made now it'd be handled with computer-aided design and CNC machinery.

## Present & future

While I wallow in nostalgia, thank goodness those teaching in schools and colleges keep their eyes on the present and future, driving the craft and industry forwards. This was surely

true of tutor John Gaylard whose summary of the Vocational Craft Course at Medway College of Art in Rochester accompanied photos of this screen and other pieces made by students. Back in 1967, the school leaver would spend their first year in general studies before getting to grips with a broad base of crafts in the second year: ceramics, jewellery, silversmithing and woodwork. Those specialising in Furniture and Fine Woodwork would then learn everything from draughtsmanship to business methods, perhaps leading to a career as a chairmaker, toymaker or, something I'd not considered, a craftsman-modelmaker, fabricating the tiny models required by architects and, I'm guessing, those fascinating miniature townscape in museums which recreate the High Street as it was when a wheelwright's shop stood where McDonald's stands today. ✂

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# SITTING PRETTY

Commissioned to make a dressing table in oak, **Robert Couldwell** comes up with a design to suit a small and narrow space



**M**y first major joinery project was an oak computer desk for my daughter (see April 2013 issue of *The Woodworker*) and much to my surprise, was admired by several of her friends. One of them actually commissioned me to make a dressing table in a similar style. I did warn the 'customer' that I was not really a joiner or cabinetmaker, but she was determined. She liked the hidden drawer style featured in the original design, but wanted them deeper and as her bedroom is quite small, the dressing table needed to be shallower. Fortunately, she also liked the contrasting wood strip, which I used to accentuate the joints and disguise my lack of experience and skill at jointing.

I drew up some sketches and had to negotiate dimensions as I needed to use the standard machined boards available from the local timber

yard. So 295mm deep became 290mm and the drawer depth of 150mm became 145mm. The dimensions were approved, a price agreed and I got started.



1 Cutting down the back panel on a vertical panel saw

## Raw materials

In hindsight I was dissatisfied with the MDF I had used for the spacers and bottom of the drawer box in the desk. I therefore decided



2 Clamping a straightedge to guide the biscuit jointer

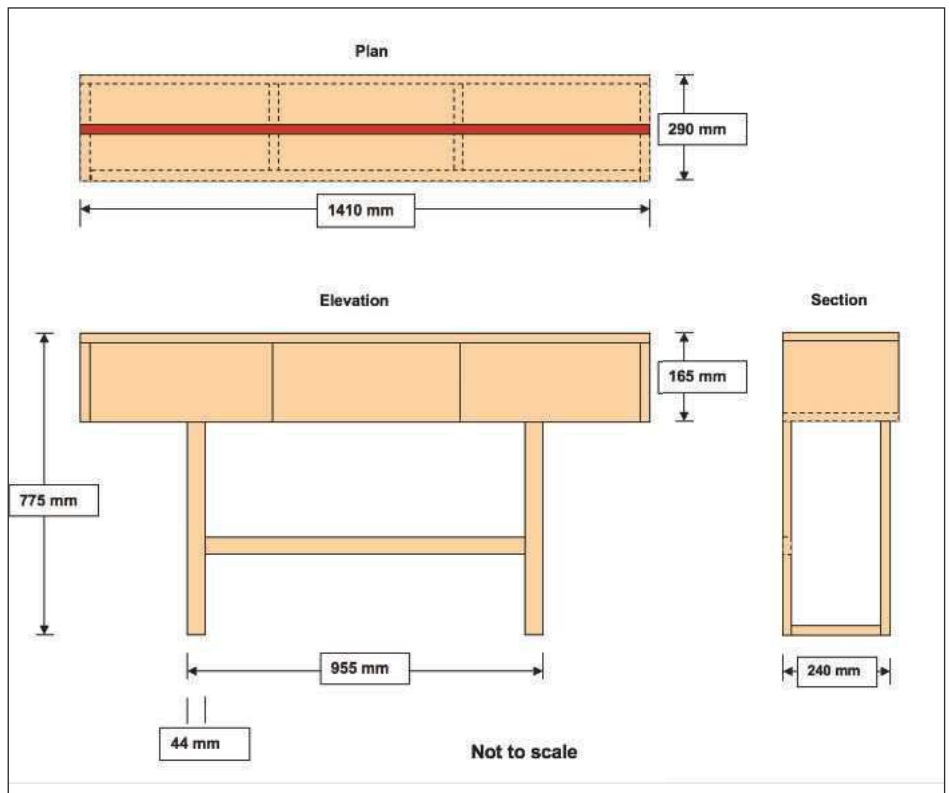


Fig.1 Dressing table dimensions

20mm oversize and routed a rebate down one side. This would accommodate the contrasting strip once the pieces were joined. This time, I made the rebates deeper to reduce the amount of sanding required after the strip was inserted.

### Coming together

I cut biscuit slots in the edges of the four boards and carefully brushed PVA glue into the slots and onto the joint faces. With scrap strips taped to the oak edges, I clamped both top and bottom boards together overnight. I had deliberately made the slots narrower than required and routed the contrasting strips to fit in the slots and, once satisfied, glued them in place. Once the glue had dried, I cut the joined boards to the correct length on the vertical panel saw. The bottom of the unit was narrower by two widths of the oak to be used for the ends of the 'box'. I could have got away with joining the bottom boards without the contrasting strip but there would always be some 'clever Dick' who'd look underneath and spot a poor joint.

### Drawers

The vertical panel saw is really designed for cutting sheet materials. However, with its mid height shelf it proved very good for sizing lengths of hard and softwood, such as the back of the drawer box, which needed to be reduced by 19mm (photo 1).

I now constructed the drawer box by joining the top and bottom using biscuit joints for the two intermediate supports and two ends. It is vital that the biscuit slots in the top are in line with the bottom to ensure perpendicular dividers between the drawers. Therefore the top and bottom were carefully lined up side by side and the positions of the dividers measured and

marked on the boards. Biscuit-jointing ends is fool-proof but more difficult in the middle of boards. Therefore a straightedge was clamped in position across both boards against which the biscuit jointer could rest (photo 2).

Further biscuit slots were cut in the ends and back of the drawer box and PVA glue was brushed onto the relevant surfaces. The whole box was then clamped overnight (photo 3).



3 The drawer box biscuit jointed and ready to assemble



4 Drawer fronts, backs and sides slotted to accept the plywood bottom

that the dressing table would be made entirely of oak, which probably only added £15 to the material cost. Oak is so much nicer to work than MDF and doesn't blunt saw blades to anywhere near the same extent.

### Making a start

I had once again spent a lot of time choosing oak boards, which were straight and true and selected the very best for the drawer fronts, which needed to appear as one piece of wood. Those for the top and sides were also carefully selected and any imperfections relegated to the bottom and back.

After producing the original desk, I now had some experience and hopefully would make fewer mistakes. I'm glad my wife knows nothing about joinery, which means I am the only one aware of my errors! I used two 145 x 19mm boards each, for top and bottom, which I cut



5 Sacrificial piece of wood to ensure clean routing



6 Drawer components ready to assemble



7 Testing drawer fit before gluing



8 Using rule against the saw blade to ensure accuracy

### Making the drawers

On the previously constructed desk the fronts of the drawers were cut to be deeper than the box to create a lip for fingers to pull them open. It occurred to me that to give more depth to the drawers I could just rout a curved rebate into the bottom of the drawer box, thus giving

an extra 19mm of space. This rebate was carefully sanded so that a young lady's finger nails would not be compromised.

The drawers themselves were made simply by routing a slot in a suitable length of softwood to accept the plywood bottoms and rebating the front and rear rails into which the sides would engage. Sacrificial softwood adjacent to the workpiece was used to ensure clean routing, just in case the same 'clever Dick' pulled a drawer out to inspect it (photos 4 & 5).

It's a good idea to make each drawer specifically for the space into which it will fit as it is always difficult to measure the openings exactly (photo 6). Once the individual drawer components are cut, I advise clamping the pieces together and trying the un-glued drawers in each opening (photo 7). My newly developed skill with my old electric planer means I can, if necessary, now plane the drawers to fit accurately. Mind you, it has taken me 20 years to get there!

I wondered if this drawer fit was just an 'amateur' problem, so pulled out the drawers of a fine antique 'Heal's' writing table and discovered that each of the two drawers would not fit the other opening, and if Heal's couldn't do it in 1904, what hope for little old me! To ensure accuracy when cross-cutting, I used a rule against the blade (photo 8).

Once a good fit was established for each drawer, these could be glued and clamped overnight. In this case, I don't know whether it's correct practice to clamp all three drawers together but provided 'squareness' is checked, it takes up a lot less space (photo 9).

The precision of the drawer fronts was probably the key to the success of this project and to ensure clean cuts on the chop saw, sacrificial plywood was placed under and behind the oak lengths (photo 10).

Using mitre glue to position the oak fronts of the drawers had proven successful when



9 Drawers clamped together



10 Sacrificial plywood on chop saw to ensure perfect cuts



11 Curved rebate to open drawers and first drawer front mitre glued



12 Set of components for leg frame

making the desk, so I chose to use the method again (photo 11). Once nicely lined up with tight gaps, the drawer fronts were secured by screws through the drawer boxes.

### The legs

The dressing table was going into a very small bedroom via a winding, narrow staircase, so I therefore felt it better to make the legs as a separate frame, which could be removed for moving. The nine components were made from the standard 44 × 19mm American oak sections. I cut the components to length and started by making them all oversize, then cutting matching rails together to ensure accuracy. The small amount of waste is



13 Leg frames Domino jointed

justified for an amateur by the extra precision (photo 12). A Domino jointer was used to assemble the leg frames and they were glued and clamped overnight (photo 13 & 14). The rear cross rail was then Domino jointed and clamped over another night (photo 15).

Before final assembly of the dressing table,

all surfaces were coated with matt, water-based varnish using a roller for the large surfaces and a brush for the crevices. I have found that this finish retains the colour of the oak and is extremely durable. Finally, two holes were drilled in the top rail of each leg frame and the assembly fixed to the top with screws. ✂



14 Leg frames clamped together



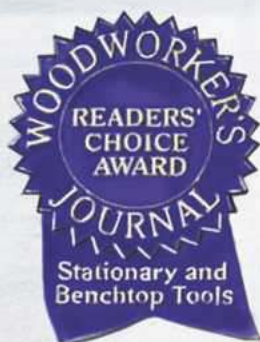
15 The back rail Domino jointed to leg frames and clamped



16 The completed oak dressing table in situ

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# WOODWORKER'S ENCYCLOPAEDIA **PART 12**

**A-Z**

This time round, **Peter Bishop** discusses cutting quality, mouldings, framing and jointing, among a load of other interesting topics

## Deep cutting or deeping

A deep cut is made in a plank or section of wood that is turned on its edge and cut through the widest point. We might take a piece of 2x6 and turn it into two pieces of 1x6, or its metric equivalent. Timber that has been deeped often cups and you get the two pieces curving in towards each other; this is because the outer skin is dryer than the core. Leaving the pieces to equalise often cures the problem. Very occasionally, deeped stuff will cup the other way – outwards. This is a drying issue again;

the outside is damper than the core. For most small stuff we can deep cut in the workshop. For large sections there are commercial, factory-installed bandsaws that are dedicated to carrying out this type of cut.

## Defects

What is a defect? Well, one could argue that it is anything that reduces the value of the timber being viewed. It could also be something that causes waste – such as cutting round a knot, for example. The problem is that a cabinetmaker

might reject a piece of wood because it has too many knots in it, but a pallet maker might not. Apart from the obvious defects such as warping, splitting, rot and insect attack, the timber you buy should be fit for purpose. Structural timbers should be graded to provide stuff strong enough to do the job; wood for furniture could have some small knots and blemishes and so on. All timber should be graded and sold in a range of qualities; we'll discuss grading in the future. In short, one man's defect could be another's feature! ▶



Resawing a tall walnut board on a bandsaw



Warped timber



Rotten wood

### Delamination

In the timber world context, delamination normally applies to man-made boards, such as plywood, coming apart and separating due to the failure of the joining adhesive.

### Density

We refer to how dense a piece of wood is by weighing it in our hands or trying to drive a nail into it. The harder and heavier it is, the denser it's likely to be. If we wish to be a bit more scientific about it, and make comparisons, we should use samples of a set size and compare like with like. In the day-to-day run of things, it's simpler to know that fixing hard, dense wood requires a different approach to a softer, light one – pilot holes for both screws and nails, for example.



Exterior dentil trim moulding

### Dentils & dentil mouldings

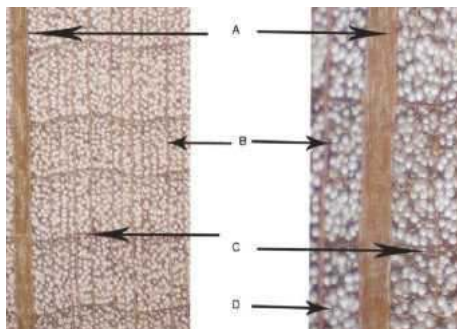
We recognise dentils and dentil moulding by their gapped, block appearance running through a length of decorative moulding. They vary in shape and size but are fairly easy to produce. Some will be part of a larger moulding; some will be made and added later. A dentil is the sort of thing you'll find in a cornice running around a room or on the top of a piece of furniture.



Air-drying a timber stack

### Diamonding

This is a distortion of the cross-section profile of a piece of wood and is the result of the drying process. Where planks or posts are cut from the log will affect their shapes as they dry. Radially, from the middle out, there is little shrinkage in the cell structure. Tangentially, across the grain, there will be more. Combining these two together means that one face will shrink more than another. A square section might then end up as a 'diamond' shape.



Cross-section of beech – a diffuse porous wood

### Diffuse porous

Diffuse porous describes the cellular structure of most tropical hardwoods when viewed on the end-grain. What it means is that growth, in general, has been continuous and not interrupted by seasonal variations. The spread of visible cells is therefore fairly even. Annual growth rings are not apparent with diffuse porous timbers. The shape, position and size, etc. can help us to identify specific timbers. These 'gross' features will be common to each specie, thus enabling us to determine what it is, as long as we have the knowledge to do so.



Stacks of dimensional lumber

### Dimension stock

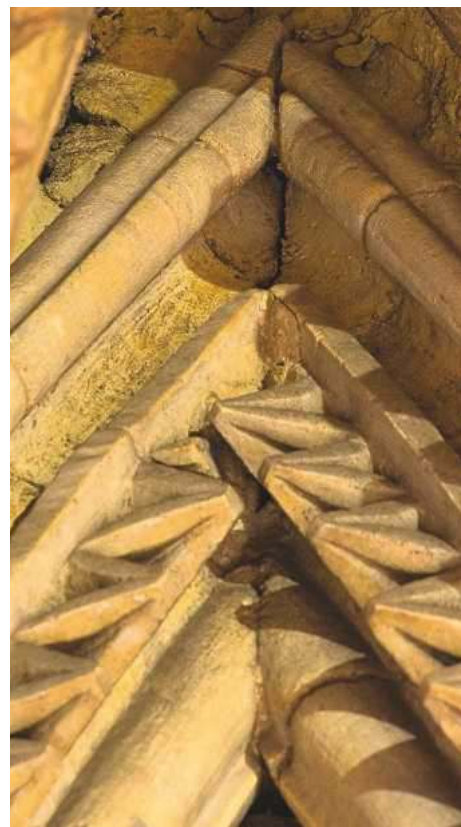
This is really a trade term that refers to stacks, piles, bundles, etc. of planks that are all the same cross-sectional size: 2x4in, for example. Random stock, the alternative, has a common thickness but a varied width. Dimension stock will be mostly found when buying softwoods.



Warped timber

### Distortion

We might describe a plank of wood as distorted, which is the same as warped. Both can cover a range of twists, bows and bends, etc.



Messy junction of dog-tooth mouldings at Lincoln Cathedral

### Dog's-tooth mouldings

This is a fancy moulding made with curved, pyramidal projections. It's not that common and I'm not sure I've ever seen or used this!



