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May 2017



THE ORIGINAL

1901

& Woodturner

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Suite 25, Eden House, Enterprise Way,
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UK & overseas
Tel: +44 (0)1689 869 840
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SUBSCRIPTIONS

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CURRENT & BACK ISSUES

Website: www.mags-uk.com
Tel: 01733 688 964

EDITORIAL

Group Editor: Tegan Foley
Email: tegan.foley@mytimemedia.com
Editor: Mark Cass
Email: editor.ww@mytimemedia.com

PRODUCTION

Designer: Nik Harber
Retouching Manager: Brian Vickers
Advertising Production: Robin Gray

ADVERTISING

Business Development Manager: David Holden
Email: david.holden@mytimemedia.com
Tel: 01689 869 867
Online Sales: David Holden
Email: david.holden@mytimemedia.com
Tel: 07718 648 689

MARKETING & SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions Manager: Kate Hall
Subscriptions: Sarah Pradhan
Tel: +44(0)1858 438 798

MANAGEMENT

Group Advertising Manager: Rhona Bolger
Email: rhona.bolger@mytimemedia.com
Tel: 01689 869 891
Chief Executive: Owen Davies
Chairman: Peter Harkness

We endeavour to ensure all techniques shown in *The Woodworker* 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



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Welcome

'The king is dead, long live the king!' A toast of a phrase little heard in genuine and appropriate usage and first encountered by yours truly as a boy when it was momentarily puzzling, but thereafter one of my all-time favourites. It says – as nothing else can – that things have changed yet everything is still the same. And, while not for a moment suggesting our status is of anything approaching a regal quality, we at *The Woodworker* would like to paraphrase, and welcome in this latest version of our magazine with celebratory glasses aloft, preferably in a Hollywood version of an 18th-century rustic inn with royalist leanings.

Yes, there's a lot to be said for a fresh start, and especially one which coincides with Springtime and all of its associations with new growth and renewal. Now could be a good time for a workshop clear-out and to make some serious inroads into that lengthy 'to do' list. As someone whose own workshop – after years of growing enclutterment – is only lately showing signs of order and tidiness, I can heartily recommend this as a course of action for all but the naturally well-kept workshop owner.

Try this simple experiment the next time you're leaning against your bench or sitting thereat on a high stool; gaze around the place and ask yourself if you know where everything of importance actually is? It's quite likely the answer will be an assertive 'yes', but there will be many – and up until recently I was one of them – who will have to admit to a big old 'no'. Reason enough then for some of us to reach for the bin bags and cardboard boxes, but for everyone else, I say this: 'Are you familiar with the contents of every drawer, cupboard, corner or shelf in your workshop?' Unless you're someone like Mr Memory from *The 39 Steps*, there's a strong chance you'll not be.

You can contact Mark on editor.ww@mytimemedia.com

Mark



It's better than it used to be, there's space on the bench now!

And here, then, is another very good reason for a workshop Spring-clean; the things you're about to rediscover will bring all sorts of woodworking joy to your heart, soul and even pocket. Kit that was given up for lost is now back in the 'available' section, items of often sentimental value can once again be held and gazed upon and, a particular treat this one, things you were just about to buy again turn up in the nick of time. And when you step back to admire the orderly shelves and expanses of bare benchtop, note well that you have brought about great change, yet all is how it always was – and will be.

THIS MONTH THE EDITOR HAS BEEN:

working on his website • clearing out the workshop • questioning his decision to start an MDF job • posting on Instagram

WOODWORK

26 Felder competition winners

After six long months, we finally unveil the five finalists and show you their fantastic pieces, before revealing the three overall winners

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Achievable with little more than a sharp knife or two, a steady hand and an eye that is true, we take a look at W. Buckley's article on chip carving, from *The Woodworker* of October 1908

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Garry and Shaun Stevenson of G&S Specialist Timber share the story of how a passion for quality raw materials led to the development and continued growth of their business

41 Custom cabinets

Phil Davy shows us how to build a functional kitchen wall cabinet from scratch, which features a handy storage space for your cookery books

46 Jungle fever

Tom Wilson's fantastic gorilla build uses beech and London plane to create a wonderful wooden version of this magnificent beast

52 Climbing the ladder

Commissioned by a friend, Peter Bishop gets rustic with the design of a simple 'ladder' style bookcase/shelving unit

65 Chariots of the sea

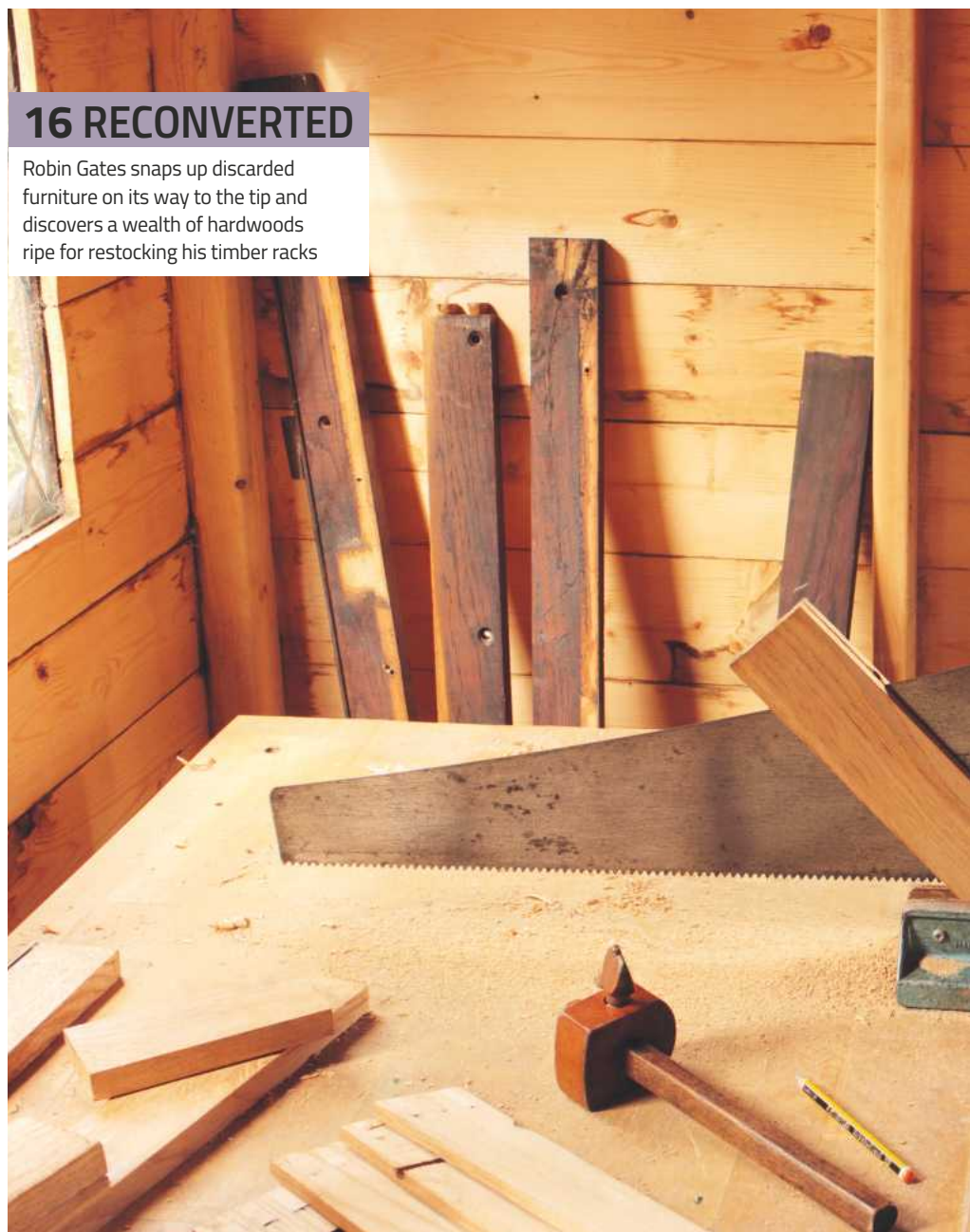
Antiquity boasted about the amazing prowess and manoeuvrability of the ancient trireme. Here, John Greeves looks at the building and testing of *Olympias*, a replica brought to life by the Trireme Trust to assess such claims

90 Timeslip

Peter Baker tells us about the impressive polishing shop at Harris Lebus, which stretched from east to west across the whole factory

16 RECONVERTED

Robin Gates snaps up discarded furniture on its way to the tip and discovers a wealth of hardwoods ripe for restocking his timber racks





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Find out how you can win 1 of 8 300mm Medium-Duty One-Handed Bar Clamps & Corner Clamp accessories

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Colin Simpson discusses the importance of sanding and the joy of a well finished surface, in addition to offering some handy hints and tips to help you achieve the best possible results

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Tony 'Bodger' Scott makes a sturdy jar from an old worktop

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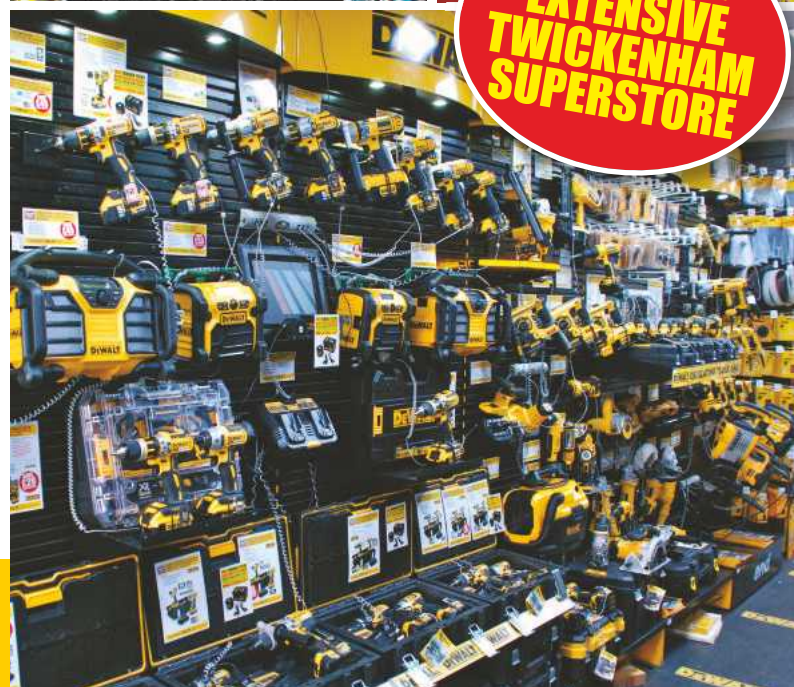
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ANY OTHER BUSINESS

While there's every chance that you the reader may have noticed a change or two in the appearance of your favourite woodworking magazine, hopefully little difference will have been perceived when it comes to content and the standards thereof. Our small but dedicated team of three are hoping that the new format will prove easier on the eye and somehow more worthy and supportive of the important position we all believe the craft of woodworking to hold in our, and all other societies, around the world.

We're proud to be part of a long established and continually changing skill, and will be around supplying woodworking help and advice for as long as there are people out there who want to make things. Please enjoy our latest rendering of this long-running classic magazine, and feel free to write in with your comments to the usual email address – editor.ww@mytimemedia.com. Now is the time to put in any requests or otherwise – remember, it's your magazine too.

Mark

DO MORE WITH EASY FILL CHALK REELS

IRWIN Tools, a manufacturer of chalk reels which have been designed with the end-user in mind for more than 50 years, offers advancements to its STRAIT-LINE Chalk & Reel line, increasing speed, durability and ease-of-use for tradesmen.

The innovations include larger chalk reel openings for increased speed and visibility, best-in-class line strength for fewer breaks, and enhanced usability and ergonomics. The Easy Fill & Lock Top innovation is a large, 90° locking top available on the MACH6 Chalk Reel and provides a wide opening for convenience when filling the reel and locks securely to prevent spills.

The wide opening gives added visibility into the reels, reducing user frustration and downtime by providing faster line priming while minimising overfilling – a primary cause of reel jams. The improved internal access allows users to access the spool to work out line tangles or retrieve broken lines without taking the reel apart.

The MACH6 also has an open access back panel for quick line changes and cleaning and features a hi-tensile line that is 2.5 times stronger than

traditional lines for fewer breaks, a robust steel handle and large centre clutch for increased durability and torque, as well as a wide prong hook to provide secure anchoring.

The aluminium bodied MACH6 has a 6:1 gear ratio, making it 6x faster than traditional chalk reels and is aided by a heavy-duty metal drive gear.

The new STRAIT-LINE range also includes two additional reel designs to provide more jobsite options. The Speedline PRO, which also has the Easy Fill & Lock Top, features a lightweight ABS housing with a metal faceplate that protects a 3:1 gear ratio, making it 3x faster than traditional chalk reels when winding. The Classic, made of durable aluminium and including a 70% wider chalk fill opening than the previous model, is available with either a 15m or 30m abrasion-resistant polyester line that delivers up to six strikes per pull.

To celebrate IRWIN's innovative range of products that allow tradesmen to do more on the job, the tools manufacturer is giving customers the chance to win some 'DO MORE' prizes when they purchase any IRWIN product.

Up until 30 June and from participating stockists, customers can be in with a chance of winning IRWIN Impact Double-Ended Bits or a 'DO MORE' experience, including hot air ballooning, sailing, rock climbing and much more. To find out more, see www.irwin-do-more.com and www.irwin-do-more.com/products.



DIARY – APRIL

6–7 Introduction to the small lathe
6–7, 12–13* & 27–28 Beginners' woodturning (two days)
8 Pen making*
20–21 Adirondack chair*
24 Sharpening with Tormek Hand Tools
26 Sharpening with Tormek Woodturning*
28 Bandsaws*
* Course held in Sittingbourne, Kent
Axminster Tools & Machinery
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Web: www.axminster.co.uk

3–7 Oak timber framing: wall framing
8 Make a Shaker box
24–28 Oak timber framing: roof framing
Weald & Downland Living Museum
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Tel: 01243 811 363
Web: www.wealddown.co.uk

20–23 Turning green wood
West Dean College
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Web: www.westdean.org.uk

3–7 Router skills
8–9 Dovetailing weekend
21–24 Beginners' four-day course
Chris Tribe
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Tel: 01943 602 836
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6 Apr–15 Jun Make a chair
25 Apr–16 May Intro to green woodwork
Ben Willis Woodcraft
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2 Intro to woodcarving
8 Intro to woodturning
9–12 Easter carpentry school: make a table
21 Rush basket making
30 Intro to furniture restoration
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A CHAINSAW STORY FROM OUT OF THIS WORLD



Darth Vader is a core character in George Lucas' *Star Wars* films franchise appearing in all the key films in recent years and has been portrayed by numerous actors. In the most recent *Rogue One* film this villainous part starred Welsh sporting hero turned-actor, Spencer Wilding. In taking this role, Spencer had to maintain a contractual silence, even being unable to confirm to his own family that he was acting the part until the film was finally released.

Ian Murray is a chainsaw sculptor, carving many varied subjects from timber as commissioned works from individuals and organisations keen to have his works of art. Both Ian and Spencer live in North Wales and are active communicators through social media. When Ian showcased a recent sculpture via Twitter he got an immediate tweet from Spencer commissioning a life-size interpretation of the character in which he had just been recognised with the launch of *Rogue One*.

The challenge for Ian Murray was that the sculpture was required for Christmas 2016 and the commission was confirmed just five days before the holiday! But Ian revved up his chainsaws and worked non-stop for three days to complete the challenge on time.

"Carving Darth Vader for the star himself was a bit daunting," reports Ian. "I have owned a Makita 3500 chainsaw for three or four years now and it works very hard in my sculpting. When my other brand blew up I invested in the Makita 79cc saw, which with 5.7hp really does give all the power I need. I use proper carving bars and chains and as a full-time professional wood sculptor I need hard working and reliable saws. The Makita machines give me that reliability to earn a living."

Spencer Wilding is over the moon with Ian's interpretation of Darth Vader and says he is "delighted to have this unique sculpture."

For more information on Ian's work, see www.ianmurraychainsawcarving.co.uk.

and to find out more about Makita chainsaws, see www.makita.co.uk.



MINI LATHE WITH BITE

The DML250 is a compact and extremely well built machine, offering excellent performance and fantastic value for money. Due to its size and portability it is ideal for craft shows, smaller workshops, or as a second lathe. To offer even greater value and usability the DML250 is supplied complete with a 75mm faceplate, drive centre and revolving tailstock centre for turning bowls and spindles. With cast-iron construction throughout, the ability to handle 255mm diameter work and 447mm between centres, this lathe is the perfect choice for the budding woodturner who requires a high quality and flexible lathe at a sensible cost. An optional bed extension is also available to extend capacity between centres if required and the optional leg stand means that lack of precious bench-top space need not be an issue. The DML250 is currently priced at £219.99 and comes with Record Power's industry-leading five-year guarantee. See www.recordpower.co.uk to find out more.



TRANSFORM A HOUSE INTO A CHATEAU WITH ESCO FLOORING FROM OSMO

Osmo UK presents ESCO Chateau, a sleek and contemporary style of oak flooring. Prefinished with Osmo Polyx-Oil, Chateau elegantly embraces the wood's artistic knots and grains, complementing a wide range of current decorative trends and interiors.

ESCO's Chateau flooring range is a smooth oak design that effortlessly showcases the wood's classic natural beauty in a stylish and contemporary manner.

As standard, Chateau is available in eight different colours, including black, tobacco, stone grey and natural. The surface is machine-oiled



with Osmo Polyx-Oil to protect and enhance the appearance of the wood. As a premium wood finish, Osmo guarantees to keep wooden surfaces in top condition. It is a high quality, water-repellent and tread-resistant wood finish based on natural ingredients.

Offering further personalisation, Chateau flooring is supplied in a choice of two grades: Original and Elegance. Original grade is ideal for interiors that want to retain the natural look. Complete with hand-filled, sanded knots, the flooring brings the true rustic nature of the wood to life, and Elegance grade provides a sleek, elegant look that keeps knots to a minimum.

ESCO flooring from Osmo UK is available in both solid and engineered (two- and three-layer) parquets and can be supplied in a selection of thicknesses, widths and lengths. Production capacities can handle both small and large orders with a delivery time of approximately four weeks.

For more information and to view the entire ESCO range, visit www.osmouk.com or www.escogroup.cz/en.

THE RIDE(R) OF YOUR LIFE



Planes and chisels are the fundamental tools of any woodworker. Axminster Rider planes have been around for a few years, having quickly established themselves as the plane of choice at an affordable price for the tradesperson and DIY enthusiast. Not wanting to stop at planes, Axminster Rider can now offer a range of chisels and, like the planes, they are made from quality materials and ready to use straight from the box.

Bevel-edge chisels with hornbeam handles

As woodworkers love wood, Axminster decided to fit these Rider bevel-edge chisels with handles made from dense European hornbeam, chosen for its resilience. Sanded smooth and given a light oil finish, hornbeam has a superb feel in the hand and is comfortable whatever your hand size. The wider chisels have slightly larger handles to maintain balance across the range of sizes, and each handle ends in a polished stainless steel ferrule with a shock absorbing leather washer between the handle and the chisel's bolster.

The blades are fine-grained, chrome manganese steel and carefully hardened and tempered to 59 HRC. Sharpened and ground with a 25° bevel, these blades require only final honing to achieve a fine, long lasting edge (30° micro-bevel is recommended). The blades are approximately 100mm long with the overall length varying between 265–280mm. Available as individual chisels (blade width from 6–32mm) or as a set of six in a quality wooden presentation box, prices of individual chisels range from £8.39–£12, with a set of six priced at £72.24.

Bevel-edge chisels with soft-grip handles

For the tradesperson who does a lot of site work, these chisels are made to the same high standards as the hornbeam handled version. The main difference between them is the two-part soft-grip handle and the strong steel striking cap that allows them to be struck by a hammer if needed. The blades are 100mm long and the overall chisel length is 250mm. Available in blade width sizes from 6–50mm and as a set of five in a wooden box, prices of individual chisels range from £8.39–£12, with a set of five priced at £60.19.

Butt chisels

The shorter length and palm grip handles make butt chisels the perfect choice for fine trimming and final fitting tasks. The Rider butt chisels also have handles made from dense European hornbeam with a flat on one side to prevent them rolling off the bench.

The blades of these Rider butt chisels are also fine-grained, chrome manganese steel, and as with the hornbeam and soft-grip versions, each one is carefully hardened and tempered to 59 HRC, then finely ground and finished with a 25° bevel, again requiring only final honing to achieve a fine, long lasting edge. Blades are approximately 65mm long with the overall length 175mm. Individual chisels are available in blade width sizes from 6–25mm, and also as a set of four in a wooden box. Prices of individual chisels range from £8.39–£11.45, and a set of four is priced at £60.19.

All Rider chisels are made in the Czech Republic; to find out more, see www.axminster.co.uk.

THE 'HANDY SANDER'



The Handy Sander glove is a revolutionary new idea in sanding wood: it reaches intricate spindles and architraves where normal sanding blocks can't reach. It is designed to be disposable and one size fits all. These gloves come in a variety of grades: fine (120 grit), medium (80 grit) and coarse (40 grit). Priced at £4.99 per pair, see www.the-handy-sander-company.com to find out more.

BENCIL – THE WORLD'S MOST DURABLE PENCIL

We are all familiar with the problems associated with regular carpenter's pencils: they are often dropped or knocked off the bench, which results in the lead fracturing and then frustratingly falling out every time you attempt to sharpen it. Then there is the problem of forgetting that you earlier slid it into your back pocket – you make yourself a cup of tea only to sit down and hear the dreaded 'snap', and you're now left with two useless 75mm pencils.