Festool Domino joiner DF 700 EQ-Set Domino XL



Using the Festool Domino XL DF 700 to make mitred joints

### Domino joiner

This is a tool similar to a biscuit joiner. The difference is that this one makes the opposing mortise holes for a loose tenon to fit into. The loose tenons are made from compressed beech and, like a biscuit joint, these will swell when fixed using water-based adhesive. A great, additional bit of kit, if you can afford to have one.



A softwood door lining and casing from Metsä Wood

### Door casings & linings

This is the three-piece, internal frame into which the door will be fitted and fixed. Often referred to as door linings, they are usually made with simple joints at the top and are then fixed into/onto the sub strata material, making sure they are vertical and squared across the top.



An external softwood door frame

### Door frame

Door frames are made with four, joined pieces into which the door is fitted and fixed. Slightly different from a casing, the door frame is generally used for an external door and incorporates a cill at the bottom. Because these are for external use, they are likely to be made from more substantial stuff than a casing.

### Door furniture & door suite

Anything that is fitted or fixed to a door can be called furniture, but excludes hinges and locks. Door handles, knockers, letter boxes, push plates, etc. are all pieces of door furniture. A door suite can be described as a full set of furniture for one door.

### Door posts, cills & heads

These are four components that make up a door frame. Posts each side, cill at the bottom, and head at the top.

### Door stop

Door casings and linings are usually supplied with strips of loose, batten wood that are fixed in place after the door is hung. They are the door stops that prevent the door passing through the frame against which it rests when closed. Door frames will, generally, have been moulded in such a way as to create a rebate for the door to fit into. Door stops are also the fittings that may stop it opening too far or against something.



A pair of dormer windows

### Dormer window

These are the vertical windows that you'll see projecting out of a sloping roof. They come in all shapes and sizes and are installed to provide light in low ceilinged rooms.

### Dot

We might describe some wood as 'doty' because it's showing signs of fungal attack and probably smells mouldy. Poking a fingernail into a suspect patch will often tell you if it's soft and doty!



Japanese dovetail joint by Theo Cook



John Bullar cutting a dovetail joint by hand

### Dovetail joint

One of the most easily recognisable woodworking joints, this versatile variation comes in many forms and guises. Anything from a simple through dovetail to a complex secret or twisted example. Its beauty not only lies in its looks, but in the strength it imparts when made well.



10mm oak dowel



A selection of wooden dowel pins

### Dowel & dowels

You can buy lengths of dowel, timber that has a moulded, round cross-section, or short round and flat dowels for jointing. Most DIY sheds will have a rack of dowel lengths, and other mouldings, that you can seek out and find if you need it. The shorter, round dowels can be purchased in various diameters and lengths for making simple joints. Flat dowels, or biscuits as we tend to call them, can be bought in a similar fashion.



A commercially-available Lie-Nielsen dowel plate



My simple homemade dowel plate

### Dowel plate

If you fancy making your own round dowels, you can use a 'plate'. This is a simple, flat section of steel with various sized holes drilled into it. To make your dowels, it's best to pre-cut them to slightly oversize and then hammer them through the hole. Beware of cross-grained, too dense or too light stuff, as these will break easily or not go through at all. You can make your own plate, like me, from the bar in a sash cramp. On the tail end, simply bore out a couple of the retaining holes to different sizes, and there you have it! ✂

### NEXT MONTH

In part 13 of this series, Peter will look at more terms from drip groove, to edger saw, to Dutch elm disease

# STEALING ALUMINIUM



## Gareth Jones recounts life as a jobbing joiner in the 1970s and his encounter with a gang of crooks

**A** growing culture of theft dogged many of the small firms which sprang up in the town where I earned a living as a jobbing joiner in the '70s. Chancers from outside the area were seizing the opportunity to pay low wages in what had become a very depressed area following the closure of both local collieries and huge railway engineering sheds. Unemployment was high.

The workers retaliated, predictably, by helping themselves to, well, whatever they could lay their hands on, really. This was brought home to me quite forcibly once when I asked a chap in a pub whether they had any ramin in stock at his works, where a lot of high-end joinery and cabinetmaking took place.

I was doing some fitted bathroom cupboards with bought-in louvred doors in ramin and had run short of the framing material. Hand on heart, all I wanted to know was whether I would be able to buy in what I needed locally – and legally – from his firm, instead of having to trek up to Merseyside for it. “What kind of lengths and sizes do you want?” he asked.

### Exotic timbers...

“Say 3ft of 2x1, mostly,” I replied. He stood up and ran a finger along the seam of his trousers as if making a calculation. “Can’t help you. 2ft, as many as you like. Say four a shift. Get you 20 in a week, but I won’t get away with 3fts. Won’t get them past the guy on the gate.”

I never got round to asking for a price, but I have a feeling they would have been on the house. The pleasure of relieving his rich employer of a few bob would have been payment enough. That was the prevailing mindset, and it was very sad that things had come to this.

It wasn’t just ramin that was disappearing down overall trouser legs from his place of

business. One contract that was keeping the place afloat was a valuable one from Otis Lifts for sheikdoms in the middle east. Exotic timbers were being bought in.

Ours must have been one of the few towns in the land where you could walk down the garden path of a two-up two-down terraced property and spend a penny in an outside earth closet constructed from Honduras mahogany with ebony window frames and the interior lined in sandalwood with inlaid tulipwood and kingwood cross-banding. And the roof tiled in *lignum vitae*.

### Magnificent doors

This was at the lower end of the social scale. Higher up, the son-in-law of the chairman and managing director of one of the other big firms worked for his wife’s father in a fairly menial role befitting his half-wittedness. Father-in-law was a sound but rather naive chap, who had built the business from scratch and was puzzled by the way a massive increase in turnover and the payroll was not translating into higher profits. His work-shy son-in-law made the fatal mistake of asking the boss home for a meal, and inviting him into the huge new conservatory for a drink. The old man shuffled over to have a look at the magnificent doors, and gave them a sniff. “Burmese teak, unless I am very much mistaken,” he said, “you’re fired.”

As most firms continued to prosper despite the high level of thieving, the embezzlement of raw materials became more organised, as I found to my everlasting shame while working on one of several joinery contracts for the Mitchell and Butler’s brewery. We were already their preferred manufacturer of hefty eight-seater picnic tables, made in a colourful softwood called Wellingtonia from Canada, I believe, and I was getting on well with the company. So when the area manager

asked me how quickly I could provide a large playground slide – i.e. in time for a pub’s reopening about a week off – I scurried around in search of raw materials, including aluminium for the chute bit.

### “What a girl!”

So I rang the firm where I happened to know a lot of aluminium was used in the making of carriages for the London Underground, and spoke to a woman in the buying office. Having earlier discreetly checked out a few prices further afield, in Warrington, in fact, I was hoping to save time and money by dropping on a roll closer to home. Even if it cost, say, a fiver more.

She quoted me a price. “Ah,” I said, “I can get it, um, a fiver cheaper than that from...” but before I could finish the sentence she chipped in with: “From Taylors, yes, I know, but you won’t get them to deliver just one roll and in that Vauxhall Four Ninety of yours I reckon a trip to Warrington and back will cost you the thick end of a tenner in fuel. So do you want it or not?” What a girl! Making a mental note to employ her if ever I needed office staff, I agreed her price, and also agreed to bring the money in cash because of a new rule she told me about under which goods could not be handed over until payment by cheque had been cleared.

The following day I called into the office, where the girl took my money, counted it, issued me with a printed company receipt, which included the VAT details, and then introduced me to a shifty looking guy with a walkie-talkie who told me to follow him and then, on his signal, back my trailer into the shed whose roller door he would open for me.

### A big thump

A minute later I was inside the building, enveloped in total darkness as the roller door slammed shut. Then came a big thump on the tow hook as the roll of aluminium I had just bought was dropped into the trailer. Next a shadowy figure, walkie-talkie at his ear, appeared beside my door so I lowered the window. “Keep your engine running,” he hissed. “Wait until the door goes up, turn sharp left and scarper. Don’t stop and don’t say nuffink to nobody.” Yes, honestly. He really said “say nuffink to nobody.” It was like something straight out of the *Keystone Cops*, or *Monty Python*. The walkie-talkie crackled. The door rolled up. “Go, go, go!” said the figure at my side. So I did.

I suppose one could argue I should have stayed put and pointed out that I had a receipt for the money I had just paid, but what then? I am not the heroic type, prepared to tough it out with villains like these. The more I look back on it, the more I believe I had little choice but to leave without prevarication, and not risk recriminations for threatening to expose their thieving. Of which, of course, I had no proof at all! ✖

### NEXT MONTH

Gareth Jones recalls the time when work as a jobbing joiner dried up, but little did he know that his woodworking life was set to take an exciting new turn

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# ARTS & CRAFTS RESCUE

Finding an old Arts and Crafts nursing chair in his workshop, **Niall Yates** decides that it was certainly worth rescuing and placing back into circulation

**R**ecently, while rooting around my workshop for an extra-long SDS bit that I knew I must have somewhere, I rediscovered an old chair frame languishing in a dusty corner amid a pile of dust sheets. It was all that was left of a collection of old chairs I had squirreled away over the years, which had all been in need of varying amounts of TLC. At some stage I must have had a rare moment of clarity, and realised that I was never going to get around to sorting them all out.

So, when I closed down my old workshop, I gave them away. For some reason, though, I'd kept this one (**photo 1**).

Very dainty in its appearance, I would probably date it to around the earlier part of the 20th century. It has incredibly short legs, which, if it could be sat on in its present state, would leave you perched little more than 12in off the ground. There were two things wrong with it: the first was that it no longer had its rush seat, though there was ample evidence that it had,

at some point, had one (**photo 2**). The second was that the spar supporting the front of the rush seat had broken in two, some time in the past. This was due to an area of short-grain around a knot. There had been quite a tidy repair made to this, with a pair of shaped brackets, which supported an additional cross-piece (**photo 3**). This acted like a splint and was screwed into the broken spar from beneath. A decorative sliver of wood had also been applied to disguise both the splint and the front edge of the rush seat.

Being sidetracked mid-search, I pulled the chair from among the dust sheets, and stood it on my workbench. Looking at it again with fresh eyes, my first impression was that it seemed barely capable of supporting any weight at all, as the structural members were pared down to such a degree. When I looked closer, however, I could see that it was a lot more robust than at first glance, and is a very pretty and well designed chair. It was certainly worth being rescued and placed back into circulation, which is probably why I had kept it in the first place. Perhaps now was the time to sort things out...



**1** Dusty Arts and Crafts chair – a suitable candidate for rescue



**2** Side spar, showing evidence of the original rush seat



**3** Close-up showing repair bracket and splint, disguised with a thin décor fascia of wood

## Starting work

I was successful in separating the front section of the chair from the rest of the frame. This came away easily with light hammer blows, using a scrap of wood to protect the chair surfaces from damage. I discovered that the rest of the frame was sound and that all the other joints were firmly fastened, which left me with only the front section to repair. I prised off the décor fascia disguising the repair, and set about cutting the rusted in screws, which held the splint to the broken spar (**photos 4 & 5**).

With the two sections of broken spar pulled from their mortises, the splint was easily removed. The shaped brackets appeared to be



4 Chair front disassembled, showing previous repair from the back



5 With the thin décor fascia removed, the rusted in screws are cut with a hack saw blade

made of some sort of tropical hardwood, along with the rest of the repair. I split these away with a chisel, as the screws were too corroded to turn, the exposed screws were then easily removed with Vise-Grips.

### New front spar

Looking at the broken sections, I could see that the round tenons on these were tapered from  $\frac{3}{16}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$ in (photo 6). They look to have been formed with a rounding plane on timber that had previously been trimmed to its final shape on a bandsaw. Since I do not have the means to form these tapered tenons in the same way, I decided to turn them on the lathe from a length of beech 50mm square in section and long enough – with a bit of extra stock at each end – to form the new spar (photos 7 & 8). After turning the tenons, a slice was cut lengthwise from the centre of this, which was then planed to its final thickness

of 15mm. I marked the profile of the original component on this, and cut it to shape using the bandsaw, having first trimmed the waste off the end of the tenons (photo 9).

Apart from the broken spar, the front frame was still intact. As a precaution, before pulling this apart, I decided to form a registering jig, by screwing some timber batten around the frame and onto a piece of scrap board. I would then be able to check that the frame went back to its original shape after it had been pulled apart, and the new spar fitted (photo 9).

With the two sides of the front frame separated, the tenons of the new spar were tried in their respective holes. Datum marks were then made on the spar, 25mm in from where the shoulders of each tenon needed to be. The tenons were then rotated in their mortises, and the shiny marks left showed where material needed to be removed. This was done with a half round file,

and the whole process was repeated until the tenons entered to almost their correct depth, making the distance from the datum marks to the front legs just a tad over 25mm. With clamping these would be pulled fully home. The front frame was then assembled dry to check for fit. A point to note about the positioning of the spar is that, in common with the other spars that form the rest of the seat, the front edge is raised slightly, so dropping the back edge and preventing it coming into full contact with the rush seating.

### Gluing up

Having got hold of some old-fashioned hide glue to make a small repair to an antique chair I had indoors, I decided to use this for the current repair as well. It's a lot more forgiving than the modern PU glue that I would probably have used, and a lot kinder to future restorers. Luckily, I already had an old double-lined saucepan and a small



6 Front leg and end of broken spar, showing the tapered tenon



7 New spar marked onto section of beech



8 Tapered tenons being turned first – a bit wasteful of stock, but OK for a one-off



9 Registering jig, with fully machined spar, prior to fitting tenons



10 Heating up the glue in an improvised container



11 Cleaning up the front frame after gluing



**12** Re-drilling the mortises with a 1/2in Forstner, to remove the ends of the new tenons

burner, which I could use to heat the glue (**photo 10**). In a short time I had the front frame glued, tried out in the registering jig, and cleaned up ready for the next stage (**photo 11**).

When the glue was sufficiently set, I re-drilled the top mortises through the new tenons, and for this I used a 1/2in Forstner bit. Bearing in mind the mortises are tapered and are in fact 3/16in at the top, I used a small section of 15mm copper pipe as a guide, to centre the bit. Once I was confident that drilling was under way, I dispensed with this. I also applied a piece of tape to the Forstner bit, to indicate when the hole had been drilled deep enough, so as not to wreck the leg by drilling all the way through with my nice sharp bit (**photo 12**). I then carefully pared away the inside of the hole with my narrow carving gouge, to reestablish the taper (**photo 13**).

I was now able to glue the back and the front of the frame together, I carefully hammered home the joints, and applied pressure with a sash-crimp to pull some of the joints fully home and true up the frame, before cleaning away the surplus glue (**photos 14, 15 & 16**).

### Levelling cleaning & polishing

The chair has undergone some distortion to its frame over the years. The bend to both the back uprights is not the same. One is slightly more angled than the other, which has given a slight twist to the chair back. This has probably also given rise to one of the front legs being cocked slightly off the ground. It may well always have been like this, as the distinct mark of a drive chuck is still evident at its base, despite this detail having long since worn away on all the other legs.



**17** Applying French polish by brush



**13** A sharp gouge is used to taper the freshly drilled mortises

To level the chair, I placed it on the flat surface of my bench and marked with a pencil the small amount to come off the three other legs. I cut thin slivers of wood from each of these, and sanded them until all four legs firmly made contact with my bench top.

Most of the frame had lost its finish entirely, although in the few areas it remained it clung on quite firmly. It couldn't be shifted with the usual mix of turpentine and meths, so I had to use wire wool and paint stripper to remove it. With the frame stripped and sanded, I applied a walnut spirit stain to refresh the remaining colour and unify the look. I then applied several coats of French polish to the frame with a squirrel mop, rubbing down with fine wire wool between coats (**photo 17**). When I was satisfied with the finish I gave the surface a coating of wax polish and buffed it to an attractive sheen. With the finish applied, I was now ready to sort out the rush seat. From here on in, I was no longer in familiar territory.