The new range of Bencil pencils from Johnson Tools addresses all these problems and more. Bencil is manufactured from a revolutionary patented formula of solid semi-flexible graphite composite, thus eliminating the fragile lead and wooden surround of traditional pencils.

Due to its unique construction, Bencil will last up to 10 times longer than a standard wooden pencil and requires far less frequent sharpening, resulting in less down time. Bencil is non-toxic, writes on most surfaces, is non-smudging and water-resistant.

Starting at just £1.20 each and available in traditional HB, Blue and Red, plus a slimmer hexagonal version in HB for those who require the finest of lines, Bencil represents great value for money and is a huge leap forward in pencil design. For further details or to locate a stockist, see www.johnsontools.co.uk.



EXTREME SHARPENING MADE EASY

Trend's FX extreme double-sided 125 x 25mm fine/ex-coarse pocket size diamond stone is designed for bush-craft and hunting. It is the ideal companion for the outdoor pursuit enthusiast and enables quick sharpening every time. One side features a fine 1,000 grit (15 micron) and the other features an extra-coarse 180 grit (70 micron) surface. The 180 grit is ideal for heavy-duty stock removal, re-shaping and regrounding of an edge and the 1,000 grit is perfect for delivering a razor-sharp edge in seconds. Made using Monocrystalline diamond for longer life, the plate thickness is 1.5mm for extra stability. Guaranteed for five years and supplied in a handy wallet, the diamond stone is priced at £32.34 – see www.trend-uk.com.



LASER MITRE CUTTING

The new Clarke CMS210 is a 210mm mitre saw, which is perfect for making accurate mitre, bevel and cross-cuts. Ideal for woodworking, the CMS210 makes light work of cross-cuts up to 120 x 60mm in hard- and softwood and also features a powerful 1,400W motor, 24-tooth TCT blade and laser guide to give the user a preview of the saw blade path. Included with this model is a dust bag, TCT blade, two workpiece support extensions and clamps. Priced at £71.98, see www.machinemart.co.uk.



YANDLES SPRING SHOW IS ALMOST HERE!

Don't forget that the Yandles Spring Show is just around the corner – 7–8 April. There will be exclusive show deals on both days, free expert advice on a huge range of top tools, save 15% on all self-select timber and enjoy a wide range of free masterclasses. Demonstrations will be taking place on both days, with many well-known names in attendance. Always a highlight on the woodworking events calendar, the Yandles Spring Show sees thousands of visitors each year, all of whom come to enjoy the informal and friendly atmosphere that is created within the surroundings of this historic timber yard. You can also enjoy free entry, free parking and, as stated above, all masterclasses and demos are also free – see www.yandles.co.uk.

HANDS-ON WOODWORKING AT T'MILL

Come for a full day and with expert tuition learn how to use some of the Victorian machinery at Gayle Mill, in Hawes, North Yorkshire. You will receive one-to-one guidance throughout the day in how to turn wood on a lathe, use a circular saw, process wood on the planer/thicknesser and operate the bandsaw, all using power from the Victorian water-driven turbine. You will produce a stunning bespoke wooden item to take home and keep at the end of the day. All tuition, materials, lunch and refreshments are included in this unique experience day at t'mill. Taking place on 29 April and priced at £175, see www.gaylemill.org.uk.



WORKSHOP SPACE FOR HIRE

North Corner Makers is a brand-new woodworking shop north of Bristol, situated in a quiet semi-rural site about 25 minutes from the city centre, which offers you a place to work with other highly skilled creatives, woodworkers, fine furniture makers, cabinetmakers, designer/makers and crafters. The company, Jim Sharples Furniture, a bespoke furniture making business, has been established for over 10 years and has just taken on a new 2,000sq.ft. workshop, which is equipped with brand-new Felder machines: table saw, planer/thicknesser, spindle moulder and bandsaw.

All benefitting from top class extraction, the machines reside in a well organised, clean and tidy space for makers to work, and all workshop users will be asked to attend a site specific machine training induction course to ensure all kit is used safely.

This workshop space is an ongoing development and the makers who currently rent space will be part of that progress. The future plan is to have a 'library' of woodworking, design and craft books that makers and visitors can use, a spray booth, as well as the ability to hold open studio-type events and run woodworking courses.

North Corner Makers will also help to develop and advertise the makers within the space by holding regular exhibitions/open days and forming links with the local community.

There is a strong vision for the future and if you are interested and wish to be part of one of the best equipped workshops around, either email Jim Sharples – jim@jimsharplesfurniture.co.uk – or call 07786 848 802 to find out more.





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MANUFACTURER: Record Power
D&M GUIDE PRICE: £899.99

This brand-new lathe from Record Power represents the culmination of many decades of expertise in the manufacture and supply of superior woodturning lathes. Developed with the help of professional woodturners and keen hobbyists, Record Power believe they have produced a world-class machine for woodturners of all levels. Thanks to a number of innovative design solutions the capabilities, features and performance of the Herald far exceed anything a machine of this size has been capable of before – it brings top-end professional performance at a fraction of the size and cost of comparable heavy-duty machines.

To reflect the Record Power heritage in a modern context, the look of the lathe incorporates the elegant and balanced curves of the earlier Coronet series in a more streamlined and efficient form. As well as looking great, the Herald feels great – the excellence of engineering, ergonomics and quality manufacturing can be felt throughout, making this lathe a pleasure to use while delivering rock solid performance.

For full details and Buy-at-the-Same-Time offers, see the website.



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SYSROCK BR 10 DAB+ SITE RADIO

MANUFACTURER: Festool
D&M GUIDE PRICE: £149.95

The popular Festool BR10 SYSROCK Site Radio is now available as a digital radio – the SYSROCK BR 10 DAB+. Lightweight, compact and powerful, the SYSROCK construction site radio fits on every windowsill and combines compact dimensions with low weight and impeccable sound. And, thanks to the Bluetooth interface and integrated hands-free function, you can also listen to your favourite tracks on your smartphone with SYSROCK sound quality. The radio can be powered with Festool battery packs (ideally BPC 18V Li-ion) or the supplied mains cable and receives analogue (FM) and digital (DAB+) stations.



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Reconverted

Robin Gates snaps up discarded furniture on its way to the tip and discovers a wealth of hardwoods ripe for restocking his timber racks

When I take garden rubbish to the recycling centre, I can't resist a glimpse inside the skips collecting wood. Among the fragmenting man-made boards of flat-pack furniture past its dump-by date, I often see the dovetailed drawer or fielded panel of something more solid poking through, and surely deserving of a better end.

Most wood collected at municipal sites is shredded to make chipboard, buried as landfill, or simply burned to produce heat. As the UK ramps up its efforts to produce electricity using biomass – essentially wood pellets – it's increasingly likely that discarded furniture will become power station furnace-fodder.

When you think of the effort already invested in bringing wood from the tree to the furniture maker – felling the tree, dragging it from the forest, milling it, and perhaps shipping it thousands of miles – that's a staggering waste if it all goes up in smoke.

Finished furniture

As a dabbler in green woodwork I enjoy converting logs into usable timber but I also source timber from the opposite end of the chain – from finished (in every sense) furniture. Essentially this is reconvertng timber, returning it to its former usable state – stripped of finishes, squared up, free of old fastenings and ready for the timber rack.

Of course it's nothing new; I recall in the 1960s my Dad fitting out the house using timber from

old beds and wardrobes, but in our increasingly fashion-led consumerist society, it's become important for other reasons than economy. Significant furniture wood trees of the past have been logged almost to extinction, others have been struck down by globally-shipped diseases, and meanwhile the planet is suffocating under all the waste we bury and burn.

My first stab at reconvertng timber followed a journey home on foot loaded with groceries, when I turned a corner and walked slap-bang into a gate-leg dining table abandoned by a litter bin. Shock turned to opportunistic glee when my X-ray vision imagined a wealth of quality timber beneath the table's gloomy stain. Impatient to beat the refuse collector to my prize, I hurried home for the car and inside half an hour the liberated table was standing in our conservatory.

My wife wasn't exactly delighted. Her own vision of the table was coloured unfavourably by the legion of spiders trooping out of it, the woodworm dust showering from it and the reek of tobacco surrounding it. "Not to worry," I said, "it'll be a tidy stack of sweet-smelling timber in no time."

I'd call that junked table my learning curve if so gentle a shape could describe such a rough experience. Finding every screw immobilised by rust I resorted to the saw and, assaulted by swinging gate-legs and falling flaps, I made a total hash of it – and for what? 90% of it was delaminating plywood, not fit to box in a compost heap.

All that could be saved were short pieces of framing and a drawer front. But it was a start, and those saved pieces had a venerable aura, which store-bought timber takes a generation to acquire. Therein lies the X-factor of reconverted timber. Yes, it comes in odd shapes and sizes, with dents, dings and holes left by old fastenings, but that's also the beauty of it – the patina of experience, a life lived, and a purpose still to serve.

Big & boxy

Taking furniture apart is labour intensive if done carefully so I favour big boxy pieces in plain designs yielding flat boards. Curves and carvings catch the eye but once separated from the whole they'll be standing in the shed for years before finding another use. Everything I've reconverted has been factory-made stuff, broken or degraded beyond reasonable repair. The one thing in its favour has been the solid timber trapped inside the wreckage.

Sadly, a good place to look for old furniture is the countryside. Fly-tippers are a blight on



1 Planing a dark finish from salvaged oak



2 One board from an elm table made this shelf



3 Salvaged and resawn elm used for a candle box





4 Resawn oak bears the scars of old fastenings and joints...



5 ... and there are significant losses to sawdust



6 It's vital to extract the old fastenings before planing



7 One overlooked screw can ruin a good saw

the landscape, leaving rubble, smashed TVs, and fridges in their wake, but occasionally I've stumbled across good timber. Once I found a glitzy cocktail cabinet standing on three legs at an Isle of Wight beauty spot, and although its fancy plywood doors disguised by veneers and lippings stood around uselessly ever after, its solid ramin shelving, slotted screws, period handles and nickel-plated stays enjoyed second lives around the house.

When the dark stain was removed, the ramin emerged as a straw-coloured, diffuse-porous timber with slightly weaving, interlocking grain. Under a hand lens the end-grain revealed fine medullary rays, and golden vessels with distinctively wing-like (aliform) parenchyma characteristic of the species. Today this species is CITES-listed, and I wouldn't buy it, but beggars can't be choosers when such timber is dumped unceremoniously at your feet.

Another hunting ground is the charity shop, from where tatty furniture remaining unsold is frequently earmarked for the tip. My two most recent reconversions – another dining table, happily in solid elm this time, albeit badly split and on a woodworm-riddled base, and a depressingly dark sideboard – were rescued from a local

warehouse, which had deemed them too shabby even to be chic and declined to put them on the shop floor. A token donation, a sprint home to fetch the car, and they were mine – as were the strained muscles from lifting them indoors.