### Weaving the rush seat

I've never tried weaving a rush seat before, though having read up on the subject, I was more confident I could make some sort of fist of it, if I limited myself to using pre-twisted rush cord, rather than the bundles of natural rush. I reasoned that I would still be using real rush – as opposed to paper rush – but that the task would be made a lot easier. Anyway, I was about to find out if I could achieve an acceptable result.

I had a good trawl online to find a supplier of genuine pre-twisted rush. I duly ordered two 1kg coils, as I would need slightly over



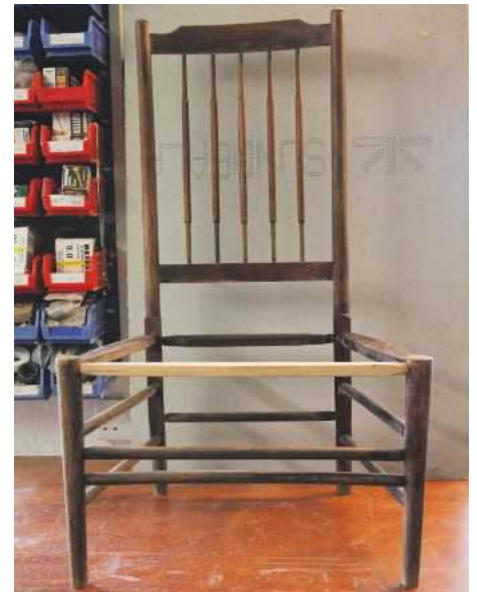
**18** Marking the width of the back rail onto the front rail



**14** Side spars and stretchers being glued, ready for the front frame



**15** Cleaning up the frame



**16** Spot the difference: repaired frame, ready for cleaning and polishing



**19** Starting off on the wrong foot, with incorrect weave pattern



20 Starting again with the new weave pattern



21 Cardboard packers fixed in seat



22 Almost there, just the 'bridge' to complete

a kilo to complete the seat, and gathered together all the other bits and pieces I would need to help with the task. Most I already had, such as a small hammer, and a pair of spring clips. The rest I made or improvised, including a wedge to hammer the cord straight at the corners, and a tapered peg to force a way through the woven seat where this was required.

### The learning curve

With a reference book to hand I set about the actual weaving of the rush seat. I marked out the width of the back rail centrally onto the longer front rail (**photo 18**) and started to weave the triangular sections to both sides of this. Following the instructions, I kept a firm tension on the pre-wetted rush cord, and duly tapped the damp cord square at the corners at regular intervals, until I reached my pencil lines (**photo 19**). So far so good, and then a thought occurred to me. Looking at what was left to weave on the seat, I could see that I would easily fill in the weave along the width of the seat, leaving me to fill in the extra – referred to in my book as the 'bridge' – along the depth of the seat. However, on all the photos of chair seats I had seen so far, this 'bridge' is only ever shown woven from front-to-back, not from side-to-side. Something was obviously amiss – my learning curve had reached a plateau.

After mulling over the problem overnight, I thought that the answer might be found under the more advanced section in my reference book entitled *Scandinavian Weave*. If I had read this section earlier, I would have seen that this is indeed the method to use when the depth of the seat is longer than its width. It was time to start again.

### Once again with feeling

I stripped away the work I had done so far, and started again with the new 'Scandinavian Weave' pattern. This certainly overcame the problem of the 'bridge' being in the wrong place. At a certain point, I fitted corrugated cardboard packers, as per the instructions in my book (**photo 20**) and continued the weaving (**photos 21 & 22**). And, in the end, I had a fairly acceptable woven seat for my efforts.

I had been a bit creative with some of the weaving, so that thing ended up looking right. It was only when I had finished that I realised what I should have done. There had been two distinct black paint lines on the left-hand spar

of the seat that had puzzled me. I now understood that these were a guide to indicate a change to the weave pattern at these specific points.

Despite not getting it quite right, I was pleased with the overall result of the repair and the reseating. And it has certainly enhanced the appearance of this Arts and Crafts chair, and finally put it back into circulation, where it can be fully appreciated, once more (**photo 23**). ✂



23 The finished chair – in use once more

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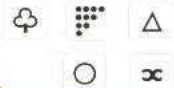
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# ME AND MY WORKSHOP

David  
Plageron

This month we meet 75-year-old woodworker **David Plageron**, the 'compulsive maker' of 100s of variations of wooden Noah's Arks and animals



David in his Devon workshop with a box of handmade wooden animals

**1. What is it – and where is it?**

A shed at the bottom of my garden in Totnes, Devon.

**2. What's the best thing about it?**

It's got absolutely everything in it that I need, and I get to walk past my ducks every morning.

**3. And what's the worst?**

Finding things!

**4. How important is it to you?**

Very. I am a compulsive maker.

**5. What do you make in it?**

I make over 100 variations of Noah's Arks and animals.

**6. What is your favourite workshop tip?**

Because I'm getting on a bit, I like to change jobs every now and then so I can use a different set of muscles.

**7. What's your best piece of kit?**

My Engis sander head, a sort of flap finisher. It's brilliant at giving a fine finish to a variety of complicated shapes.

**8. If your workshop caught fire, what one thing would you rescue?**

My templates for hundreds of animals.

**9. What's your biggest workshop mistake?**

Not having more space.

**10. What's the nicest thing you've ever made?**

An Ark, with trompe l'oeil painting of the customer's home and garden.

**11. And what's the worst?**

A Mrs Noah with a very grumpy face.

**12. What's the best lesson you've learned?**

Working for 12 hours a day, doing something you love, beats eight hours a day doing something you don't like.

**13. If you won the lottery, what would you buy for your workshop?**

A really gorgeous, super-safe and efficient wood-burning stove. ✂

**FURTHER INFORMATION**

To find out more about David and see more examples of his wonderful wooden toys, visit his website: [www.noahsarktoys.co.uk](http://www.noahsarktoys.co.uk)

**NEXT MONTH**

In the next issue, we look around the workshop of Dave Bowden, Chairman of the Mid Devon Crafts Guild. We'd love to hear about your workshops too, so do feel free to send in a photo of your beloved workspace, and please answer the same questions as shown here – just email [tegan.foley@mytimemedia.com](mailto:tegan.foley@mytimemedia.com)



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# THE PLACE OF WOODWORK IN SCHOOLS

Paul Greer explores the importance of teaching woodwork in secondary schools

In most state secondary schools in England and Wales where it's offered, woodwork falls within the broader subject area of Design and Technology (D and T). However, D and T itself is compulsory only until the end of Year 9, and even where it features among an institution's GCSE options, will probably be accompanied by unrelated modules. In short, the opportunity to gain good woodworking skills is something far from guaranteed to young people today.

Things were once very different. For decades,

woodwork occupied a valued place in many learning environments. As early as the 19th century, pioneering educationists advocated its use, even with young children. One was Friedrich Froebel, whose wooden play materials were known as 'Froebel Gifts'. Even after World War II and into the early 1960s, woodwork was still perceived as a worthwhile subject.

However, the nation's fortunes improved, and many things once beyond most people's means became widely affordable. Where young people had once made things like wooden toys, they were now more likely to buy them. Despite this, and while usually seen as a peripheral subject in grammar schools, woodwork remained popular in the rest of the secondary sector, especially as many leavers progressed into practical jobs.

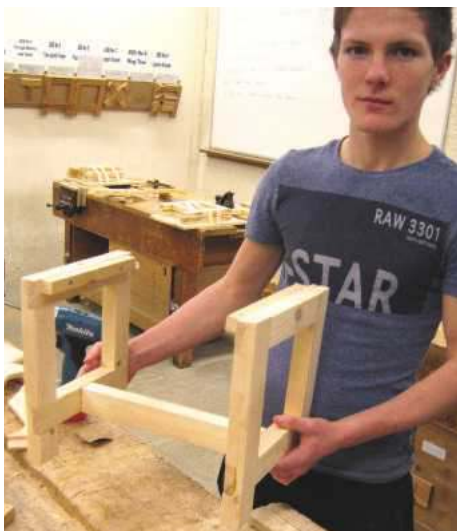
During the 1980s, though, the D and T sector expanded to embrace graphics and



Pupil holding side of stool



Pupil using plane on bench



Pine wood is cheap and plentiful



Snug joints really enhance appearance



electronics. Schools were encouraged to make their workshop spaces multi-functional, but this made it difficult to store or display potentially hazardous woodwork equipment. Also, perhaps fearful of D and T subjects not seeming intellectually challenging, many schools introduced related computer programs, often as a substitute for instruction in craft skills, despite a demand for these among employers.

In 2008, an Ofsted report highlighted widespread shortcomings in D and T teaching. It declared that young people were missing out on woodwork and metalwork in particular, citing as the main cause a shortage of specially trained teachers. It stressed the importance of such staff undertaking the health and safety training vital to supervising students using the likes of saws, lathes, and drills.

Despite this, many schools (perhaps nervous of litigation) adhered to unduly cautious health and safety policies, but following Lord Young's 2010 review, a saner approach prevailed, with woodwork enjoying a revival in many



establishments. This being so, it's disappointing to read in a *Daily Telegraph* article, as recent as 2017, that (overruling the strongly-expressed concerns of parents) large numbers of GCSE D and T courses have ceased 'amid pressure to succeed in core compulsory subjects'.

### Arguments for woodwork

There are powerful arguments to retain woodwork. Firstly, it promotes the spatial visualisation needed for such as geometry and trigonometry, thereby smoothing the path into careers like science, engineering, and agriculture. Secondly, it helps pupils understand and communicate ideas non-verbally, and become 'self-assessors' by using measuring tools to ensure that what they make fits properly. Thirdly, it offers firm evidence of their growing skills, besides a (no doubt welcome) break from the classroom.

You'd think all this would merit an honourable place within the state system; however, some claim that woodwork is actually taught better

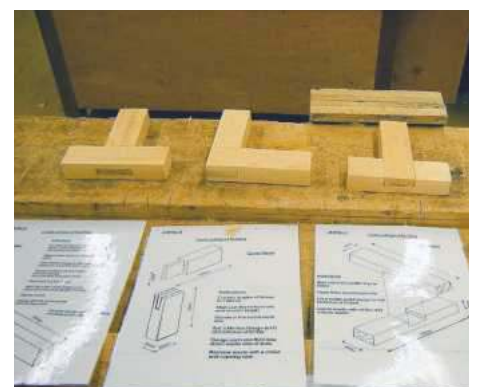
in private institutions. Students at Sands School, Ashburton, in Devon, may agree. Its website claims that they're 'never told what to make', prompting them to produce distinctive pieces. The Head of Woodwork (a graduate of the London College of Furniture) helps students develop their ideas through sketches and full working drawings.

In some areas, schools which lack workshop facilities have forged links with a local college, letting significant numbers of Year 10 and 11 pupils learn construction skills (usually one day a week) on its premises. Offered is a range which includes painting and decorating, bricklaying, and electrical work; woodwork remains their emphatic favourite. Because schools view these visits as essentially vocational, though, participants are often chosen from among the less academic, and not infrequently those labelled 'difficult'. However, finding themselves on first-name terms with college tutors, and expected to act responsibly without prompt, pupils' behaviour frequently improves dramatically.

The challenges of technical drawing, and of

making even basic items like a nail box or saw stand, can build a strong sense of achievement. Pine (which is cheap and allows for mistakes) is the sole variety of wood pupils use until they gain a BTEC qualification. A healthy proportion of them return as full-timers a year or so later.

Relatively few visiting pupils are female, but their work commonly earns high praise



Instructions on making basic joints, with examples



Even simple pieces require several tools



Solid proof of achievement



A good drawing is the first step

from tutors. Unfortunately, a school sometimes refuses a college 'slot' to interested girls whose predicted GCSE grades will boost its league-table position. Sadder still, a visit programme may be scrapped if a headteacher views it less favourably than their predecessor, or, while granting its value, wants money normally devoted to it for other purposes.

Private and state schools alike are mindful of their image, and acquiring specialist status for D and T is one way to raise woodwork's profile. Open events and parents' evenings provide excellent opportunities to display pupils' creativity with wood, and invite admiration.

**Inspirational teachers**

The woodwork teacher shortage might be addressed by schools asking adults in the community who possess woodworking skills to volunteer some time there. Their role is likely to be a supporting one, and they may need to be made familiar with current etiquette (such as not touching a student, even where this would facilitate demonstration).

Secondary schools still offering woodwork will have a workshop and appropriate tools. However, this is less likely in a primary school, and teachers there keen to introduce woodwork could do worse than contact one of the organisations (like Nottingham-based 'TTS') which sells woodwork equipment especially designed for children.

Where schools have the facilities, woodwork evening classes can be offered to adults, too. Once, I undertook one myself, and (more through good instruction than personal aptitude) the wall bookcase I made all those years ago still fulfils its purpose. Of course, when woodwork disappears from a school's curriculum, the evening class there is almost certain to be axed, too.

As with academic subjects, an inspirational instructor can be key. Many woodwork teachers produce artefacts in their own time, some profiting handsomely. If a D and T syllabus fails to ignite students' interest, the teacher may spark it by bringing in their own creations. Where having focused before on woodwork's functional elements, pupils can be drawn to appreciate the subject's artistic potential through the beauty of different woods.

**Ticking boxes**

Aside from the nature and value of woodwork as a subject, it's worth appreciating things made of wood, which are fixtures in many schools. Among these are the honours boards displaying alumni awarded university places. In older institutions these may go back many years, and are always a source of pride. Frequently the names and academic destinations are in gold, emphasising the richness of the (sometimes varnished) wood background. Despite the availability of such as acrylic, wood remains the most popular material for honours boards, and light oak is the variety highest in demand.

Among the most enduring values of any school subject is its potential to still interest people long after their student days. Woodwork ticks some important boxes in this respect, its skills being useful for activities as diverse as jewellery-making and chainsaw sculpture. ✂



A reproduction set of Friedrich Froebel gifts



An example of a wooden honours board



# The Rocking Horse Shop

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Plan 124r  
Laminated Chair Horse

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Plan 109  
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Plan 129  
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## LETTERS

## ★ LETTER OF THE MONTH

## GONDOLA CRAFTWORK

Dear Tegan,

During a recent holiday on the island of Murano, near Venice, I came across a finely-carved artwork celebrating iconic aspects of the traditional gondola. The item was part of the decor in a



A busy waterway in Venice showing a gondola at work, featuring the three elements of the carved artwork

self-catering flat, which my wife and I rented in a charming canal-side location. In case it may be of interest, I attach a photo for you here. Thank you for your kind consideration. Yours sincerely, **Trevor Bolt**

Hi Trevor, thanks for getting in touch and sharing these photos – this is a lovely carving and perfectly sums up the beauty of the gondola, as you rightly say. The other photo really captures Venice at its finest! Thanks again for getting in touch. Best wishes, **Tegan**



Spotted during a recent trip to the island of Murano, near Venice, Trevor came across this finely-carved artwork celebrating iconic aspects of the traditional gondola

## DOVECOTE PROJECT – FOLLOW UP REPLIES

The following replies are in response to Chris Jepson's letter, which was originally featured in the November 2019 issue of the magazine.

Dear Tegan,

I'm a newcomer to the wonderful world of woodworking and your informative magazine. I recently made this dovecote for our garden (see attached photo) and thought I'd share it with you and, hopefully, your readers. I discovered that there are many dovecote plans online, but I wanted to have a go on my own and build one from scratch. It was a very enjoyable project with a great result, even if I do say so myself! However, the hardest bit I found with this, and other projects, is angles. I know experienced carpenters and joiners have a fundamental knowledge regarding angles for staircases and pitched roofs, for example, but I don't know where to start. I understand basic angles and degrees on paper but putting them into practice is another matter altogether. For example, with this dovecote I struggled to calculate the correct compound mitre angle to bring the six-sided roof together with perfectly fitting joints to minimise water ingress. In the end I succumbed to square cuts and a basic triangle shape roughly butted together; I had to line the roof with a membrane before cladding with cedar shingles. I appreciate you're limited to the articles your contributors are willing and able to provide the magazine, but if you could find someone to explain all aspects of woodworking angles/mitres (especially a six-sided roof) I'm sure I, and many other novices, would find the article very interesting and most helpful. Thank you very much. Regards, **Chris Jepson**

Dear Tegan, Chris Jepson may have got more tangled in his angles than he needs to. Cutting the triangles for his six-sided pitched roof (or any other similar structure) is easier if you work out the elements separately:

### Step 1

Trace the outside circumference of the walls on to paper, and draw another line outside it to allow for the thickness of the roof pieces plus any overhang for the eaves. That'll give you the width of each triangle's base.

### Step 2

Work out how steep you want the roof to be. The steeper the pitch, the longer each triangle will need to be.

### Step 3

The flatter the roof, the less bevel each triangle will need along its sides. The steeper the roof, the closer the bevel will need to be to 30° (360° divided by the number of sides and halved). So cutting the bevels to nearly 30° will at least ensure that the outside edges meet, even if it leaves a narrow – and invisible – gap inside.

Regards, **Tony 'Bodger' Scott**

P.S. I think his finished dovecote looks great anyway.

Hi Tegan, in November's issue there was a letter from Chris Jepson about a dovecote project that he built (and a good job he made of it too). His query was in regard to measuring and marking out. Although it is now out of print, a book by Vic Taylor, *The Woodworker's Fact Finder*, published in 1988, is readily available online,

and not very expensive either. I regard it as an essential for every woodworker/hobbyist. Another very good source of information and kit is the annual *Hobby's* magazine, which has for sale a 360° protractor, divided in full degrees, open centre, all at £1.99. *Hobby's* magazine is commonly available at WHSmith and again I regard it as an essential item on my bookshelf. I hope this information is helpful to some of your readers. Kind regards, **John Higgins**



Chris Jepson's six-sided dovecote, which was featured in the November 2019 issue

## READERS' HINTS & TIPS

In conjunction with Veritas and BriMarc Tools & Machinery, as of the next issue, we'll be offering readers a brand-new prize in exchange for sending in their top workshop hints, tips and pointers – indeed anything that other readers may find useful in their woodworking journeys. We'll be giving one lucky reader per month the chance to get their hands on a **Veritas apron plane with PM-V11 blade**. Ideal for trim carpentry and featuring a ductile cast-iron body, its unique side wings allow for a comfortable, firm grip. To be in with a chance of winning, just email your top workshop hint, tip, pointer or piece of advice to [tegan.foley@mytimedia.com](mailto:tegan.foley@mytimedia.com), along with a photo(s) illustrating your tip in action. To find out more about Veritas tools, see [www.brimarc.com](http://www.brimarc.com)



The grain filling rubber has a little pumice rubbed into the surface



Work in small circles over the polished surface to create a paste, applying pressure to push it into the grain



Give it a few minutes to settle before going back over with the polishing rubber

## FRENCH POLISHING MADE EASY

French polishing is dependent on the quality of the preparation of the piece, and as most will know, dampening the surface of the timber and allowing it to dry before moving to the next grit will raise the grain and provide you with a beautifully smooth surface upon which to start polishing. However, you'll often find, once you've laid down some shellac with your French polishing rubber and allowed it to dry, that the grain can be felt on the surface once again.

The best way to fill the grain at this stage is to use a dedicated grain filling polishing rubber – it's important that you don't use your normal polishing rubber for this technique, as it introduces an abrasive that will contaminate the rubber and make it much less effective for general polishing.

Your grain filling rubber is just a tight ball of skin wadding wrapped in a piece of white cloth. Unlike your polishing rubber, you don't need to shape it carefully into a pointed pear-shape that fits perfectly to your hand – a small ball will do. Rather than charging the rubber with shellac, this one needs only to be charged with meths, or a much-diluted shellac solution if you prefer.

The abrasive used is powdered pumice, and the trick is to use very little – scatter some on a clean surface, much like you would dust a surface with flour for rolling pastry. With your grain filling rubber damp to the touch with meths, just gently dab it into the powder and then spread it across the surface with your finger.

Now, go over the surface of the workpiece in small circles with the grain filling rubber. The meths will reactivate the shellac you have already applied, while the abrasive pumice will create a paste

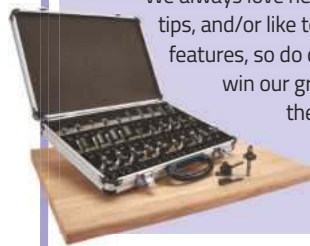
out of the materials of the shellac coating and the wood dust, which will perfectly fill the grain. Even sawdust can be useful for this process. Whenever I create a lot of fine dust, I'll store some in pots marked with the species, and when I am grain filling with pumice, I will scatter a little of this dust over the surface to incorporate into the paste created.

Once the filled surface is dry to the touch, you can start building more layers of polish with your pristine, non-abrasive French polishing rubber.

**Brian Watkins**

## WRITE & WIN!

We always love hearing about your projects, ideas, hints and tips, and/or like to receive feedback about the magazine's features, so do drop us a line – you never know, you might win our great 'Letter of the Month' prize, currently the new Trend  $\frac{1}{2}$ in 30-piece Router Cutter Set, worth over £100. Simply email [tegan.foley@mytimedia.com](mailto:tegan.foley@mytimedia.com) for a chance to get your hands on this fantastic prize – good luck!



## DOUGLAS FIR FLAG POLE

**Hi Tegan,**

I have just finished laminating up a flag pole (8.5m high) in Douglas fir. I have taken lots of photos of the lamination and shaping process and am attaching a few here. Regards, **Jim Young**



Jim's 8.5m high flag pole required a lot of clamps!



The completed flag pole in situ

## NEW FLEXIBLE CURVE ROUTING GUIDE TEMPLATE ACCESSORY

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Tom and  
Anselm Fraser

## CHIP OFF THE OLD BLOCK

As he takes over the position of Principal of The Chippendale International School of Furniture from his father, Anselm Fraser, Tom Fraser discusses his vision for the school with *The Woodworker*

I am pleased to introduce myself as the new School Principal of The Chippendale International School of Furniture. Firstly, I would like to pay tribute to my father, Anselm, who established our school more than three decades ago. Under his guidance, the Chippendale School has garnered a reputation as one of the foremost establishments to study furniture making and design. Although he has taken a step back from the day-to-day running, he will continue to be a familiar face in the workshop, running his own furniture making business from the premises.

### Furthering the school's reputation

Throughout my life, the Chippendale School has played an important role. As a young boy, I grew up amid the flurry of the workshop, surrounded by woodworkers, furniture makers and artisans, who inspired my passion for craft and design. Later, I studied on the Professional course – a nine-month intensive programme

that provides woodworkers of any standard with professional grade skills, which allow them to pursue a career in furniture making. Following on from the course, I became our school's Head of Admissions, and later Deputy Head, before taking on the role of Principal.

As I step into my father's shoes, it is my intention to further our reputation as a leading furniture making design school and expand awareness of our school internationally. To achieve this, we will collaborate with more expert tutors from around the world to teach on the Professional course. Recently, we have brought in renowned woodworkers Ben Dawson and Michael Fortune to provide unique learning experiences for our students. Ben will spearhead the expansion of the design aspects of the Professional course, while Michael will provide expert insight into a variety of wood-forming techniques.

Also, to ensure that we are at the forefront of innovation in furniture production technology, we have created a dedicated tech workshop

with a CNC machine and 3D printer. Students will work with these tools under the guidance of CAD instructor, Andrew Cockerill. The Chippendale School will continue to adopt new technologies in order to provide our students with the best routes to success in an ever-advancing technological market.

### Enthusiasm & passion

The thing I enjoy most about working at the School is the eclectic mix of international students that study on our courses. There is an amazing buzz of enthusiasm and genuine passion in the workshop from students who have joined us from all over the world. Most of them come to us with no woodworking experience and it's amazing to watch them flourish as they progress. I always feel incredibly proud to see their furniture at our end of year Graduation Exhibition, because I understand the extraordinary journey that they have all been on. We work very hard to create a learning environment that is welcoming and fun, and there is a very warm and friendly atmosphere in the workshop built on positivity and enthusiasm. Students get to know one another very well while on the course and tend to become life-long friends.

Students can expect to have a very clear idea of how to make a living as a woodworker. We teach them how to design, make and restore furniture on the Professional course. Importantly, we also show them how to market their woodworking business, which is crucial to differentiating themselves in what is a competitive market.

Our hope for our students is that they are successful in whatever they set out to do after graduation, and we ensure to provide the tools, training and resources to get them there.

We look forward to welcoming our next generation of students and can't wait to get them acquainted with the furniture making community.

The Chippendale International School of Furniture offers a variety of courses, ranging from short courses to the nine-month Professional course – further information regarding these can be found below. ✂

### FURTHER INFORMATION

To find out more about courses offered by The Chippendale International School of Furniture, see [www.chippendaleschool.com](http://www.chippendaleschool.com)



The Chippendale School's newly-appointed Principal, Tom Fraser



Students working on projects in the School's well-equipped workshop



Various tools of the trade at the Chippendale School workshop

# KITCHEN STAPLE

Rick Wheaton's simple knife bar uses powerful rare-earth magnets to ensure your kitchen gadgets are kept exactly where you want them

**W**hen I worked in catering, wooden knife blocks were frowned upon: they're impossible to clean internally and magnetic strips were much preferred. Sadly many of the ones in the shops are quite weak, and they don't grip too well. Instead, try making this simple version using powerful rare-earth magnets. ✕

## TIP

Any small knives will be held well enough using only the top magnet, but replace the lower magnet with a screw to the same height. This way the small knives will sit parallel to the block, and a standard set of six knives (assuming two will be small ones) only need two packs of magnets



**1** Start with a bit of scrap wood (something with a nice grain if possible) about 125 x 330mm for an average set of six kitchen knives, but choose a size and shape that suits the knife set you have in mind. You'll need some 10mm diameter ready-countersunk rare-earth magnets (two per knife, but see tip sidebar) – mine are from Axminster Tools & Machinery (part no. 700306 and cost £7.28 inc VAT for a pack of five). You'll also need some screws and a screwdriver, a drill, marking square, abrasives, etc.



**2** Here you can see the wood laid out, knives spaced as you want, and the shape marked. For roughing out, use a piece of chalk, which is much easier to clean off than pencil



**3** You can then carefully lift each knife and mark the position of the two magnets with a blob of chalk



**4** Now use your square and a straightedge to mark the exact position of each hole with a Bradawl, then cut and shape your block. At this point, it's a good idea to sand and finish – here I'm using 400 grit sand and Danish oil



**5** Next, screw the magnets in place (this is one time you'll never drop a screw on the floor – they love the magnets!)



**6** The job is then pretty well done and dusted. Your block can now be screwed to the wall, or the side of a kitchen unit. Once you know where the holes need to be, you can keep it looking extra neat by hiding the holes behind a couple of blades. Enjoy the satisfying 'clunk' as the magnet grabs a knife!

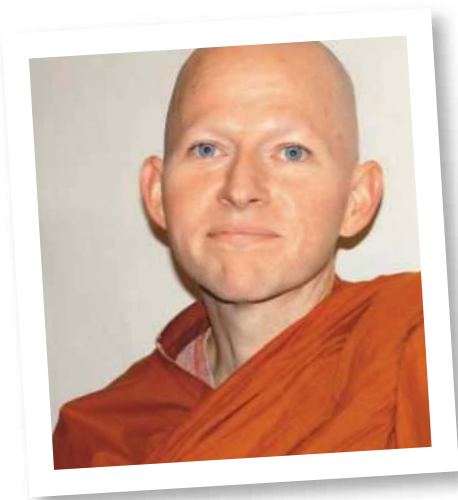
**1** The Dhamma Hall for teaching, meditation and devotion. Douglas fir, lime plaster over Hemcrete walls, oak, stone and bronze: nothing by halves. Ariyo and Tom (soon to ordain) are fitting the last slab of stone. Notice the woodwork of the shrine: all Ariyo. The design is simple so as not to distract, and is immaculately executed. The five lower panels are doors to cupboards (for candles, incense, etc.). These lead the eye upwards to two larger panels gaining in power and supporting the bronze statue

Inset photo & photos 1-3 courtesy of **Edward Hopkins**; photos 4, 6-10 courtesy of **Dave Getzschman**



# WHAT IS IT ABOUT ARIYO BHIKKHU?

Edward Hopkins wonders



## “Woodwork keeps you grounded”

Hartridge is building an imposing hall for meditation and teaching. Heavy timber (Douglas fir) framing roots it in Devon while an unusual heightening of the proportions makes it quite un-English. Ariyo has, for the last four years, been involved with various aspects of the design and construction. When they needed someone to lay the engineered floor, he was asked. He hadn't done such work before, but he did his research

and asked people who knew. Now he has finished fitting stone skirting, and is completing the shrine – a platform for a large bronze Buddha, which is the focal point of the room. For the other end of the hall he is making substantial oak double doors.

Ariyo can draw, paint, sculpt, do calligraphy, throw pots, photograph, plaster, tile, lay flooring, wiring, plumbing; anything that he turns his practical hand to. “Any activity can give joy. I love taking raw materials and making something out

**B**efore Ariyo was called Ariyo, he trained in fine art in Australia and America. Abandoning his studies, he went to Thailand to investigate Buddhism, and became a monk (a bhikkhu). I met him at the Hartridge monastery a few miles from my home in East Devon. The community there consists of four or five monks and occasional visiting monks and nuns. Of different ages and nationalities, the monastics have one thing in common: they smile a lot. Like all true wisdom, theirs flips conventional thought on its head dealing with the heaviest of subjects with the lightest touch.

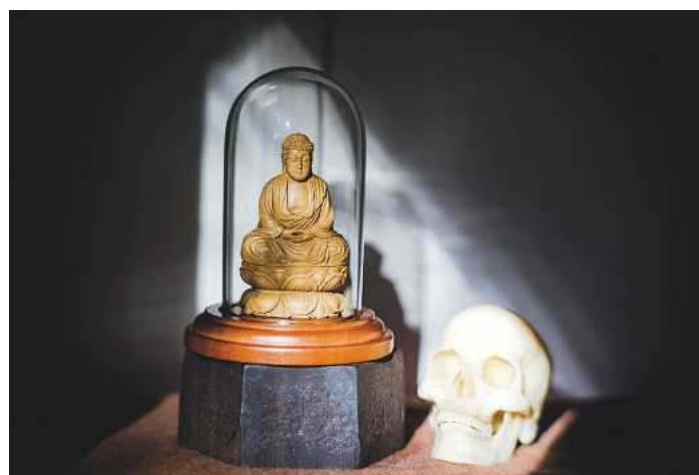
Buddhism is not a religion, it is an understanding. It faces up to the most difficult of human conditions: suffering. Much of our suffering is self-inflicted by the way we act and the way we think. If we understand this, we can be rid of it. Other times we might accept it – thereby drawing its sting. Meditation undercuts the chattering mind that sings a self-centred song. It returns us to who we really are. My enlightenment is a long way off (somewhere over the horizon), but Buddhism points me in the right direction.



**2** In this ‘forest tradition’ a monk lives in a ‘kuti’ – little more than a shed with a bed, a small shrine and a wood-burning stove. What do you miss living like this? “Monastic rules are very strict and there are many of them. Some of my friendships prior to ordaining have suffered and felt constrained.” The cat was previously feral but has since acquired appropriate calm



**3** The kuti has no plumbing or electricity. Evening reading is by candlelight. In the middle of this photograph is Ariyo's shrine. Symbolic objects form the focus of his private meditation



**4** Ariyo meditates on death and the impermanence of life. That might sound dismal but instead it is liberating

of them. There's a prejudice about manual work, but it is good. It puts us in our body. Our education system is highly intellectual. We become disembodied. It's as if our mind becomes a balloon and our body is just the string hanging down."