Gingerly does it

Working in a small shed already jam-packed with bikes and garden paraphernalia, it's no easy thing to accommodate a bulky piece of furniture and dissect it, so I proceed as gingerly as patience allows. After inhaling the ancient dust, which accumulates in corners during the grunt-work of levering obstinate nails and drilling out corroded screws, I've learned to thoroughly vacuum a piece before beginning work.

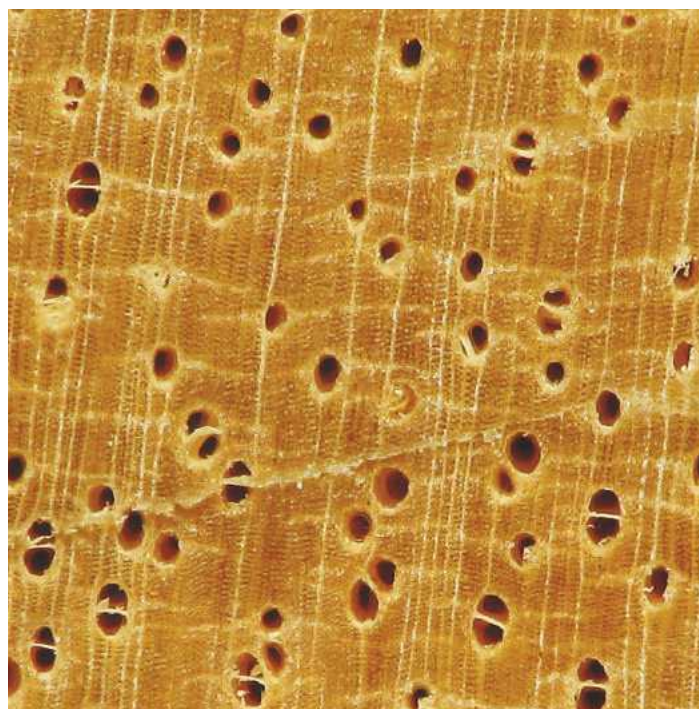
But accidents still happen. The last thing I did before sweeping up during the deconstruction of that sideboard was to tread on a long piece of oak, which had a bracket foot at each end, and, like a variation on the cartoon classic of treading on a garden rake, the top end cracked into my forehead like a hammer to a hard-boiled egg. For a fortnight after I bore a lightning-shaped scar on my forehead like Harry Potter.

It's the tools which stand in greatest danger, plunging in where they were not expected. Certainly the saw and chisel are a safer bet than power tools when feeling a way into an unknown construction. Beneath a uniformly dark-stained surface there may be screws countersunk and camouflaged by wooden plugs. Or, where someone has been jury-rigging a loose joint, handfuls of assorted nails lie in wait.

In the dismantling and subsequent cleaning-up of timber, I've scored the sole of my favourite wooden jack plane and knocked the teeth right out of a brittle hardpoint saw when buried fastenings have turned up like unexploded bombs on sandy beaches. A lot can be discovered with a judicious all-over tapping using a mallet, perhaps growing more persuasive with a lump hammer,



8 A fly-tipped cocktail cabinet was the source of this endangered ramin...



9 ... identified by its characteristic end-grain



10 Ramin is an even-grained timber finding many uses...

just to see what moves. I heave a sigh of relief when gaps show dowel joints – they saw apart so neatly and with so little waste. But a forest of machine-made dovetails amounts to a disappointing waste of timber – how's that for turning woodwork on its head!

The order of dismantling suggests itself as I go along, with the objective of retaining as much rigidity as possible for as long as possible. Removing glued-in corner pieces is an easy job with the chisel and mallet but it can prematurely transform a manageable structure into an unwieldy wobbling wreck.

Board games

Reducing a piece to its big wide boards is only half the game, because almost invariably these are made from narrow boards and, once the supporting framework is gone, they can move in all directions. One old oak surface I reconverted recently was made up of alternately laid flat-sawn pieces, which cupped their separate ways so badly it resembled a choppy sea. Age, it seems, is no guarantee of stability.

So my next step is to rip the made-up boards down to their original single pieces of timber. The elm table top had been assembled using tongued & grooved joints, now suffering from split ends, so I used the splits as convenient guides for the panel gauge scribing from end to end. For my small projects, given an oil or wax finish, I like to start with genuine one-piece pieces, because when stripped of varnish and stain the made-up T&G boards often show disconcerting clashes of grain and colour.

Keen to give my back a rest while sawing away a grooved edge, I tried the overhand ripping technique described in Charles Hayward's excellent book *Tools for Woodwork*. With the timber overhanging the bench, and using a two-handed grip on the saw, it felt a little odd to be standing upright and cutting away instead of towards myself. It did work but I'm just too used to bending over the timber with a knee and one hand to stabilise it, and a sawing action like starting an uncooperative lawn mower. I was soon back to my old ways.

The next stage is planing surfaces, stripping away old coatings to reveal the timber's honest face. My suspicion of what lies beneath veneer was dealt a lesson recently when the underlying timber of an apparently unremarkable straight-grained piece turned out to be solid oak with



11 ... such as the base board for a bench hook...



12 ... which is so handy for making square cuts in small timber



13 Starting a cut using the overhand ripping technique



14 A two-handed grip with teeth facing forwards



15 Planing the old finish from this elm was dusty and arduous work...



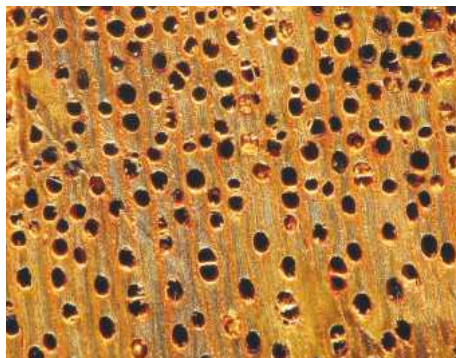
16 ... but rewarding when the beauty of the grain came to light



17 End-grain of a reconverted elm board



18 Better to reuse old mahogany than see it burned



19 Mahogany end-grain explains the timber's easy nature



20 Marking the edge of an elm board for resawing

beautiful pools of medullary rays, which shone like moonlit water. Discoveries like this, returning the rivers and backwaters of grain to the light, dispel any lingering sadness for the demise of the furniture itself, because now I see a future for its reborn timber.

Pushing the jack plane across both sides of a stack of dark boards is hot dusty work but as they emerge one-by-one ready for the timber rack it all seems worthwhile. I can't think of anywhere locally an amateur woodworker can go for boards of native hardwood like these. In particular, the elm table top, which had been destined for the tip, was a time capsule of a timber which was all but wiped from the landscape by the ravages of Dutch elm disease about 40 years ago.

Second bite for exotics

Deconstructing furniture from a less environmentally-enlightened age also throws up some exotic species, which, today, would be best left gathering growth rings in the forest.

There's the pale straight-grained and evenly-textured ramin mentioned earlier, for example, a workable timber once popular for framing but now an endangered species, and acres of mahogany turning up in drawers, shelves and panels. Today's rainforest logging is an environmental tragedy, yes, but consigning the products of yesterday's logging to the flames only adds insult to injury. This stuff deserves a second bite of the blade.

Besides which, every opportunity to experience the working qualities of an untried timber is an education. I recovered my first piece of rich, chocolatey mahogany from a 1970s veneered chipboard filing cabinet, which had disintegrated in a damp office. Under a hand lens the end-grain showed a pattern of rays, vessels and parenchyma typical of the genuine article *Swietenia macrophylla*, and I immediately felt guilty – as though I was handling stolen goods. But the moment I began working it with saw, plane and chisel, I understood its reputation among furniture makers. Compared to the

DIY-store softwood I was accustomed to it was a case of chalk and cheese – with mahogany being the well-behaved cheddar.

Reconverted timber thick as a table top doesn't make for sweet proportions in a small box, so I usually resaw it, which is a long haul and one worth preparing for. Occasionally I'll give the teeth of my Spear & Johnson rip saw a touch of the triangular file, but I always scribble on both sides of the blade with a stick of beeswax. Over a long saw cut the friction between blade and timber amounts to a good few beads of unnecessary perspiration, and this simple step is like changing out of wellies into trainers – suddenly the saw feels light and eager. It also helps to reduce friction if the kerf is wedged open.

As my mind wanders during a long cut the quality of my sawing wanders with it, so I turn the wood regularly to cancel out any deviations. At each turn the board is raised higher until it reaches the roof of the shed, and then I begin sawing from the opposite end. When the two



21 Applying beeswax to the saw blade to reduce friction



22 Early in the saw cut



23 Following the line the mind is prone to wander



24 A wedge keeps the kerf open

kerfs are close to meeting I shove a lolly stick in the lower kerf to prevent it closing under pressure from the vice.

Then the moment of truth, as one thick board becomes two thin ones. Their ragged surfaces lay bare all the delays and cancellations of my trains of thought while sawing, but I tell myself I'm not a machine and surely it's the imperfections arising from hand tools which make character. Anyway, the plane or cabinet scraper will smooth away the worst of it.

Treasure-trove

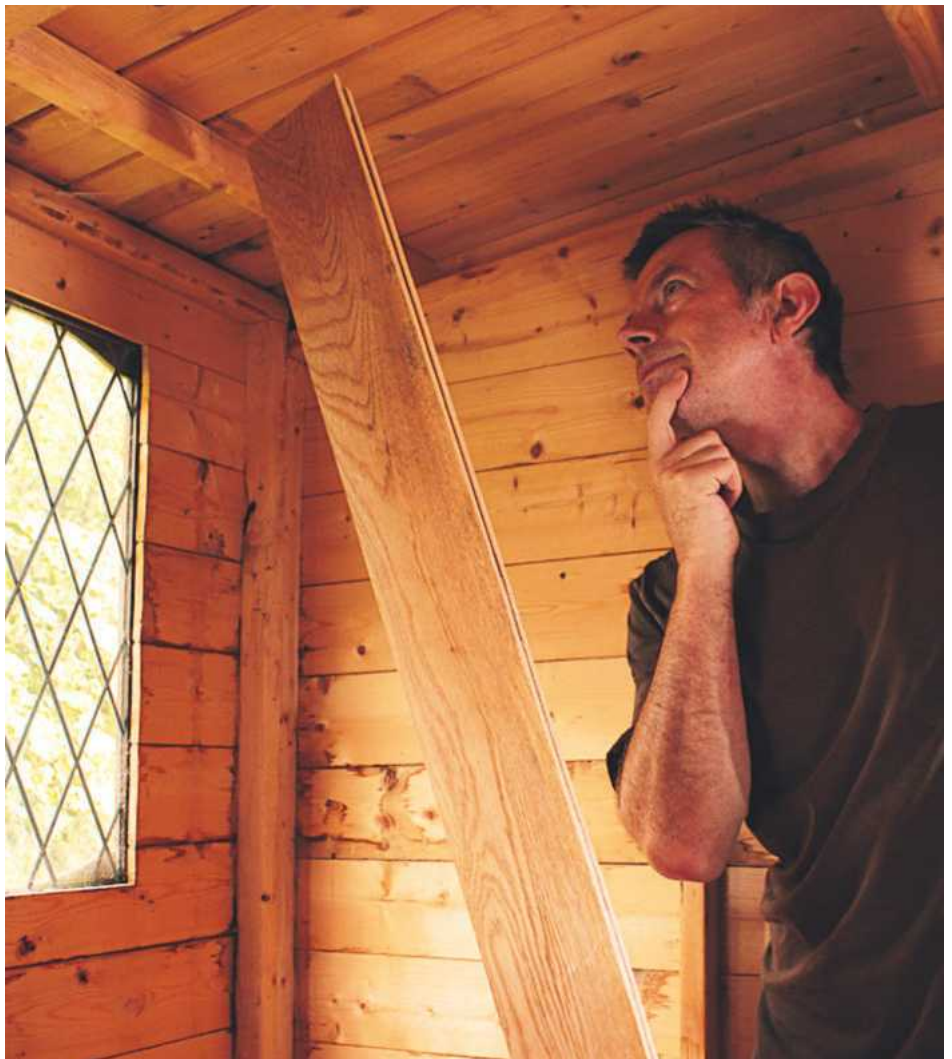
Totting up what's left after the joints, woodworm and blockboard have been deducted may not leave much timber to play with, but there's often a treasure-trove of interesting ironmongery. Hinges, catches, drawer and door pulls can all be put to use if carefully removed, for which a well-fitting screwdriver is essential if screw heads are not to be mangled.