The monastery workshop is of modest size. It houses a small table saw and a large router table, along with hand tools. When I visited, Ariyo was about to assemble panelling for the shrine. His work was perfectly neat but his joints were under-dimensioned: I lent him my Dowelmax jig and saved the day (that felt good).

I spent a few days with him machining oak in another workshop – a timber-framers' barn as big as a five-a-side football pitch; then forming and fitting large section architrave, a job that turned out to be far from easy. During that time I began to appreciate Ariyo's intense attention to detail, his patience and, at the end of a session when I was beginning to feel a little frayed, his composure. It's meant to be the old guy with years of experience who stays serene while the youngster is impatient. I told you Buddhism turns things upside down.

### The End of Suffering

How does spirituality affect practicality?

What does Buddhist woodwork look like?

"If a job is worth doing, it's worth doing well."

He gives an example. Monks learn to sew their own robes. He does this as carefully and neatly as he can. He has difficulty with the compromise of 'no one will notice'. He will notice, and when he sees the care he's taken, it will be reinforced within him. The monastery lives by donation.

Ariyo shows respect as he works with materials, honouring the giver; grateful for the gift.

"From how we think springs our speech and the acts of the body. How you think constitutes how you are, and the world that you live in. When we align our thinking with nature such that there is no discrepancy between the way we are and nature, then our lives are contented, they're in concord; it is no longer necessary to affect things through acts of will – they come to us naturally.

"Nature has a way of doing things. A plant reaches its roots down, and turns to face the sun. What is perverted or skewed is the human mind and its ability to over-think and overcomplicate things. I call this place Hartridge. It doesn't call itself that. Then I fill it up with my hopes, fears and my opinions and have to deal with them. We so often play at being God. It's better to listen more.

"A person has to take responsibility for themselves and see what they contribute to their own welfare both in happiness and unhappiness. The First Noble Truth [The Four Noble Truths are fundamental to Buddhism] says that there is suffering. We must recognise and acknowledge our suffering in all areas of our life. This is the first step to addressing the problem. To what extent are you responsible for your suffering? If you can identify how you are responsible, you can address the problem. I know that the basis of my suffering is my ignorance and needless grasping.



**5** Course work from 20 years ago: strong, simple, precise



**6** I don't need to say anything here. Just look at it. Douglas fir

Unless I accept that, I am a victim in my own life." The Fourth Noble Truth says that there is an end to suffering. "There are two types of suffering: bodily suffering and mental suffering. It is to the mental suffering that enlightenment applies. The Buddha himself as he grew old had back trouble and various ailments, but he didn't suffer from his suffering." He didn't buy into it.

Before Ariyo ordained he was often depressed. "You come to a breaking point. You can't sustain the effort; you can't lift the weight." Did he think that if he disrobed, depression might return? He doesn't hesitate. "No. I've dealt with the underlying reasons." So ordaining was your salvation? "It's not because I am a monk that I am no longer depressed, it is because of my understanding."

Had he considered ordination in Tibetan Buddhism? Zen Buddhism? "Something sparkles, something shines and you are drawn in that direction. I was exposed to the Theravadan school first and that suited my temperament. It has some breathing space. I find my life meaningful. I have chosen an ethical and moral life with a focus on the pursuit of wisdom, kindness and generosity. I don't ever feel sad in the way that I used to".

### Family values

His grandmother (who lived to be 105) was "a Colossus; amazing in more ways than I can count." His family inspired him. He saw fine characters, generous, kind and virtuous. "That's the sort of man I want to be," he thought. "If my activities in life could be used for the benefit of other people, that would also bring me joy." In the Thai Forest tradition, parents must consent to the ordination of their offspring. "I asked my mother and she said: 'Go ahead, Darling; have fun!' I don't think she knew what she was agreeing to!" Ariyo uses email for work and letters for friends. His mother is his greatest pen-pal. He is about to take leave to visit her in Florida, then stay in a Swiss monastery before returning to Devon. He wants to finish his work on the hall before he goes and is presently working late into the evenings.

Ariyo was a monk before he was ordained and would still be one if he disrobed. Certain characteristics, he suggests, are with us from birth. Some monks really go through it and it can be a daily struggle to stay. "It's not that I haven't struggled, but on the whole I find myself well suited to monastic life." Do you still suffer, I ask him? "Of course I do." What are his weaknesses? He thinks for a while. "I'm not always good with large groups. I worry I'm becoming socially backward." That's a hard word. I'd like to swap it for 'reclusive' (of course). Another time, he talks of his monastic life and concludes: "I wouldn't trade it."

### Days in the life

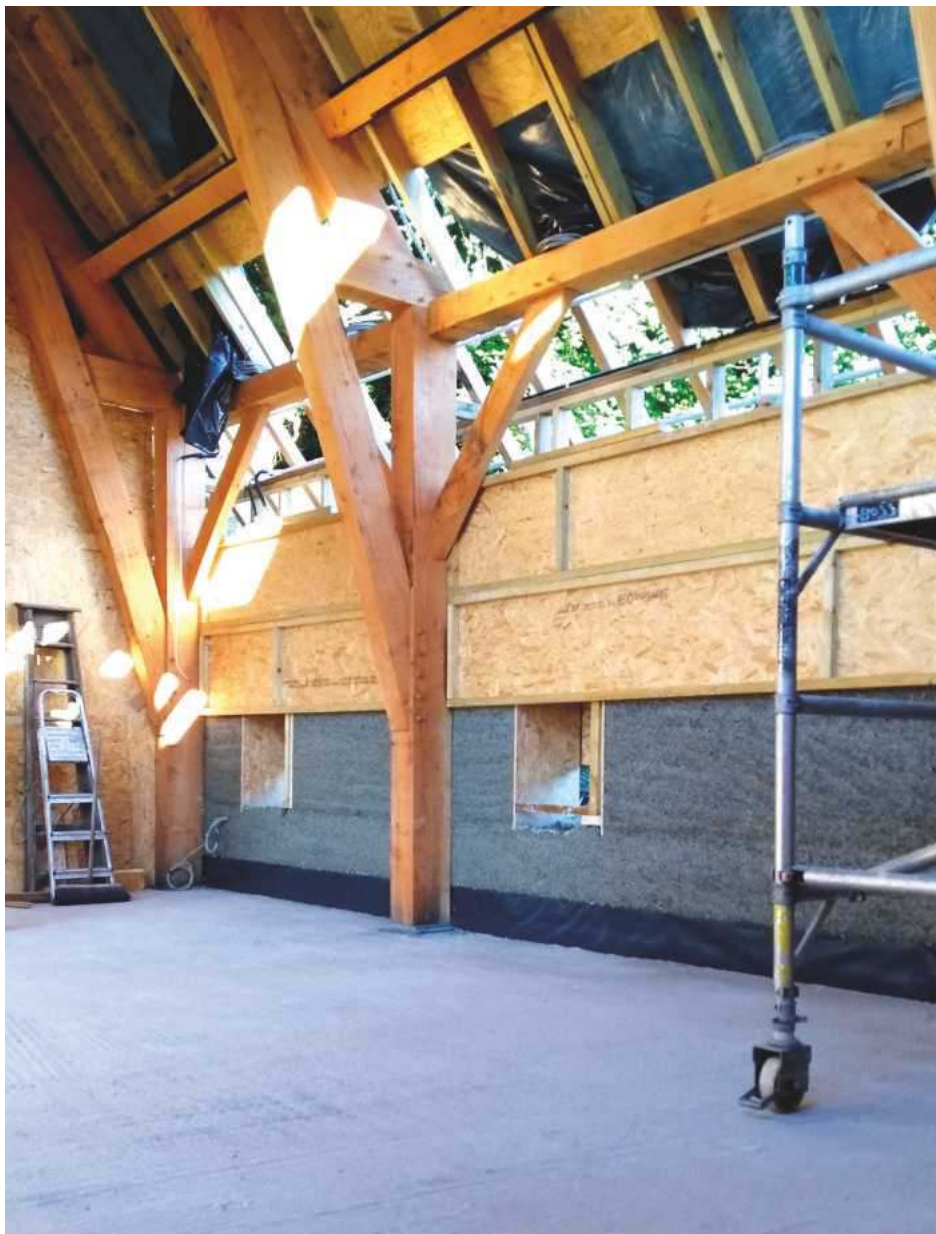
A typical day in the monastery begins at 5.30am with an hour's puja (devotional chant and meditation). After that, a short break, and then time for general housekeeping chores. From 7.15 to 8.00am, a light breakfast is offered, then monks work on the maintenance of buildings

and grounds, chopping and stacking wood (their source of heating), and doing anything else that is required. After 10 minutes to get ready, and after a traditional chant of thanksgiving, the day's meal is offered at 11.30am. The monastics eat in silence. Afternoons are free. Monks meet again for evening puja at 7pm. I suggest to Ariyo that some readers might think this a nice life being housed and fed with no great demand for work. What would he say to them? "Come and try it," he quietly replies. It is a life of renunciation. Monks are celibate. They have minimal possessions, no property or money; no music, television or radio though printed matter and Internet access is allowed. "When you remove the things that can be a distraction, you are left with your mind. Depending on the state of your mind that might not be a very pleasant place to be. You confront yourself where you are."

In a break from their normal routine, monks may go on 'Tudong', a type of pilgrimage though with no fixed destination. The monks are dependent on alms but they do not beg. They might come to a village and stand holding their



7 'Hempcrete': fibres of hemp bound with lime and cement. A quicker, more precise alternative to cob. Inside the hall, window reveals are rounded as if they were cob, adding vernacular charm and softness



8 Hempcrete is poured into shuttered layers. It is also available in blocks



**9** Ariyo asked Lee Harper, a local conservationist and plasterer ([www.harperbd.co.uk](http://www.harperbd.co.uk)), if he could shadow him and learn the necessary skills



**10** Double doors being made with the help of Mo (Maurice Hanley), who is donating his time. Even experienced joiners scratch their heads

bowl, waiting with downcast eyes. Some people will greet them; others talk, and some will offer food. Do people ever jeer, I asked? "Only once or twice over the years," he said, and then, with non-judgemental delicacy, "the spirit behind what they were doing was not very kind." If no offering is forthcoming, the monk goes hungry. For Ariyo, this seems not to be a problem. I could not have guessed when I worked with him that he had voluntarily undertaken a long period of fasting. How did he feel? "It gives me lots of energy," he said, yet again perplexing me.

I'm lucky to have the monastery so near. I can easily join the Sunday evening puja. I'm no great disciple; I'm not even sure I meditate properly,

but the teachings, I trust, will gradually soak in. Buddhism teaches the interconnectedness of being, meaning that every thing in the world, including you and me, is dependent on every other thing, and is therefore not separate from it. There is no division (we just think there is). I am the same as you, a basket of water, minerals and charge. I am the same as the person who annoys me and the person who delights me, so it behoves me to treat them (and myself) equally.

It goes further than that as Ariyo demonstrates. We are the same as our environment, part of it. When you're working at your bench or teetering on a pair of stepladders, it should not be to assert yourself or impose your will, but to join

a conversation, a dialogue with the materials, the tools/instruments and the job in hand. The best artists know this. The best musicians know this. They consciously leave themselves out of the process and allow it to unfold of its own accord. The best woodworkers are no different. ✕

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information on the Hartridge Buddhist Monastery, see [www.hartridge.weebly.com](http://www.hartridge.weebly.com)



**11** Exterior view of the Dhamma Hall

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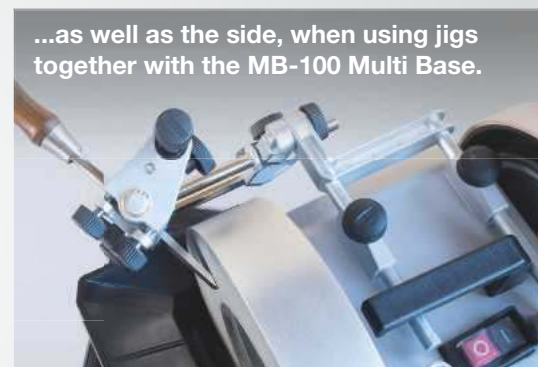
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Gouge sharpening with the SVD-186 Gouge Jig.



You can sharpen on the periphery...



...as well as the side, when using jigs together with the MB-100 Multi Base.

# AN INVITATION TO TEA

Pinkies out! **Dave Roberts** takes tea in fine style with his faux bamboo cake stand

**L**et them eat cake," said Marie Antoinette. And, fear of sparking a revolution aside, why not? But if you want to do it properly, you need a dedicated cake stand. Mine is inspired by the faux bamboo style of the 19th century, and can hold plenty of cake!

To create the bamboo effect, I experimented with different timbers and finally settled on pau amarillo. This was because its natural yellow hue provides a good bamboo-ish base, and it also takes the dark polish that I used to stain it. I didn't want this staining to be too uniform, however, so I cut it back by applying a coat of



1 Cut the legs on a table saw to get them square

## TOOLS YOU'LL NEED

- Parting tool
- 12mm skew chisel
- Spindle roughing gouge
- 6 & 9mm gouges
- 6mm chisel
- 13mm Forstner bit
- Junior hacksaw

sanding sealer to create subtle variations of colour that you would expect to find in real bamboo.

## Straight-grained timber

When turning long thin pieces of timber like we are here, it's always advisable to use straight-grained material, as timber that's even slightly cross-grained may break. You'll also find that these long workpieces have a tendency to whip, making turning very difficult, and using a centre steady will eliminate this problem. The one I use is homemade, and it isn't difficult to make one using timber and skateboard wheels. It doesn't matter how it looks as long as it does the job!

To get started, then, cut the timber for the four long legs and the two short legs at the top to get them square (a table saw makes this a quick job), leaving them about 4mm over size to give you a bit to play with. Cutting the timber square will make it easier to drill the holes for the cross-members, and the gouge will simply skip over the holes when you turn them. Drilling them after turning, on the other hand, is problematic, because it's tricky keeping them in a straight line.