A selection of hard-to-find slotted screws is often a bonus, but the sideboard mentioned earlier yielded something even better – a load of Robertson socket head screws, which I've been using sparingly around the house ever since. They were invented by Canadian Peter Robertson in the 1900s, using a tapered socket in place of a slot, and Robertson's slogan of 'Drives like lightning' was no hollow boast – the driver fits the socket with absolutely no tendency to wobble or slip. The old screws emerged with crisp threads and sockets, ready for immediate re-use.

Robertson screws don't seem to have gained a foothold in the UK so the necessary square-tipped drivers can be hard to find, but Aldi came up trumps with a ratchet handle and four 'Ro' sizes among its 100 interchangeable bits for £8.99. **WW**



26 A lolly stick keeps the lower kerf open in the vice



25 Time to begin sawing from the other end



27 Two elm boards from one



28 Removing saw marks in elm with a Stanley No.80 cabinet scraper



29 Robertson socket head screws and drivers

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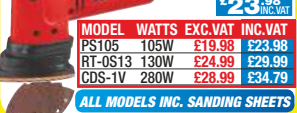
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★ STAR LETTER

A barrel of laughs



Photograph courtesy of Raymond Simonds

A qualified Journeyman Cooper emerging from the barrel after his 'Rolling Out' initiation ceremony at H&G Simonds

Hi Mark,

I was just browsing through the latest edition of *The Woodworker*, when I came across the article on barrel making.

My father was a cooper for all of his working life having served an apprenticeship to become a Master Cooper, and worked for an independent cooperage business in East London until the 1980s. In my teens, I was privileged to watch him and his fellow coopers plying their craft, using hand tools from antiquity – just like those hanging on the wall as shown in your article.

The opening paragraph brought back many happy memories of the time that I attended, what was called in East London parlance, a 'Trusso'. The gent in question was possibly the last apprentice in London to undergo this traditional passing out ceremony.

Instead of stale ale and wood shavings, buckets of swill, rainwater and probably some unmentionable ingredients, were tipped over the poor individual who had previously been placed into the barrel. He was then rolled twice around the workshop. After this part of the ceremony, the barrel was stood right end up, the head removed and the apprentice was lifted up, only to have clean water poured over him and a pint of beer thrust into his hand. Then, the governor of the company handed him his papers uttering the words 'you're sacked!'. Thus ended the Apprenticeship period. Not all was lost, however, as the governor then offered him a new contract of employment and the festivities began.

Regards, **Alan Dowers**

Great letter, Alan, and with the pendulum swinging back towards craft of late, I'd like to think that traditional coopering will go on for a lot longer yet!

Mark

Stained glass meets woodwork

Hello Mark,

What an amazing coincidence to read through the April edition and find the article from Lead and Light! Just recently I started learning about stained glass work with a view to incorporating glass work with my turning and scrollsawing. Working with glass is truly amazing but thinking of innovative ways to incorporate it into smallish wooden projects that will still allow the beauty of the glass to shine through is proving slightly more tricky! However, putting inspiration for that 'world shattering new idea' aside for the moment, I have now nearly finished my first lamp shade, which may not bear close scrutiny, but of which I am very proud. I've just got to turn the lamp base now or I may smile sweetly at my husband to try that one first! Any more articles on this would be great.

Thanks, **Mary Anthony**

Hi Mary, glad you liked the stained glass article – I'm a big fan of leaded lights myself. Watch this space for more and feel free to send in a pic of your finished lamp; I'm sure it will look great! All the best, Mark



A great example of how stained glass and woodwork can really complement each other

Service with a smile

Hi Mark,

Thanks for advising readers in the March edition of the BriMarc special offer on the Tormek RB-180 rotating base and the RM-533 rubber mat.

I promptly checked this out on the BriMarc website and found the offer, even though it was posted on their website back in November last year! It did not appear possible to purchase the kit online, so I checked to find my nearest BriMarc dealer in Cardiff. To my surprise, there were two dealers not more than half a mile apart. My first telephone call was to Axminster Tools & Machinery, with whom I have spent a small fortune over the last year. They were unable to help as they said the offer was out of date.

I immediately called the second BriMarc dealership – Data Powertools in Cardiff – and what a difference! The salesman spotted that the BriMarc offer was back-dated, but was sharp enough to realise that if people saw the article in the March edition of *The Woodworker*, then he might well get a number of enquiries in the near future. He contacted BriMarc and the items were in their Cardiff store the next morning – all for £49.96, including VAT as promised.

How refreshing in this day and age, where we never expect anything to work as advertised, to find sales staff that go the extra mile to provide excellent customer service. Well done, Data Powertools and wake up, Axminster.

Best regards, **Chris Finch**

Glad things worked out nicely there, Chris. We all need to be positive about this sort of thing and start expecting the best from people; eventually things will improve!

Remember, it's you the readers who really make this magazine, so keep on sending me those emails and the whole woodworking family can enjoy your tales.

Mark



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The Final Five in the Felder UK HQ showroom, behind the first prize of the coveted A3-26 planer/thicknesser

FELDER COMPETITION WINNERS

unveiling excellence

After six long months, we finally unveil the five Felder competition finalists and show you their fantastic pieces, before revealing the three overall winners – **Tegan Foley** reports

As many of you will know, we have been running the Felder 60th anniversary competition in both magazines since the middle of last year. While we love giving prizes away, it's even better when we can get you, the readers, actively involved and making things especially for this purpose. While it's easier to answer a simple question to win a prize, this competition required a little more effort on your part, and set the task of asking you to make a piece of furniture over a six-month period, or submit a piece that had been previously made.

Sheer diversity

As the months went by, we were growing increasingly impressed by the calibre of entries received as well as the sheer diversity of the pieces. It was also reassuring to see such a high level of entries from young woodworkers, and equally as satisfying to see the seasoned professionals also applying.

By the time the closing date of the competition came around, we were faced with the arduous task

of having to choose our Final Five, each of whom would be invited to a special judging ceremony held at Felder UK's Milton Keynes HQ. Furniture making experts Peter Sefton and John Lloyd would also be in attendance, passing on their comments and doing their best to choose a valiant winner based purely on the piece they had submitted as opposed to factors such as age of the entrant, experience level, etc. It was agreed by all that the pieces should be judged fairly and on face value.

Choosing the Final Five

So once each of the email entries had been looked at and assessed as thoroughly as possible, it was a case of whittling them down over a period of a few weeks until we had decided on the Final Five. This was no easy task as each of the people who entered were all winners in their own right, but we had a job to do, so battle on we did, until we were all in agreement as to who should be put forward. The next step was to contact the finalists and let them know they had been chosen. I was thrilled to receive so many excited emails in

response, and one of the finalists, Patrick Walsh, was even making the trip all the way from County Tyrone, Northern Ireland! Luckily everyone could make the date, which just so happened to fall on St. Patrick's Day.

Meet & greet

With the judging date of 17 March upon us, myself and all those involved made the trip to Felder UK's HQ to commence the ceremony and begin to make the difficult decision as to who would be chosen as the three winners. It was a pleasure to meet the finalists in person and to learn more about each of them. While a few were professional carpenters and furniture makers (Patrick Walsh and Nathan Millar) and a student at University studying 3D design (Josh Milton), there was also an aircraft technician among them (Jamie Lake), so a real mixture of skill levels and experience, which made the job even more difficult, but exciting nonetheless.

Having done the meeting and greeting and having had a chance to look at each of the pieces more closely, photos were taken of the entrants with their projects before the judging began and each of the Final Five were asked to leave the room. While out of the room they had the chance to look at some of the serious bits of kit on display in the Felder showroom, with many commenting how one day they would love to have a workshop kitted out with such machines!

Critique

The judging was definitely the most difficult part of the day, and knowing only three of the finalists would receive a prize was quite a sad realisation, but we hoped that each of them would have a fantastic day regardless of the end result, and that this would be a worthwhile experience for all.



Felder UK Chief Executive Matthew Applegarth addressing the finalists and judges in the showroom



The next task was for myself, John and Peter to look at each of the pieces individually and to assess them based on various factors: quality of joints, quality of finish, material choice, degree of skill on show, and overall execution of the piece. While I am certainly no expert in the furniture making field, it was really interesting to listen to John and Peter's comments and I certainly learned a lot about different processes, what to look for when critiquing a piece, and the importance of running your hand over surfaces to distinguish factors such as the quality of the final sanding and finishing.

Having made countless notes and giving my humble opinion, we eventually made a decision as to who would be awarded first, second and third place, but decided to break for lunch before making this announcement, just to keep everyone hanging on a little longer!

First, second & third

Having all had our fill of sandwiches and cakes, and being given the opportunity to talk more and mingle, it was then back to the showroom to announce who the three winners would be. It was important for me to get across to everyone just how impressed we were by the level of work, and how grateful we were to them for entering and also making the journey with each of their pieces (luckily nothing was broken in transit, much to my relief!). With everyone stood around eagerly awaiting the decision, the third place was announced, followed by second, and finally, first. While two of the Final Five could sadly not be awarded a place, it was agreed that they would each be given a smaller prize, of £75 Felder tooling credit, which we hoped would go some way to showing our appreciation.

The third place was awarded to Tony Wood for his wonderful wine table in American white



Far left Tony Wood with his wine table



Middle Nathan Millar with his winning walnut cabinet on stand



Left Patrick Walsh with his hall unit



Josh Milton kneels beside his 'Tilt Lounger'

oak; second place was given to Josh Milton for his ingenious 'Tilt Lounger'; and finally, first place was awarded to the very well deserving Nathan Millar for his walnut and stone cabinet on stand, which had people talking as soon as he brought it into the board room.

The winners were then given their prizes, which for Tony was £100 tooling credit; for Josh the FAT 300 and Felder worktop surface multiplex; and for



Jamie Lake beside his 'Wall of Heroes'

Nathan the nifty A3-26 planer/thicknesser with Silent-Power spiral cutterblock. To say he looked pleased with his prize was an understatement and it was great to hear him say how he couldn't wait to get it back to his workshop. He's promised that he'll keep us posted as to what he makes using it, and it's clear that this great piece of kit will prove a real asset to this young furniture maker and his growing business.

THE FINAL FIVE

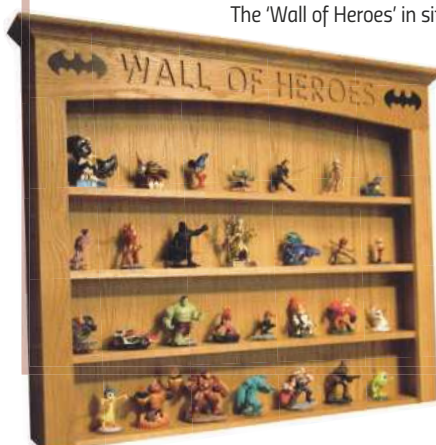
JAMIE LAKE 'WALL OF HEROES' RUNNER UP

31-year-old Jamie made this fun piece for his son, who is an avid comic book fan. Dominoes were primarily used for the joints and everything was given a good sanding before the unit was glued up. Jamie glued up the main part of the cabinet first, making sure it was square, and once the glue had set he used a router to rout out a rebate to accept a back panel. He used an oak-faced MDF panel for the back and glued and screwed this in place for strength.

Lettering & shapes

The letters for the 'Wall of Heroes' were marked out and routed on the face frame using a template. He found a *Batman* symbol online

The 'Wall of Heroes' in situ



and printed it out, before gluing this to some 20mm-thick wenge. This was then cut out on the bandsaw, starting with the outside followed by the inside of the shape, and once cut out was tidied up using a Dremel.

Inlaying

Once the glue had dried, an orbital sander with good dust extraction was used to sand the inlays down flush. Any small gaps were then filled with glue before being re-sanded.

He used a long 1m rule bent to the desired curve and marked this on the timber before cutting most of the waste out on the bandsaw, before tidying up on the bobbin sander. He cut the sides of the face frame to size and drilled two pocket holes in each, then glued and screwed these to the top section of the face frame. Dominoes were then used to fix the face frame to the cabinet.

Finishing touches

Jamie purchased a cornice moulding online, ripped a part of the moulding off and cut this to size, mitring the corners. He made up some blocks and fitted these to the top of the cabinet. He then glued and finish nailed the cornice to these blocks, and once the glue had set the whole cabinet was sanded through to 240 grit, before being finished with two coats of Osmo Poly-X Wax Oil.



First place winner Nathan Millar with his well-deserved prize



John Lloyd, Peter Sefton and Tegan Foley closely inspect one of Tony Wood's wine table drawers

A great experience

All in all, this was a fantastic day, and a great opportunity for woodworkers to meet other like-minded people, to learn about their interests and what each other enjoys making, transfer skills and opinions, as well as showing their pieces to others and receiving professional feedback. We hope that all those involved enjoyed the day as much as we did and that they can take something positive away from the experience, even if it wasn't the first, second or third prize. Competitions, after all, are all about taking part, and a big thank you goes out again to all those who made it possible; we couldn't have done it without you. **WW**

PATRICK WALSH 'IROKO HALL UNIT WITH STORAGE BENCH' RUNNER UP

31-year-old Patrick's hall cabinet with storage bench is made using iroko and took some 50 hours to make, using a table saw, bandsaw, planer/thicknesser, router table and biscuit joiner.

Patrick says that seeing the competition in the magazine reminded him that he'd promised his wife a hall unit, so he set about making this one especially. As with all his designs, he simply sketched out a few ideas on a piece of ply and when happy with what he had in mind, he started to work out dimensions. Next, he drew up a cutting list and selected 50, 64 and 25mm planks.

He started by cutting and planing the timber to the required lengths/thicknesses and began with the storage chest. The corner posts were routed with two rebates to hold the main structure of the base together; this was then made with an outer frame filled with T&G boards. Lapped joints and rebates were used for construction and the base was made using 12mm ply. The chest was then glued up.

Storage chest lid

In order to make the lid section as light as possible without detracting from the intended 'chunky' finish, he used planed 64mm boards for the outer

The completed hall unit, complete with coats and bags...

sides and used planed 25mm boards internally. The lid was constructed with T&G joints for the thicker boards and biscuit joints for the internal boards.

Back board

The top section (back board) was made using 12mm T&G boards with a framed outer rim; it was then finished with a slight overhang at the top and cornice moulding was added.

Assembly

Finally, it was time to assemble the pieces together and measure for the hinged lid. Once he was happy with the dimensions, the lid was cut to size in order to suit the chest. A piano hinge salvaged from an old piece of furniture was used, and small hydraulic arms were installed internally to allow the lid to stay open.

All sharp edges were rounded over and the unit was sanded down to 400 grit. Once assembled, it was then finished with five coats of Danish Oil.



... and in its natural state

Antique brass coat hooks were added to the finished piece of furniture, including lower hooks, which can be easily reached by youngsters. Patrick says he's happy with the finished piece and his wife is too, as the school bags and coats are no longer lying on the hallway floor!

TONY WOOD 'WINE TABLE' THIRD PLACE

OVERALL COMMENTS: Good timber selection; some gaps in joints; good choice of finish

Retired Tony says that before he approaches any project, he likes to draw it in detail using a 3D drawing package, such as Fusion 360 by Autodesk, and after it has been drawn up he then works out the constructional details that enables him to produce a cutting list so he can work out which raw materials to purchase. Tony prefers to work from sawn boards, selecting those he likes from a local timber yard. For his table, Tony used a mixture of traditional joints, routed joints



Timber in its raw form, cut oversize and ready for planing



Pieces jointed and cut to size, ready for gluing up



The completed frame



Side view of finished wine table...

and dowels. The finished piece, made using American white oak, measures 1,000mm long x 450mm wide x 750mm high, and was finished using Hard Wax oil and Bison wax polish.

... and from the front



JOSH MILTON

'TILT LOUNGER' SECOND PLACE

OVERALL COMMENTS: Crisp finish; simple design but very pleasing to look at; striking; good use of timber; well executed mitres

21-year-old Josh's 'Tilt Lounger' was made during a University project, and was inspired by the Swiss company, Vitra. The four components which make the chair base and the arms are all identical, but the inner two are tilted back at 12° degrees. This adds a playful nature to the design as well as giving it a striking aesthetic.

Walnut mitres

The rectangles were made using FSC certified timber, which was mitred, the corners passed through a 4mm spindle moulder blade and a solid



The chair base, all clamped up



Inserting one of the walnut splines



The completed chair with cushions in place...



... and without, showing the simple but effective box frame construction

walnut spline was then glued in place, which adds a pleasant aesthetic as well as giving all the mitre joints strength. Josh also used the same ash to add two slats to the back of the frame and five slats to the base; these were all Domino jointed to the sides of the frame.

Finish & fabric

Three coats of Osmo raw oil were added in order to give the piece a natural looking finish, as well as a smooth touch. For the upholstery he used a 33 grade domestic seating foam for the base and

a 33 grade luxury mattress foam for the back; this allows for the base to be a little softer than the back so that the under board in the base cushion cannot be felt when the user is sitting on the chair. The upholstery was made using Camira Blazer fabric, and the colour choice was made to mimic other Vitra products in the range. Josh says that the style is fairly bold but not overly complicated: he thinks that the chosen fabric colour works well with the slight orange tint that the raw oil gives to the ash, and we couldn't agree more!

NATHAN MILLAR

'WALNUT AND STONE CABINET ON STAND' FIRST PLACE

OVERALL COMMENTS: Tricky mitres; crisp appearance; very well executed; great use of stone material; lovely choice of veneer; striking appearance; professional result

25-year-old Nathan is mostly self-taught and now works for himself full-time, working on both commissioned pieces and speculative items, which he sells through galleries, exhibitions and in local shops. Nathan's stunning piece is made using solid black American walnut, burr walnut and copper quartz stone veneer.

"I spent a few weeks thinking about designs, sketching ideas and getting samples together before I started work," Nathan says. "I tend to spend a while thinking about designs and how the piece could be constructed before I put pen to paper and start refining and developing the ideas when sketching. I tend to choose the materials that I feel best complement each other, but also add to the design and are different enough to intrigue and make you want to touch and explore the piece."

Main carcass

Nathan started by making the main carcass for the cabinet, and the cabinet box was made from 18mm moisture-resistant MDF, which was then veneered in quartersawn walnut on the inside and copper quartz stone veneer on the outside. The stone is a solid but very fine, thin layer, which is bonded to a flexible fibreglass backing. PU glue was used to bond the stone to the MDF in the bag press, and a solid walnut lipping was attached to the front edge of the carcass before he started the veneering process.

Once removed from the bag press, the carcass was cut to size and the top and bottom of the

PU glue being used to bond the stone to the MDF in the bag press



cabinet was mitred. Dominos were used to secure and strengthen the corners of the cabinet, and the back edge of the carcass was rebated to accept the back. The back was cut to size and glued in place once the main box was glued and dry.

Doors & stand

With the main box made, Nathan then started work on the doors followed by the stand. He put a solid walnut lipping around a small piece of MDF for each of the doors, and used a straightedge and scalpel to cut eight leaves of burr walnut to size, to create the four lay-ons for the two doors. He used consecutive leaves to create the two-way bookmatch. Nathan felt it was important to work on the base second to ensure all the measurements would look as good in full-scale as they did on paper: "As it happened, I reduced the length of the rails to tighten the gaps between the cabinet and the legs," he says.

Making the base

Next, he machined the walnut for the base, including square section timber for the legs, which he then shaped by removing most of the waste on the bandsaw followed by final shaping using a jig and a bearing-guided router cutter in the router table. He then used a spokeshave to remove any cutter marks. The frame was assembled dry to see how it looked. Nathan felt the cabinet would benefit from being lifted away from the base to create a shadow gap, which would make the cabinet appear to almost float. He also made



The main carcass, starting to take shape



Bookmatching the burr walnut leaves



Nathan's winning entry



The walnut legs curve inwards on two of the faces, lightening the appearance of the whole base of the cabinet

some larger rails to lift the cabinet away from the stand, then sanded and glued the stand to ensure it was perfectly square.

Handles & finish

Wooden handles were let into the edge of the doors and everything was given a final sand to prepare for the oiling. "I love to use Osmo oil for finishing my work, Nathan says, "I've found that the warm tones of the oil and the lovely sheen gives a finish that makes you want to caress the finished timber."