Mark out the holes, keeping them in the centre of the timber, and drill them halfway through with

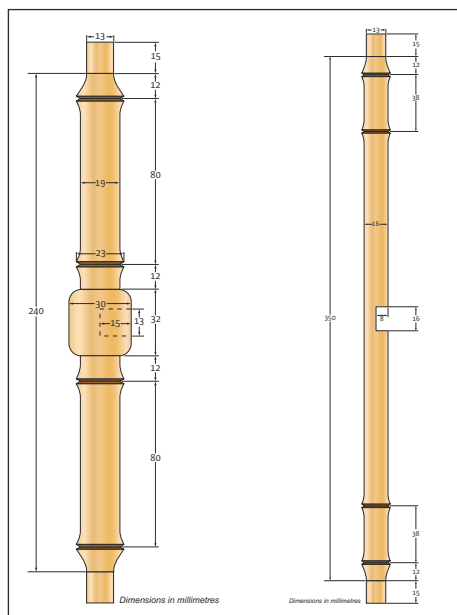


Fig.1 Top cross-pieces for uprights

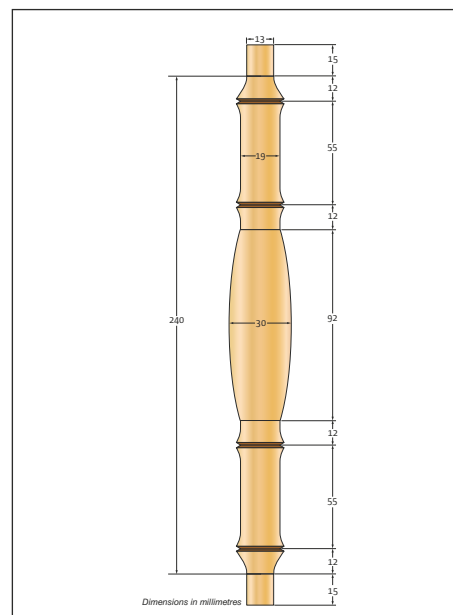


Fig.2 Handle

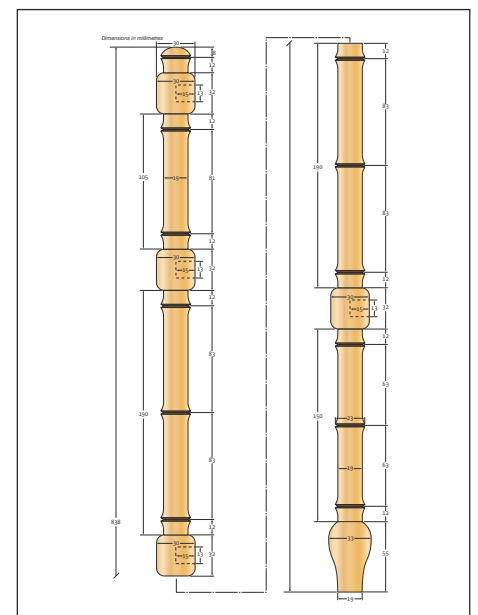


Fig.3 Legs

Pau amarillo was chosen for the faux bamboo cake stand due to its yellow hue and for the way it takes a dark polish. The inspiration for the piece has its roots in the 19th century, when bamboo from China and Japan became popular



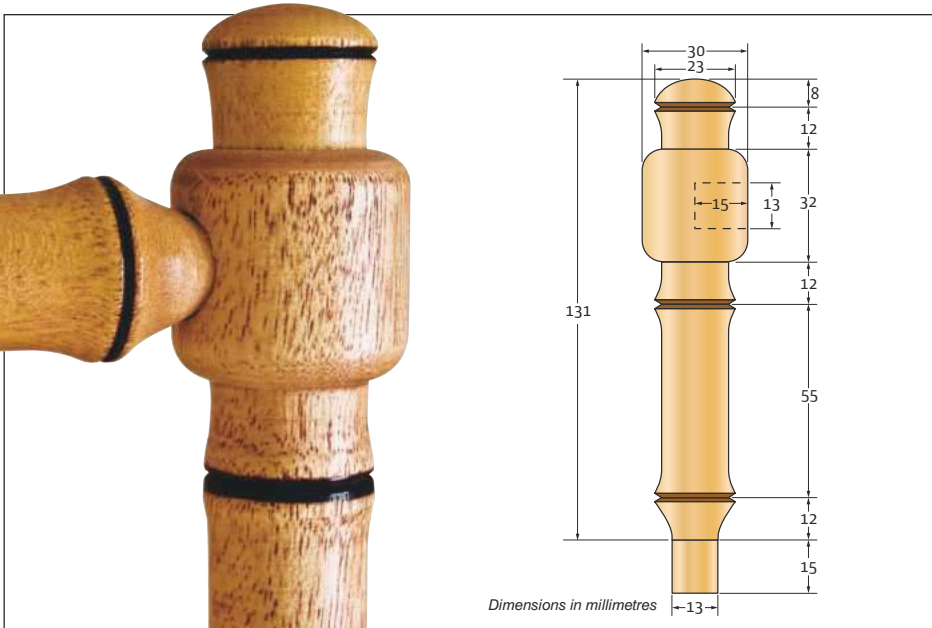


Fig.4 Uprights

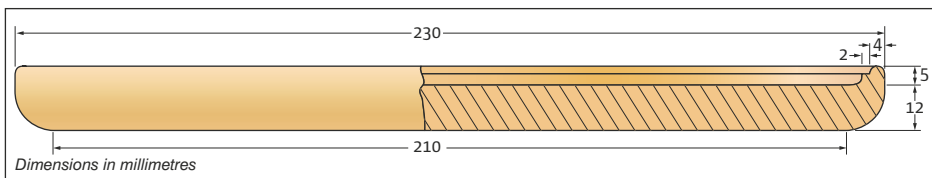


Fig.5 Cake tray



2 Drill the holes halfway through with a 13mm Forstner bit..

a 13mm Forstner bit. If you have a pillar drill, this will make the job easier than working by hand. Next, mount the legs between centres, and with the speed set at around 2,000rpm, use the spindle roughing gouge to turn them to a cylinder. Don't be heavy-handed here, just take your time and they'll soon be round.

### Burning the knuckles

Next, you'll need the parting tool to turn the sides of the sections in which the holes have been drilled, and then turn the long areas between the holes, which are going to be decorated with knuckles; use Vernier callipers to check the diameter of your work, ensuring that it's straight and even. The knuckles themselves are just small decorative ridges, which will be formed on the legs and cross-members. After marking out the position of the knuckles, use a skew chisel to make a cut in the centre of each knuckle. You don't need to make them too deep or wide, though, because you're going to darken them by burning the timber using a



6 A 6mm gouge will remove the timber in between the knuckles



10 Blend the end of the cross-member into the spigot

## BAMBOOZLED?

Bamboo was introduced into the UK from China and Japan around 1820. It soon became fashionable and was used to make small pieces of furniture such as chairs, stick stands and magazine racks. Other timbers were also turned and painted or stained in order to look like bamboo – which is what inspired my faux bamboo cake stand.

Today, the uses of bamboo are many and varied – it's not just for supporting your runner beans in the garden, you know. The fibre is used to make paper and yarn for clothing, the wood for knitting needles and scaffolding, and it has been used as a substitute for steel reinforcing-rods in concrete. The new shoots coming out of the ground are edible, and the sap of young stalks tapped during the rainy season can be fermented to make a sweet wine. The Zulus, meanwhile, are said to have used a native South African bamboo in the construction of their shields.

Although some of the larger bamboos are known as bamboo trees, bamboo is actually a gigantic tropical and subtropical grass with hollow-jointed woody stems. The difference between these and real trees is that bamboo does not have a vascular cambium layer – the thin reproductive layer found just under the bark, which adds to the phloem and sapwood to increase the tree's girth and which shows as growth rings.

Bamboo is the fastest growing woody plant: a single stem from an established bamboo can grow to full height in a single season, and some species can grow over 1m in a day! However, when harvesting, care is needed to select stems that are several years old. First-year stems, although full-size, are not fully woody and therefore aren't strong. Strange, but true





**3** ... and use a 6mm parting tool to turn the areas around the holes

wedge-shaped piece of hardwood. This is done with the leg spinning, and by putting the sharp point of the wedge into the groove and applying a little pressure. Within seconds it will start to burn, and make the groove bigger, which is why you only need to make a small groove with the skew chisel! When the knuckle starts to burn, lean the wedge to the left and then the right to burn the sides, too. After a couple of knuckles, you'll probably need to sharpen the wedge on a disc sander. I've found this burning technique is preferable to using stain, which tends to bleed into the leg just where you don't want it.

### The ridges, sanding, colouring & sealing

Now you can turn down the areas in between the knuckles to create the ridges. I used a 6mm gouge, which did the job quickly and efficiently. On real bamboo, of course, the knuckles won't be uniformly sized or spaced, so a little variation here and there won't go amiss – it makes your bamboo look a little less faux.

The final parts of the legs to be turned are



**7** Make sure the four feet are matching – you don't want it to be wobbly!



**4** Knuckling down: a 12mm skew chisel is ideal for cutting the grooves

the feet, which are pretty simple: just check them with callipers to get all four the same.

To add realism, I chose not to sand the legs to a mirror finish, but instead left them a little patchy so that it would pick up different amounts of polish. Apply the polish while the lathe is running; if it goes on too thick and looks too dark, use '0000' wire wool to knock it back, then apply a coat of sanding sealer, and once dry, use the wire wool to flatten the surface. I used this method for the whole of the stand, including the trays, and found that colouring with polish was better than using a stain as, again, it gave me more control over the final finish.

### The cross-members

These six pieces join the legs and support the cake trays. They're thinner and shorter than the legs, so you should be able to turn them without using the centre steady, but turn them carefully and slowly in case you do get any whipping. It's also important to get them all the same length. Start by turning the cross-member to the finished



**5** You can darken the groove by burning it with a wooden wedge

size of the knuckles (mine are 19mm) then use the parting tool to turn the spigots on the ends, which have to be correctly sized to fit the 13mm holes in the legs. Now turn the two knuckles at either end of the spindle, and carefully turn the taper on the ends until it blends into the spigot. Now you can finish the rest of the turning, bringing the knuckles down to 16mm before sanding, polishing and sealing.

Each pair of cross-members is joined with a lap joint, so you'll need to cut slots halfway through each piece by finding the centre, marking off 8mm on either side of it, and using a junior hacksaw with a fine blade to cut the timber sweetly without hacking it to pieces. I left the cross-members on the lathe while I cut the sides of the slots, and supported the piece with my free hand. Once sawn, the slots can then be formed with a 6mm chisel and each pair checked to ensure they marry up. A little tweaking may be necessary, but it's worth spending the time and making the effort to get these joints dead right. Now you can pre-drill the holes for



**8** Leaving the sanding quite rough, I used a dark polish for staining



**9** Check the size of the spigots (13mm) with Vernier callipers



**11** Use a junior hacksaw to cut a slot into the cross-member



**12** Clean the slot out, no deeper than 8mm, with a 6mm gouge chisel



**13** Drill the holes in the cross-members to accept the screws



**14** Turn the thicker handle until it's comfortable in your hand

the screws that will hold the trays in place, a job that's easier to do now rather than after assembly.

To complete the main frame all that's needed now is the handle section, which consists of five turnings. The four cross-members are turned in the same way as the tray supports; the handle itself is thicker in the centre, and turned to a size that feels comfortable in the hand.

### The trays

There are three trays on my cake stand, all the same size, and all made from a plank of pau amarillo. This was prepared on the planer, which left only one surface in need of a light sanding. It also meant that each blank could be hot glued onto a scrap piece of wood ready for mounting on a faceplate or screw chuck. When gluing, put one small bead of glue on the scrap wood towards the outer rim. Push the blank onto the glue then bring the tailstock up for support and leave it there for a couple of minutes while it sets.

Begin by balancing up the blank and facing



**17** Turn the top of the tray with a 9mm gouge, keeping an even thickness



**19** Put a little PVA on the joints, then assemble and leave to dry



**15** Hot glue the blank for the tray onto a scrap piece of wood...

it off; you can make sure it's flat by placing a steel rule across it. A speed around 800rpm is fast enough for working these trays, which are turned to the finished diameter and thickness, after which you can shape the outside rim. This is a gentle curve, so take your time and turn it slowly to ensure a good finish; if you rush it, you'll only tear out the grain. Once that's done, turn the top of the trays. I used a 9mm gouge for this, which removes the timber quickly, if you're careful. It's worth putting a straightedge on the trays to check that they're flat. Oh, and keep a close eye on the wall thickness, too: it's so easy to get carried away with turning it that you might go through the bottom.

With the turning finished, you can move on to the sanding; I find working through the different grades using a cork block with abrasive wrapped around it and the piece mounted on the lathe does the job quickly and efficiently. The final sanding is best done with the lathe stopped so that you can rub the abrasive up and down the grain to eliminate any sanding



**18** With abrasives and a cork block, you can flatten the surface quickly



**20** Finally, screw the trays into the cross-members



**16** ... then carefully turn the outside rim, leaving it with a good finish

marks. Finally, blow off the dust and apply the polish and sealer.

Removing the scrap wood shouldn't be too difficult – it should break away after a couple of taps with a rubber mallet. You may be left with some glue stuck to the bottom, but you can pick this off before sanding and polishing.

### Assembly

When you come to assemble the cake stand, it's worth having a dry run first just to make sure everything fits OK. After this, put a little PVA onto the ends of the cross-members and push them into the legs. Check to see if any glue has squeezed out; if it has, wipe it away immediately. Let everything dry before screwing the trays into place, and make sure the screws are the right size! I used 22mm screws, which were just right to go through the cross-members and into the trays. With four screws in each tray, they're held pretty firmly in place.

And that's it: your faux bamboo cake stand is now complete. ✂

## TEA & CAKES

According to Chinese legend, in 2,700BC the Emperor Shen Nung, who always boiled his water before drinking it, accidentally made tea when some leaves fell into his boiling pot. He found it so relaxing that he ordered widespread seeding of the plant. The first samples of tea were introduced to England in the 1650s, and it soon replaced ale as the national drink, demand supplied by the famous Clipper ships. A drink is too wet without cake, so the English invented afternoon tea – said to originate from Anna, the Duchess of Bedford, who couldn't wait for her evening meal and so asked for some bread, butter and tea. Finding this most agreeable, she started inviting friends. When holding tea parties at home, Victorian and Edwardian ladies had special tea sets, napkins and the like. Also de rigueur was a stand with three trays offering a selection of cakes. See? Stick with me and you'll be presentable in even the politest society

## NEXT MONTH

In the next issue, Dave turns another traditional piece: a pair of candlesticks

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# AROUND THE HOUSE WITH PHIL DAVY



One of the great aspects of woodworking is the broad spectrum it encompasses when it comes to precision. For example, a musical instrument maker can expect to work within tenths of a millimetre when thicknessing timber for a soundboard on a guitar or similar. For a site carpenter, the same degree of accuracy is unnecessary and a waste of valuable time. A pitched roof will not require the joint tolerances that a furniture or cabinetmaker will demand. But the structure itself may well be quite complex, requiring a good knowledge of geometry when planning and setting out the timbers. If you've seen a timber-framed building under construction, you'll know that a couple of millimetres discrepancy here and there won't be too crucial to the overall strength and stability.

Woodworking is perhaps unique in offering space for anyone, whether we work within minute tolerances or none at all

## BOOK REVIEW THE WOOD FIRE HANDBOOK

One of the nicer aspects of winter is the prospect of having a roaring fire each evening. Even better if you've collected free wood when out on a walk or chopped and stacked logs in preparation. There's a certain satisfaction in seeing a neatly-stacked wood pile seasoning, ready for the colder nights ahead. If you're keen to adopt this lifestyle, this revised book is a good place to get started. Even if you're an experienced firewood fanatic, there's likely to be plenty of interest.

Chapters suggest this can become something of a way of life, covering trees, woodcutting, buying firewood, seasoning and splitting logs, wood stoves and open hearths, even down to an examination of flames, smoke, embers and ash. Unlike other forms of fuel, it's essential to plan well ahead if you're hoping to source and season your own firewood.

This second edition guide has relevant information on woodburning stove technology and building regulations, all of which have been in the news in the past year or so. With emissions high on the agenda when considering environmental concerns, cleaner air is a responsibility we must all take seriously.

### Woodland skills

As the author has been a woodsman from an early age, there's understandably a healthy section devoted to trees, woodland management and a brief look at traditional skills such as coppicing and pollarding, besides processing a felled tree. There's an excellent chapter on splitting logs, with tips on choosing an axe, chopping techniques, alternative tools and choice of clothing. He discusses why you need a stable chopping block, too.

Although chainsaws do get mentioned, an illustration or two would have been helpful, with basic tips on buying and using one. This may be down to safety considerations, but there's always going to be a handful of enthusiastic newcomers who can't wait to start sawing their own logs...



### Seasoning & storage

When it comes to using wood as fuel it really does make a difference what you burn. Several pages on wood selection are grouped by the quality of a particular species for firewood: excellent, good and poor grade broadleaved trees. Further descriptions of common conifers create a handy guide if you have a choice of firewood.

There's helpful guidance on seasoning timber, almost a science in itself. Thurkettle stresses the importance of good storage for logs, ideally with a system in place to accommodate both dry and more recently felled timber. Tips on building a simple but reliable woodshed and stacking logs will help anyone in their quest for dry fuel. And if you need convincing about dependable storage, perhaps let the author persuade you: 'The woodshed is a larder of joy,' which sort of sums up the whole wood fire process, really.

Even if you don't have the relative luxury of a woodburner or open fire, the final chapter on campfires and outdoor cooking should stir your senses. He describes the four types of outdoor fire used traditionally throughout the world – pyramid, square, star and long – which could tempt you to plan a camping trip, even if it's only in your head.

It's fascinating reading, even if you've benefited from wood fires for years. Illustrations are suitably rustic but rather thin on the ground, though the occasional full-page photos are splendid.



### THE VERDICT

Written by Vincent Thurkettle, published by Mitchell Beazley

Price: £ 15.99

Web: [www.octopusbooks.co.uk](http://www.octopusbooks.co.uk)

Rating: 4 out of 5

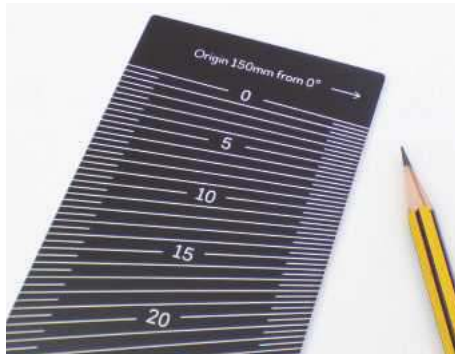
## USEFUL KIT/PRODUCT

# FIRSLIGHTWORKS BEVEL MONKEY & BIG PROTRACTOR

It almost seems as though the more advanced power tools and machinery become, a growing number of specialist hand tool builders emerges, creating niche tools such as wooden planes, dovetail markers and so on. One of the newest in Britain is FirstLightWorks, a small business based in Derbyshire producing high quality setting out tools for woodworkers. Visitors to recent woodworking shows around the country will probably already be familiar with them. Initial prototypes were made from birch ply, though finished products are now from 3.2mm thick, acrylic laminate.

### Bevel Monkey

Any tool with a name like this has to be worth a closer look. Perhaps one of the simplest tools you're likely to own, it could be one of the most useful when you need to mark out or check existing angles. Measuring 290 x 70mm, it consists of a series of laser-etched lines from 0 up to 50°. Black front and rear laminates sandwich a white core, so the fine lines show extremely clearly in contrast. What makes this tool unique is that graduations are marked every 0.5°, and they're actually far enough apart to read



Measuring 290 x 70mm, the Bevel Monkey consists of a series of laser-etched lines from 0 up to 50°



As you'd expect, angles are marked on the Big Protractor from 0-180° (from both left and right) in 1° increments

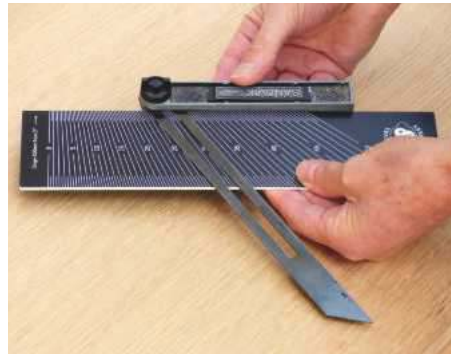
without having to resort to reading glasses! This is because the inner edge of the Monkey does not start from zero, but actually begins 150mm out from the original point. Easier to explain by way of a diagram, but imagine one side of a triangle growing bigger as you extend it outwards, while the starting point remains zero.

Graduations are marked numerically every 5° and corners are lightly rounded. Setting a sliding bevel to a precise angle is child's play, while you can just about mark off within 0.25° if necessary, though whether you could cut or plane to that degree of precision is another matter.

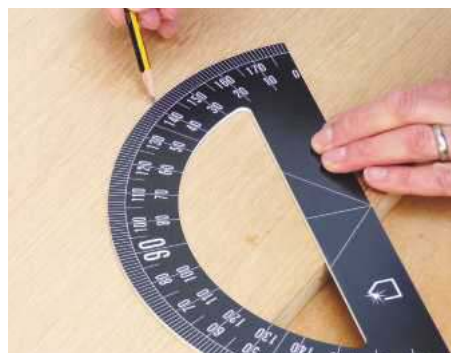
### Big Protractor

Depending on your area of woodwork there may not be many times when you need to use a protractor, but when you do it can be an ordeal. I've struggled for years with my cheap, maths-set relic that's not terribly accurate. Because of the size it's certainly not easy to read angles easily. FirstLightWorks to the rescue again, then.

The Big Protractor is just that, measuring 300 x 150mm. It reminded me of those school geometry lessons, where the maths teacher used a large, beautifully-made boxwood protractor on the chalk



Setting a sliding bevel to a precise angle is child's play



Around the perimeter these graduations are about 2.5mm apart, so it's dead easy to read or mark off 0.5° or less

board. I know, tempus fugit and all that... As you'd expect, angles are marked on the Big Protractor from 0-180° (from both left and right) in 1° increments. Around the perimeter these graduations are about 2.5mm apart, so it's dead easy to read or mark off 0.5° or less. Like the Bevel Monkey, edges are smooth and both tools are beautifully finished.

### Conclusion

These are simple but highly accurate tools, with nothing to go wrong. Look after them and they should last decades. A hole in each tool for hook storage may be worth considering, but that's a minor detail. Chairmakers will no doubt find the Bevel Monkey invaluable, while the Big Protractor will appeal to anyone setting out carpentry or joinery projects.

### SPECIFICATION

#### Bevel Monkey

- A bevel setting gauge for woodworkers, chairmakers, carpenters and joiners – in fact anyone who needs to quickly and accurately set a sliding bevel
- Marked in 0.5° steps from 0-50°
- Manufactured from a 3.2mm 3-ply acrylic laminate with high contrast laser engraved markings

#### Big Protractor

- Suitable for woodworkers, joiners, carpenters, chairmakers and anyone else who makes things using angles that aren't 90°
- 300mm wide and made from 3.2mm 3-ply acrylic laminate, which is laser engraved to give high contrast markings
- Marked in single degrees for reading both clockwise and anti-clockwise

Typical prices: Bevel Monkey – £26.40;

Big Protractor – £31.20

Web: [www.firstlightworks.co.uk](http://www.firstlightworks.co.uk);

[www.classichandtools.com](http://www.classichandtools.com)

### THE VERDICT

#### PROS

- Easy to read 0.5° increments; precision tools

#### CONS

- You'll need a sharp pencil!

RATING: 5 out of 5



## WINTER PROJECT: OAK SKIRTING

**Takes:** One weekend

**Tools you'll need:** Mitre saw, router, sander, jigsaw, drillstand

# CLASS FOR LOW COST

Making your own skirting from hardwood is not so much dearer than buying ready-made softwood, says **Phil Davy**

Although softwood skirting is usually available in several patterns from most builders' merchants, it's harder to find something similar in hardwood. Not surprising really, due mainly to lack of demand; few suppliers would want a quantity of boards sitting in stock for months before a customer perhaps spotted them. You may find a specialist timber merchant stocks ready-machined skirting in perhaps oak, ash or sapele, though the range of sizes and profiles could still be limited. Assuming you have a  $\frac{1}{2}$ in router it's easier and cheaper to make your own skirting, and relatively inexpensive once you've bought the appropriate cutter.

A couple of months ago my stone porch was finally plastered, and with oak door and window already installed it just needed skirting to complete what had been a major construction project. The elegant torus profile is one of the most popular mouldings, though I reckoned its regular size would look slightly heavy in a small

entrance area. I decided to replicate the skirting I'd made for a bath panel a while back. By using a Trend bearing-guided corner bead cutter ( $\frac{1}{2}$ in shank), it's possible to create a similar pattern on a smaller scale. Either use a router table or produce the moulding using the router freehand. For the latter you'll need to support the router by cramping a wide piece of timber along the rear edge of the skirting.

I reduced the 25mm-thick sawn boards to 20mm before truing up the top edges by hand. Although it's normally far more efficient to plane edges by machine, this time I had no support rollers for what were fairly long boards. Overall skirting height finished at 150mm, which looked about right in the porch.

### Mitres & fixing

Skirting at internal corners should always be scribed, which admittedly is a bit fiddly. On simple profiles, cutting both pieces at

$45^\circ$  may look OK initially, but you can almost guarantee that in time the skirting will shrink, revealing a gap in the corner. If scribed, the gap will be far less obvious. A scribing tool such as Trend's EasyScribe is extremely handy here.

External mitres are easy enough with a hand or powered saw, though don't assume your walls are square. You may need to trim the mitres to fit neatly, or set the saw a degree or two under or over  $45^\circ$  to compensate. Here a sliding bevel is essential.

You could fix skirting with a fast-grab adhesive, though I prefer to use screws. They should be concealed with oak plugs, though make sure these are cut from an offcut of the same board. I used a  $\frac{1}{2}$ in plug cutter for 5mm screws, with a 13mm spade bit for counterboring. This was ground down slightly to reduce its diameter so the plugs were a nice snug fit. Finally, a couple of coats of Rustins satin polyurethane varnish completed the job.



**1** Plane oak to a thickness of about 20mm. If knives leave ridges, remove with a block plane



**2** True up the upper edges of boards with a bench plane, if necessary. Next, check these for square



**3** A bearing-guided corner bead bit will create a similar profile to a torus, but on a smaller scale



**4** Cramp straight timber to rear of skirting to prevent the router from tipping when machining the profile



**5** Start fitting skirting to a long section of the wall. Cut to length, drill and counterbore for oak plugs



**6** Where the walls are out of square, scribe a short piece of oak to check the angle for accuracy



**7** Cut the first board to length. If too tight between internal corners, trim sawn ends with a block plane



**8** Sand the surface with 180 grit abrasive before fixing skirting to the wall



**9** Mark wall, drill with a masonry bit and insert plastic plugs. Screw skirting firmly in place



**10** Cut matching oak plugs using an appropriate cutter in a drillstand. Check spade bit for fit



**11** For internal corners, mitre the next board at 45°, then cut along the profile with a jigsaw



**12** Cut small radius curves using a coping saw fitted with a new blade. Teeth should face downwards



**13** Clean up inside curves with a file or abrasive wrapped around a dowel, but watch for breakout



**14** Check joints butt together neatly at internal corners. Trim edges carefully as required



**15** Mark external mitres with a pencil by holding the next piece of oak above the existing skirting



**16** Use a combination square to mark 45° mitres; use a sliding bevel for other angles



**17** Cut external angles with a powered or hand mitre saw. Check sawn finish from blade on an offcut



**18** Walls are rarely dead square, so trim mitres with a finely-set block plane where necessary



**19** Saw and fix remaining pieces of skirting. If floors are uneven, check top edges with a level



**20** Glue and insert oak plugs to conceal recessed screw heads. Tap these firmly home



**21** When glue has dried, saw off protruding plugs. Thin card prevents blade from scratching the surface



**22** Carefully trim plugs flush with a block plane or chisel. Fill any defects and sand the surface



**23** Dust down and brush on a sealer coat of satin polyurethane varnish, thinned with white spirit



**24** Remove masking tape from the floor. Completed skirting finishes off a porch, matching door along with a window

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# STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO CARVING A WOODEN SPOON

Dremel prides itself on encouraging makers to learn a new skill, so why not try your hand at woodcarving and have a go at making this handy wooden spoon

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Wood for your spoon
- Axe
- Carving knife
- Crook knife
- Saw
- Safety glasses and gloves
- Dust mask
- Pencil
- Dremel Multi-Vise
- Dremel flexible shaft
- High performance multi-tool tool, such as the Dremel 4300
- Dremel Flex-Shaft Tool Holder
- High Speed Cutter 192
- Dremel EZ SpeedClic
- Finishing Abrasive Buffs
- Multi Chuck
- High Mandrel (401)
- Polishing wheel (414)
- EZ SpeedClic Mandrel

## TIP

Surrounded by surplus wood? Dry it out and use it for firewood – birch bark burns especially well, and you'll love the sweet smell too



**W**hy not take it upon yourself to learn a new skill and add another creative string to your bow? It's with that in mind that Dremel has the ideal creative inspiration for novice makers or aspiring artists, as well as the tools and knowledge to help you learn a new craft or skill, such as woodcarving.

So, if you're wondering about woodcarving and you want to create something useful but not sure where to start, Dremel has put together a step-by-step guide to carving your own wooden

spoon. From finding the right kind of wood, and choosing the correct tools and Dremel accessories, to polishing and perfecting your spoon ready for pride of place in the kitchen or on the dining table, woodcarving is an art that will leave you wanting to create more.

If you're looking for more inspiration to get your creative juices flowing, then visit Dremel's website – [www.dremeurope.com/gb/en/projects](http://www.dremeurope.com/gb/en/projects) – or follow them on Facebook for regular hints, tips and competitions. ✂



**1** Picking the wood is the most important part of this project. Softwoods like willow, limewood or birch are easier to carve, and will make this project a lot simpler/more straightforward. In this guide, we'll be using birch wood



**2** Pop your gloves and safety glasses on as it's time to get chopping. Wedge an axe into the top of your wood and to make a controlled split straight down the middle, lift the entire thing and knock it gently against your work surface



**3** Once the wood is split, clean the surface with an axe and remove the dark core of the wood. Using your axe, carefully chop away some wood until the dark line in the middle is gone



**4** To clean the wood, grab your axe again and starting in the middle chop downwards, angling the axe to the outside to help the bark peel away. Remove the rest of the bark with a small knife leaving you with the basis for your spoon



**5** It's time to round the ends of the wood. Hold the axe near the top with one hand, then steer the wood with the other hand as you make slow, chopping movements to the ends. Now on to step 6, to finish the rounding



**6** Using a woodcarving knife, simply chip and peel the same way you would an apple. Always point the knife away from yourself as you work. This carving will reveal the pattern of the wood, so by now you should start to see what your spoon will look like once it's done



**7** Using a pencil, draw a circle at one end of the wood, leaving a centimetre or so around the perimeter. If you're making a double-ended spoon, do the same at the other end and connect the two with a drawing of what will soon become the handle. Don't forget to make the handle slightly wider as it reaches the circles



**8** Next, draw horizontal lines beneath the circles to create a security stop, put your gloves back on and use a handsaw to saw the wood down to the lines. This will create a shelf, which will in turn prevent the wrong bits of your spoon from breaking when you use the axe later. Taking the axe, carve away the rest of the sides between the lines, then clean with the woodcarving knife until there are no jagged edges. Once this step is completed, you're halfway through the project!



**9** Gripping the new spoon handle, use a crook knife to hollow out both circles you drew in step 7. Whittle very slowly and feel with your fingers, until you have roughly half a centimetre of wood left at the bottom of each hollow. Be careful not to make the hollow too thin – you'll be using a Dremel soon and will require some wood to be left in the spoon so you have some excess to work with



**10** For ultimate precision, this next step could take a few hours, but here's where you'll really see your creation coming together. Take the carving knife and start removing very small layers of wood. As you shape the back and front, be sure to make the handle as straight and smooth as possible. If you're making a double-ended spoon, remember one end should be bigger than the other



**11** This next step creates a natural break in the project. Once shaped and fine-tuned you'll need to dry the spoon, which will make it easier to sand. Place it in a plastic sandwich bag with some small, dry wood chips and leave it open at room temperature to release the moisture. If you turn it occasionally in the bag, leave the spoon between 3-5 days to dry naturally



**12** Apply your dust mask, safety glasses and gloves for the remaining steps. Clamp the spoon into the Multi-Vise. Attach the Flexible Shaft to your Dremel Multi-Tool and hang it on the Flex-Shaft Tool Holder. Using the Multi Chuck, then attach the High Speed Cutter 192 and carve within the 15,000-20,000rpm range. It helps to use your small finger for balance, as if you're working with a pencil. Keep carving the wood until the hollows are completely smooth. Don't apply any pressure to the softwood – the tool and the accessory will do the work for you



**13** Now your spoon is smooth, it's time to perfect the look and feel by sanding. Change the accessory using the Dremel EZ SpeedClic Mandrel to an EZ SpeedClic: Finishing Abrasive Buffs with a grit of 180, and sand within the 10,000-15,000rpm range. Work on the hollows and the sides, then smooth even further using the EZ SpeedClic: Finishing Abrasive Buffs with a grit of 280



**14** Coating your spoon with a little oil is a great idea. Not only will it give a shiny finish, but it'll also help protect the wood, and ensure the colours, grains and patterns stand out more. Any 'food grade' oil will work, such as linseed oil, walnut oil, or pure tung oil. Avoid olive oil, which tends to get sticky and attract dirt. Add some oil to a polishing wheel, at a setting of 5,000rpm, mounted using a Dremel Mandrel 401, and polish for the best finish. Now, get the soup ready – it's time to test out your newly carved spoon!