Chip off the old block

Achievable with little more than a sharp knife or two, a steady hand and an eye that's true, we take a look at **W. Buckley's** article on chip carving, from *The Woodworker* of October 1908

I'm sure that most of us have tried a bit of carving over the years; it may have been replacing a missing or damaged component on an antique or just a bit of fun adornment on a plain cabinet. For simple surface work, chip carving lends itself to decorating edges, borders and creating patterns, and is achievable with little more than a sharp knife or two, a steady hand and an eye that is true.

Straightforward & accessible

This relatively straightforward and accessible form of woodcarving has been around for thousands of years, and has been used to decorate vast numbers of artefacts over the ages. Requiring only a very basic tool-kit, it's no wonder the ancients took to it and no surprise too that its popularity has remained to the present day. This page, from *The Woodworker* of October 1908, demonstrates some simple border work and illustrates methods of setting out and execution, and was part of a long-running series on surface carving.

Fans of the chip

As we all know, there is always more than one way to carry out any job, and it's the same with carving. While a knife may suit some people best, the author, one W. Buckley, is clearly a proponent of the veiner chisel (a 'V' section) and a very proficient one, too. I always think that, as long as you go about it safely, whatever method works for the individual is definitely the best way. If any reader is a big fan of the chip, please do get in touch and show us what you've done. **WW**

Mark

DO GET IN TOUCH

If any readers have memories and photos of things they or their forebears made from *The Woodworker*, please get in touch as we'd love to see them. Just email me on the usual address: editor.ww@mytimemedia.com and we'll get them in the mag

October 31, 1908.
THE WOODWORKER.
63

Chip-Carving.

By W. BUCKLEY.
(Continued from page 31.)

ANOTHER border, with the method of marking out, is given in Fig. 8. The outside lines are 1 in. apart, and run in with the veiner. Lines $\frac{1}{4}$ in. apart are put across with the pencil, at right

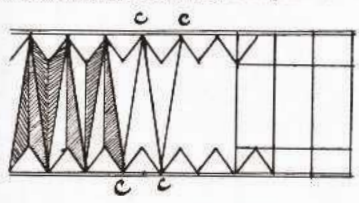


FIG. 8.—STRAIGHT BORDER.

angles to the former, and for a time it will be necessary to put further guide lines in, inside the veined lines and 3-16th in. from them (see right-hand side of Fig. 8). Cut down with tool No. 1 as shown in Fig. 5, cutting on both edges, and beginning with the point of the tool on the parallel guide line and



FIG. 9.—USING TOOL NO. 2.

on the lines at right angles on one edge of the border, and between them on the opposite edge.
The veiner should now be run across from line to

line from point *c* to *c*. The last operation is to take out the resulting triangular pieces with tool No. 2, being careful to leave the veined lines entirely intact. The method of using tool No. 2 is shown in Fig. 9. The two borders already treated of are given in Fig. 10 with a combination of the two, showing the method of finishing the corners. A duplication of the last border is also given, and will be found useful for practice. Similar borders will now suggest themselves to the worker, who will find pleasure and profit in working them out.

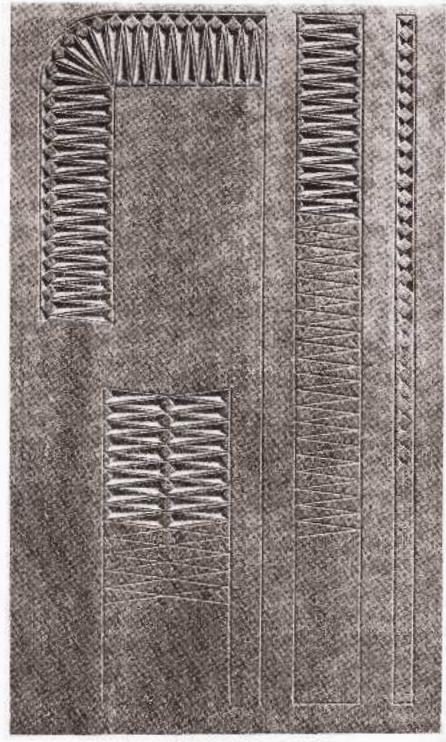


FIG. 10.—BLOCK OF WOOD WITH PATTERNS CARVED.

The cutting compasses illustrated in Fig. 7 present no new difficulties to anyone who can use a pair of ordinary compasses.
Fig. 11 may now be attempted.
The centres for the arcs E E are found by using the same radius as for the circle H in the manner indicated. Put a pencil line across the centre of each loop, as at F, cutting down on each side of it with the tool No. 1, leaving as large a square as



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In ancient TIMES

Andrew Hall shares the secrets behind the making of one of his turned helmets

I'm probably best known for my turned hats, which I have been making for the last 12 years. In 2007, I moved into a different type of head wear. Inspired by the Spartan king Leonidas and a holiday in Rhodes, wandering down the Street of the Knights, I decided to start turning Corinthian helmets.

Small ones were the order of the day and the turning evolved out of a goblet when I proceeded to cut eyes, cheeks and a nose to replicate the style of the Corinthian helmet.

Artistic licence should be given in terms of the shape and size, but the small helmet is made from a blank measuring 150mm long x 100mm diameter.



1 Branchwood or square section is fine to use and it can be wet or dry. Ash, oak or sycamore are my favoured species for projects such as this



2 Use a centre finder with the 60° angle to locate the centre of branchwood, or go corner to corner if you're using square stock



3 I use Steb centre drives to hold the material between centres, but a two- or four-prong drive will work equally well. A tailstock revolving drive can be Steb, ring or cone centre



4 Using a spindle roughing gouge, turn the blank into a cylinder measuring 100mm diameter



5 Next, turn a spigot or tenon using a 10mm beading & parting tool. I grind mine to an angle of 6°, which reflects most jaw sizes. Turn the spigot so it is slightly larger than the optimum size of the jaws



6 Mount the material in the jaws of the chuck ready to hollow out the cup of the goblet



7 Sharpen a long swept-back gouge so you're ready to undertake the initial hollowing of the cup – I protrude my gouges 75mm beyond the jig, which helps me to get a lovely, long swept-back wing. The angle at the front of the gouge is 45°; this reduces the size of the cheeks of the gouge and helps prevent turner's knock



8 Using a Jacobs chuck, drill a 10mm hole 100mm deep to assist with the hollowing. Drill the hole with the lathe running no faster than 500rpm and drill 12mm at a time, cleaning the flutes with a small paintbrush

9 Hollow out to a depth of 75mm using the bottom one-third of the wing, with the bowl gouge cutting from the hole in the centre to the outside wall of the cup. As you get closer to the wall of the cup, close the flute and you will get a lovely clean cut on the edge of the goblet. Note: only cut with the bottom one-third.

A good stance, so you are leaning against the bed of the lathe, will help with tool control and will also ensure the tool is cutting on the centreline of the wing, as exposing too much of the wing will result in a dreaded dig-in



10 Clear out the shavings either using an airline or blow out using a straw or tube



11 Use a proprietary hollowing tool to finish the remainder of the hollowing. I use a Simon Hope tipped hollowing cutter or an HSS Ashley Iles closed-cup hollowing tool. Both cutters are set at 45° and on a square bar. Used in conjunction with the Robert Sorby flat box hollowing rest, this offers a very safe and secure way to remove the remainder of the material, providing the tool is held flat on the bar and the tool is cutting on centre. When I turn my full-size helmets I use the Hamlet Big Brother, or the Crown hollowing system, but you should use your preferred choice of tool – there are a number of different hollowing options available



12 Once the hollowing is completed, sand the helmet using a ball sander and work through the grits as follows: 80, 120, 180 and 240 – that's as far as you need to go when using moist material, but if it is completely dry, take it another few grits: 320, 400 and 600. Next, using a template, mark out the eyes on the goblet and then you are ready to take the helmet from a cup to something that resembles Spartan head wear. Note: feel free to design your own template – every one is different and that's what makes them interesting. Sketch out a few designs and choose the one you like best, using your artistic licence, of course



13 I use a small Proxxon jigsaw to cut out the eyes, taking great care to hold the piece securely and always keeping the cutting edge away from the fingers



14 Mark out the cheeks...



15 ... and carefully cut them away, then the helmet is ready for sanding



16 You're then ready to sand through the grits as before. When I demonstrate this project, this is usually the part where I involve the audience and pass the helmet around the group while I demonstrate a hat/helmet stand, which will be the subject of a later article



17 Keep your templates – it's good to see the progression made after each helmet



18 The completed helmet should look something like this. You can add colour or texture (as I have done in some of the examples shown on page 35), or leave it plain – the choice is yours

MORE EXAMPLES OF ANDREW'S TURNED HEAD WEAR

I am a firm believer in personal development and treat myself to a course each year to learn new skills. Shortly after starting to turn the helmets, I had the pleasure of seeing a demonstration by Nick Agar at the AWGB seminar and decided to have three days of one-to-one tuition with him. When I came home my helmets took on a new dimension, some of which are pictured here. **WW**



A selection of
Andrew's turned
hats and helmets



The ceremonial helmet, turned, carved and ready for finishing



The completed ceremonial
helmet – airbrushed, textured
and embellished



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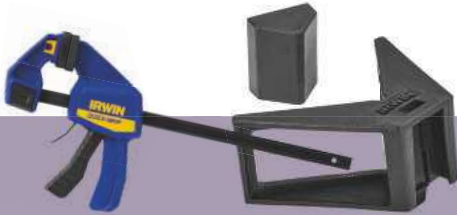


punches



WIN!

1 OF 8 300mm MEDIUM-DUTY ONE-HANDED BAR CLAMPS & CORNER CLAMP ACCESSORIES



IRWIN TOOLS IS GIVING EIGHT LUCKY READERS THE CHANCE TO GET THEIR HANDS ON SOME GREAT CLAMPING EQUIPMENT

IRWIN Tools, a leading manufacturer of hand tools and power tool accessories, has recently introduced a new line of clamping accessories for their range of One-Handed Bar Clamps (OHBC).

The complete line of OHBC accessories that extend the functionality of the redesigned Heavy-Duty (HD) and Medium-Duty (MD) OHBC enables users to transform their OHBC into a speciality clamp allowing them to accomplish many more tasks with just one tool.

"As the creator of the first OHBC, IRWIN QUICK-GRIP is known for providing innovative clamping solutions, and by listening to our users, we understand how important it is for them to be able to use one tool for various tasks on the job," says Rafael Martinez, Sr. Brand Marketing Manager at IRWIN.

The refreshed OHBC and new line of OHBC accessories were designed with that insight in mind. The new accessories extend the functionality of the OHBC and allow tradespeople to accomplish more tasks without the added cost and need for additional storage that comes with purchasing a brand-new clamping tool.

Heavy- & Medium-Duty

The clamping line includes a Quick-Change push button for easy conversion into a spreader or for quick installation of the new accessories, and the swivel jaws are now removable to allow users the flexibility to modify the jaw position based on what each job requires.



Consistent with the previous generation of OHBC that tradespeople trust today, the new Heavy-Duty and Medium-Duty OHBC can sustain 272kg and 136kg of clamping force, respectively.