## IT'S GOT LEGS!

Spotting a definite theme in his work, **Les Thorne** decides to add one more to his repertoire as he turns this stunning square box in spalted beech, with contrasting legs in African blackwood

There appears to be a bit of a theme going on with my articles at the moment as everything seems to have legs. This is probably due to a man called Jonathan who comes in once a week to use one of the big lathes as he doesn't own one himself. Jonathan has an eccentric slant to his designs with bowls, stools and tables on all sorts of leg arrangements. They don't always work but they are always interesting. During the making of this particular piece, I kept thinking that I could stop at any time, so if you want to make a square bowl or a square box, you just need to stop at the relevant point. I didn't worry too much about making the blank exactly square as I trusted my bandsaw to do a good enough job. Side-grain boxes bring their own set of problems as the timber is prone to moving, which will alter the fit of the lid, so make sure the timber is as dry as possible, or even part turn it in order to let the wood settle down. When working on spalted beech, such as with this blank, always ensure to wear suitable eye protection as splits and faults are hidden by the black lines and the blank can easily fly apart on you. ✂



**1** I have quite a bit of African blackwood in small bits, which I've collected over the years and they should complement the spalted beech perfectly. The first step is to cut 25mm off the 100mm blank for the lid



**2** The bowl section is quite small, so a faceplate may have caused a problem. Here, I'm using the woodworm screw on my scroll chuck for the initial mounting. If the timber is a bit soft, run some CA adhesive into the hole, allow it to dry, then mount it on the screw



**3** The toolrest needs to act as your guard. As you can see in the photo, the square section is not visible so you are cutting it by feel a lot of the time. The long-grind bowl gouge allows you to carry out a pull and a push cut



**4** The smallest spigot I can get away with allows me to put as much of the shape on the bowl at this initial stage. When marking the diameter with dividers, only use the left-hand point on the wood, which will prevent them from grabbing



**5** As a rough guide, mark the top square with a marker pen; this means you can see it while it is spinning, giving you something to work to. This black line will be removed with the final cuts



**6** The rim has to be flat in order for the legs to sit properly, so set the toolrest up in the direction that you want to cut; this gives something for your fingers to slide along and keeps the tool at a constant cutting depth



**7** It's difficult to judge the extreme edge of the square, so I put a mark on the toolrest to give me a guide as to where the wood begins. You should be aiming for a top thickness of around 5mm



**8** A well executed spigot should have a slight dovetail to suit the jaws, be the right size, and ideally should have a flat that will locate on top of the jaws; this will provide strength and accuracy to the chucking point



**9** Getting the transition point between the bowl and flat section correct will make or break the shape, and the best way to do this is by using a spindle gouge. Remember to close the flute of the tool as it gets to the meeting point of the two surfaces



**10** The bowl needs to be gripped on the spigot and you are then ready for the hollowing out process. A pair of callipers will help you to mark the diameter of the bowl on the top surface



**11** Hollow out the bowl section in the same way that you would hollow out a bowl, working from the large diameter inwards using a push cut with the 10mm bowl gouge



**12** Create a step for the lid using the 10mm skew chisel. It's important to get this square to top surface so the fit of the lid will be as good as possible



**13** The bowl section needs to be thin, but as I'm going to re-turn the outside, it's more important to get a good curve on the inside. The figure-of-eight callipers offer the best method of measuring the wall thickness



**14** The 60° bowl gouge may be required in order to access the bottom section of the shape. It's easy to achieve bevel support when using this tool, even when you can't get the toolrest into the bowl



**15** Sanding the square section is difficult to do when the bowl is spinning as you can catch your fingers on the square and you also run the risk of rounding over the edges. Using a sanding pad with the lathe switched off keeps the top square as flat as possible



**16** The ability to leave the base on a chuck while I turn the lid is very important. Buying another chuck is generally a lot more useful than that must-have gimmick tool



**17** Next, mount the lid section on a screw chuck using an MDF spacer to shorten the screw. You can then turn the blank using a bowl gouge to round and then fit to the base using a small spigot



**18** I wanted to lighten the weight of the lid as much as possible, so I started to dish the underside of the blank and then suddenly remembered the screw hole. Thinking on my feet, I then added a decorative dome to the centre



**19** The dryness of the spalted beech means that it needs lots of sanding sealer before any other finish can be applied. It took two coats of acrylic spray before I achieved an even finish



**20** Put the base back on and mount the lid using light tailstock pressure. The lid should be a tight fit and you can try and line the grain up at this point



**21** To keep the lid on in order to turn the top surface, I used a paper gasket to jam the section together. A slight dome will complement the curve of the bowl underneath the square



**22** A bevel in contact push cut is the best way of keeping the lid on as the pressure is going towards the headstock. If it comes loose, you often get a warning with a change of sound rather than the lid flying off across the workshop



**23** Now that the lid is finished you can begin to remove the spigot. Mount a piece of pine scrap wood in the chuck and turn a dome that fits the inside curve of the bowl. If you get the curve right, it will hold on there if you lightly tap the bowl in place



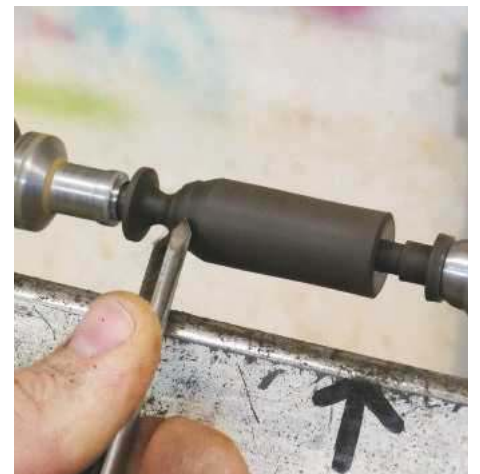
**24** Keep the tailstock in place for as long as possible and shape the outside of the bowl, ideally with a push cut. You shouldn't have to work all the way up to the square section as that part of the bowl should have been turned in the initial shaping



**25** If you have a good fixing onto the jam chuck then the tailstock can be removed; this makes it much easier to achieve a perfect curve around the bowl section. When the turning is complete, give the entire base a couple of coats of sanding sealer



**26** Four legs, four buttons and a blackwood finial now have to be turned. The legs have an 8mm spigot, which can be accurately measured using a pair of Vernier callipers before they are cut with a 5mm parting tool



**27** Next, carry out the shaping with a 10mm signature spindle gouge – here I'm going for a traditional inverted balustrade shape. The small bevel of the spindle gouge puts very little pressure on the surface of the wood



**28** Turn the remainder of the shape using a 10mm skew chisel, held in a planing type cut. If you experience any vibration, you need to support the work with your fingers placed behind the cutting edge



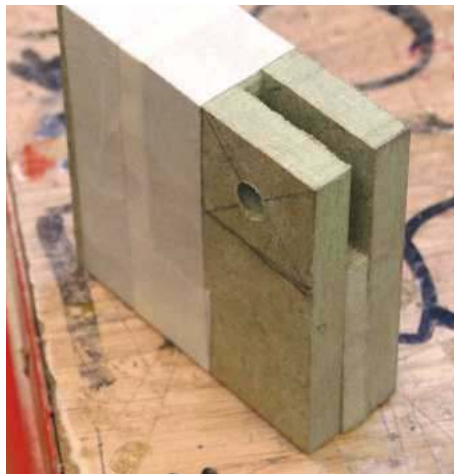
**29** Turning the first one is easy, but getting the others to match will be the challenge. Overall diameter and length are the important factors when copy turning



**30** I recommend keeping the shapes simple until you are more confident in getting them right. The right-hand leg has a worm hole in it that will need to be filled with some CA adhesive and sanding dust



**31** I debated whether or not to turn the top buttons in one length and then cut them up, but decided to do them individually by holding small bits of blackwood in the pin jaws of my chuck



**32** It's always fun to make simple jigs to use in the workshop and this drilling jig allows me to mount the legs accurately. A few bits of MDF glued together with a 8mm hole is all that's needed



**33** Drilling on the drill press is more accurate than trying to do it by hand. I had the drill running quickly to get as clean a hole as possible through the softish parts of the spalted beech



**34** Drilling some 8mm holes in a piece of scrap wood means that I can hold the legs while I spray them with gloss lacquer. My preferred finish on blackwood and ebony is always high gloss



**35** Lastly, turn the finial between centres with a 10mm spigot. My small finials all have a 10mm spigot, which makes them all interchangeable. I like to make sure I'm totally happy with the look of it before I glue it in place



**36** The completed square box on legs should look something like this

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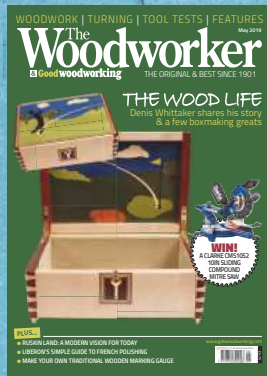
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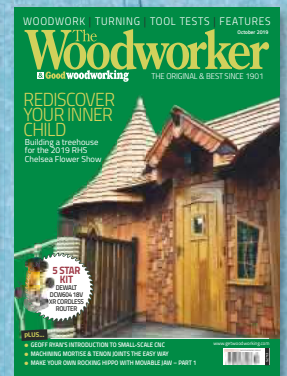
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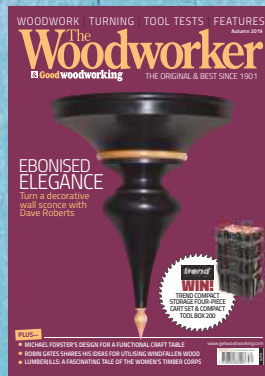
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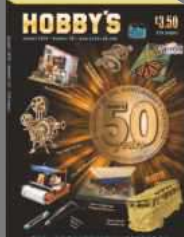
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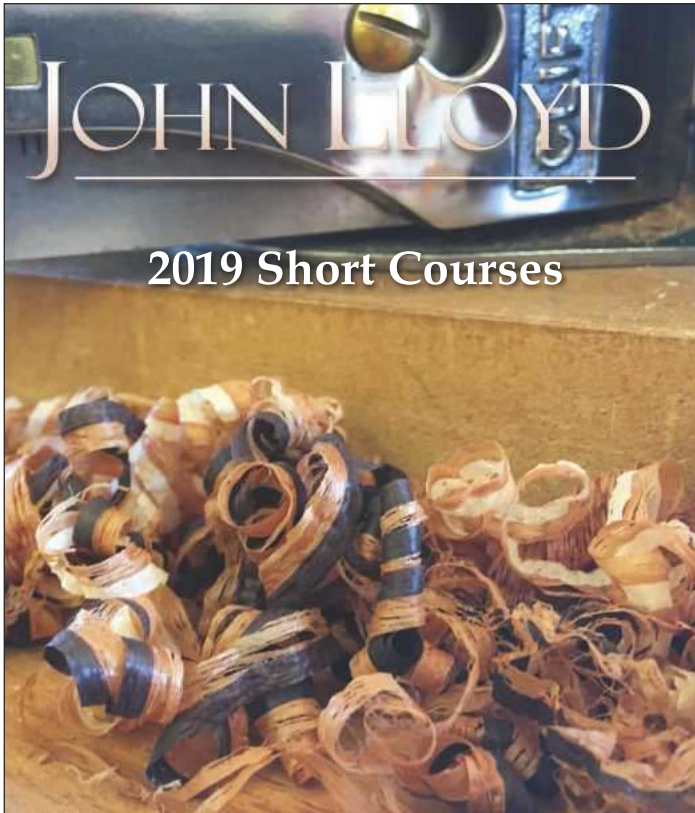




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# DYSLEXIR OF LIFE

## Stepping sideways

I've come across several people who are dyslexic. As a proportion of the people I generally come across, the number is high, so I conclude that dyslexia is quite common. Years ago it was mistaken for stupidity. Dyslexics heard that they were stupid; inevitably to some extent believed it, and suffered accordingly. The hard irony of this is that according to my brief observation (four individuals), three out of four dyslexics are conspicuously brilliant, and all the brighter for being out of the mainstream.

Eddie Izzard is still funny after all these years. He doesn't write things down. This shows in his zany asides that become increasingly bizarre as the evening wears on. Lara, my erstwhile lodger, is dyslexic. She has double firsts in photography. Some of her pictures are simply beautiful; others, dark and intriguing – they all exude excellence. A \_\_\_ is a lecturer, a therapist and an inventor, astonishingly sensitive to energy fields. While Carrie, my fourth sample is not as overtly accomplished as these three, nevertheless she has a rare ability, and a willingness to be on the outside looking in, that combine to make her a powerful counsellor.

It is precisely because dyslexics are denied formal education solidly framed in the logic of written words and figures that their creative forces burst out sideways into areas unconfined by conventional structure. They do it their way. Far from dyslexia being a handicap, it is their booster drive, probably all the more so if the individual has suffered negative reaction, and now wishes to set the record straight.

The same education system that disparaged dyslexics looks down on practical skills like woodwork, metalwork and basket-weaving. Music, drama, poetry, dance, cooking, sewing, gardening, art – all are considered soft options and not real studies, and as decades pass, despite being valuable and transferable life-resources, they dwindle in the curriculum. Not only have dyslexics been punished by their exemption to formal education, they have been denied a viable alternative.



Before she asked her mother what it meant, Lara saw this sign as a Snoopy dog with a bandage round his head. Lara sees things differently. That's why she's a photographer



'19' ©Lara Clarke-Wardle: [www.lcw-foto.com](http://www.lcw-foto.com)

### Cold sweat

I used to have bad dreams about exams. I'd be about to sit one and realise that I knew nothing at all about the subject. No, hang on: that's not a dream, that's a memory. I was hopeless at secondary school. I didn't know nothing because I'm dyslexic: I'm not. I just didn't revise, or listen in the first place. The good thing about the dreams was waking from them and realising afresh that I won't have to sit an exam ever again. I don't have to forget, fail and fall short. The last time I sat a night-time history paper, I realised even in my dream that the fear had gone, and was replaced by freedom. With freedom comes pride (healthy, not puffed-up). The same is true in the workshop, the dance hall, the studio. I'm grateful that woodwork is friendly and accommodating. I can't think of anything else so rewarding that I could have slipped into with such ease and next-to-no training.

### Two fingers

It might be too late for you as far as school goes, so you'll have to write it off. If you are dyslexic and have gathered that you're therefore somewhat dim, you must wave two fingers at that judgment. Raise them again to those who think that woodwork is peasants' work.

Neither of these is true and, in a perfect refutation, you can demonstrate it. Go into the workshop remembering that you have an advantage over others. You are not bound by convention. You can excel wherever you like. You can do better than fulfil a contract, you can truly satisfy a customer, surpassing all expectations including your own.

There are no rules in woodwork (apart from common-sense safety guidelines): none to learn and none to break. You learn as you go not by rote but experience. There are teachers, but you don't need one. If you are patient and practically intelligent, you'll work out the best way of doing things. The more you do them, the better you'll become, and then there'll be no stopping you.

Woodwork offers more. Typically carried out in a shed or garage by just you and the radio, any mistakes you make are not chalked up on the board for all to see. You are safe. It'll be disappointing, of course, when you make silly thoughtless errors. So be it. It is part of the curve. Accept it. Learn from it. Improve. Feel good. There's no one to put you down except you, and you, like them, can just dysyst. ✕

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