The Heavy-Duty clamps are available in six sizes: 150, 300, 450, 600, 900 and 1,250mm, and the Medium-Duty clamps are available in five sizes: 150, 300, 450, 600 and 900mm.

The entire range also includes light-duty clamps – the Mini and Micro lines – for a cohesive look throughout the family of IRWIN OHBC. The Mini is available in 150mm and 300mm, and the Micro in 115mm.

Accessories

The new line of accessories aims to make users more efficient and productive throughout their day by increasing the number of tasks that can be completed with OHBC. Included in the new accessories line are:

- **Edge Clamp:** Converts OHBC into an edge clamp to easily hold trim and edging on materials
- **Wide Pads:** Doubles the width of the OHBC pads for even distribution of clamping force over a wider surface area
- **Corner Clamp:** Transforms OHBC into a corner clamp for easy clamping of 90° angles
- **Clamp Coupler:** Increases the bar length of OHBC by joining together two smaller clamps to make one larger clamp for tackling large projects
- **Hold-down Jig:** Turns OHBC into a table clamp for firmly holding items in the middle of a worktable
- **Deck Tool:** Changes OHBC into a tool for lining up, spacing and holding boards in place for easy, accurate deck building
- **Clamp Stand:** Expands usage of OHBC to allow level clamping applications for projects, such as frames, caseworks and drawers.

HOW TO ENTER

To be in with a chance of winning a 300mm Medium-Duty One-Handed Bar Clamp plus a Corner Clamp, just visit www.getwoodworking.com/competitions and answer this simple question:

QUESTION: WHAT DOES 'OHBC' STAND FOR?

The winner will be randomly drawn from all correct entries. The closing date is **5 May 2017**

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

DO MORE prizes

To celebrate IRWIN's innovative range of products that allow tradesmen to do more on the job, the tools manufacturer is giving end-users the chance to win some DO MORE prizes when they purchase any IRWIN product. Up until 30 June and from participating stockists, end-users can be in with a chance of winning IRWIN Impact Double-Ended Power Bits or a DO MORE experience including stunt driving, overnight sailing, hang gliding and much more. To find out more see, www.irwin-do-more.com.

A passion for timber

Garry and Shaun Stevenson share the story of how a passion for quality raw materials led to the development and continued growth of their business

Back in 2002, Father and Son team, Garry and Shaun Stevenson, decided to make a career change in order to pursue an interest in woodturning and crafts. They set up their workshop in a converted barn in Stainton, a village nestled just outside Penrith, in Cumbria. The workshop was also located on the same site as the Alpaca Centre, a high-quality clothing store owned by Garry and wife, Joy.

Quite a workshop

The workshop measured 9 × 9m and included a Harrison Graduate lathe, a big Wadkin lathe – and all-important dust extraction – a bandsaw, and all the necessary accessories to produce woodturnings for the home. It all seemed to be going well for them as they sold their wares in the Alpaca Centre next door, with exception of the hardwood blanks that they were buying in for the turnings. They found the blanks had not been kiln-dried properly, which resulted in cracks on completion. This was proving to be costly – both in the purchase of the blanks and on wasted time.

As such, they came up with the idea of converting their own timber for turning and selling the surplus blanks to other woodturners.

The arrival

They purchased a tractor and forestry trailer to pick up locally felled logs and travelled all over Cumbria... at 30 miles per hour. A wide variety of species were picked up and taken to a local softwood sawmill for conversion, and once back in the yard, the timbers were stacked for air-drying. It was decided that there would be no compromises on the quality of the wood, so slow drying was the order of the day, followed by kilning in a high-tech, fully-computerised kiln that had been installed at the back of the workshop.

Once they had some dry timber, they partitioned off half of the workshop – a 4.6 × 9m space kitted out with basic shelving – in order to display the blanks. With some minimal advertising (and fingers crossed) they waited for customers to arrive while turning in the now-diminished workshop, but, arrive they did and G&S Specialist Timber was born.



A small selection of the many tools on sale in the G&S shop



Inside the timber warehouse



An oak stack being loaded into the heat vent kiln



An oak log being processed



This tractor with Botex forestry trailer is capable of lifting 2.5 tons



Heavy work for two

One year on, and it was clear that the sawmill they were using was too small to cope with large hardwood logs, meaning they were left with the challenge of finding and installing a suitable sawmill in the G&S premises. They found a Stenner 60 sawmill – a massive bit of kit with a 9.8m saw blade – which took 10 weeks, 11 loads of concrete, one huge crane, and many man hours to install. The first time they switched the saw on was a nerve racking experience, but all the machinery worked well and soon they were milling logs up to more than 1.2m in diameter. Garry and Shaun were now selling the blanks and dry hardwood

boards in the shop and converting the logs ready for air-drying in between customers; quite a task, and heavy work for two.

As more customers were arriving for wood, they often asked why Garry and Shaun didn't sell tools for woodturners. This seemed to be a great idea, so they began with Robert Sorby, Hamlet Craft Tools, Chestnut finishes, and gradually increased the brands, year on year. This meant that they now had to employ staff; the first person who joined them, John Lake, was an ex-engineer who had some woodworking experience. John was a great addition to the crew: very hard working, eager to help take the business forward, and very capable with the woodworking machinery. He was also a great laugh to work with and, even though he has now been retired for some three years, the Stevenson family still misses him.

Top tools & brands

As the stocks of tools increased, so did the floor space of the shop, gradually diminishing Garry and Shaun's workshop space until there was none left for them at all. In 2008, a 464sq.m warehouse was erected on site for timber storage and this extra room gave the opportunity to develop a machining workshop; this led to sales nationwide and even the supply to some films, such as *Hercules*.

A joinery department was developed in the new warehouse that produced bespoke stairs, windows, doors, trusses, and built-in furniture, among other



The Stenner 60 bandmill has a 229mm x 10m blade. When in use it has 10 tons of tension and the motor requires 150Kva to start the saw blade – certainly an impressive machine!



The G&S reception area

items. They were keen to stock top quality tools, and successfully secured supplies of brands including Lie-Nielsen Toolworks, Pfeil Tools, Robert Sorby, Colt, Jet Machinery, and many more. In 2016, they secured the dealership of top quality woodturning lathes by German manufacturer Hapfo, which makes both hand turning lathes and CNC copy lathes. Finishes include Osmo, Treatex and Chestnut products, and earlier this year, they secured the dealership of paint and paper company The Little Greene.

Their website has greatly assisted in securing work all over the UK and beyond, and there are now over 14,000 products to choose from. G&S has also increased staff levels year on year and now employ 18 people. Due to the increased workload, they have again run out of space and are planning an extension to the warehouse for the joiners; this will provide the option of increasing the joinery alongside with extra space for the timber stocks – watch this space! **WW**

FURTHER INFORMATION

G&S Specialist Timber are specialist hardwood timber merchants who provide high quality woodworking tools and machinery. They are certified by both the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC). To find out more, see their website: **www.toolsandtimber.co.uk**

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Custom cabinets

Phil Davy shows us how to build a functional kitchen wall cabinet from scratch, which features a handy storage space in the middle for cookery books

Commercially produced kitchen cabinets are usually built to conform to standard sizes, whether they have a contemporary or a more traditional look. Building one from scratch means you can adjust the width and depth to suit the room or match existing units, though it makes sense to stick fairly closely to common dimensions. These have stood the test of time in terms of ergonomics, so there's no point in straying too far. Although the height is the same, the width and depth are greater. Standard widths of double units are 800 and 1,000mm, while the depth is generally 305mm.

Golden rectangles

Rather than just having two cupboard doors, I wanted to make the unit more functional, with extra storage space in the middle. Visually, I could have simply divided the overall width to give three equal measurements. This would have made the doors narrower, so I followed the proportions set

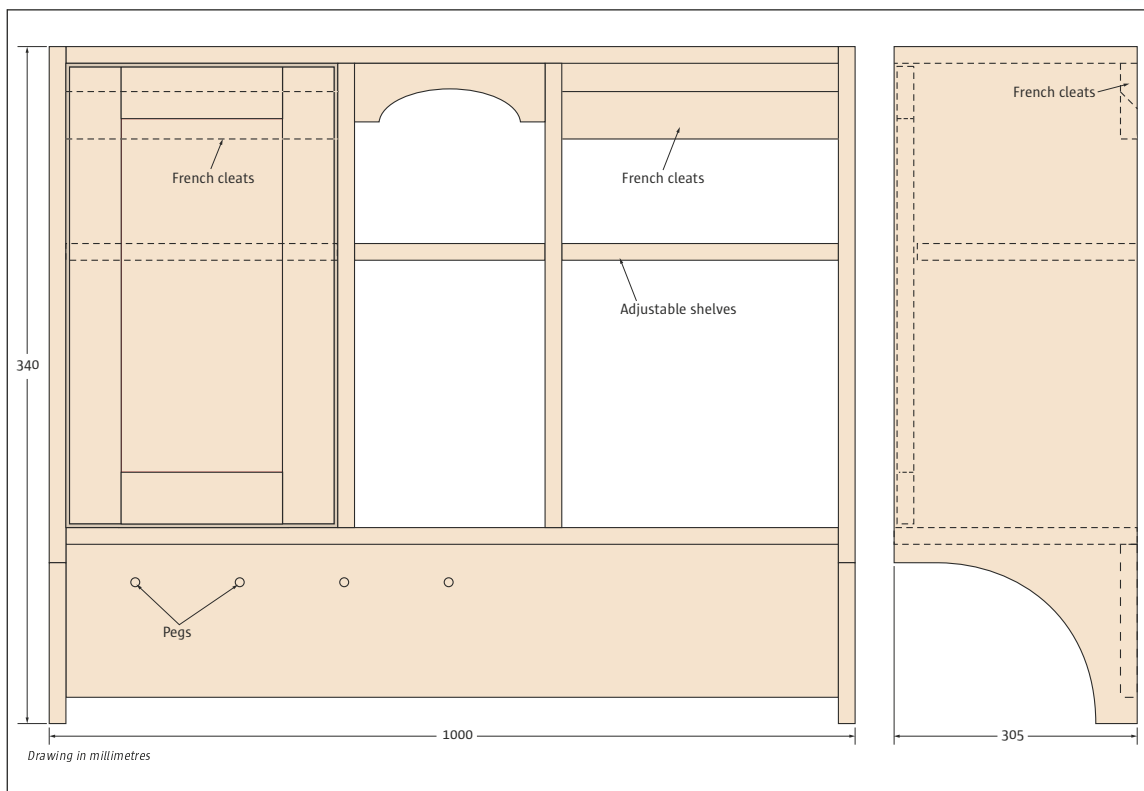


Fig.1 Kitchen wall cabinet

TOOLS REQUIRED

- Biscuit jointer
- Jigsaw
- Drill and bits
- Drill stand
- Tape
- Bradawl
- Craft knife
- Combination square
- Bench and block planes
- Hand saw
- Straightedge
- Sanding drum
- Sash cramps

out in the Golden Section. The Ancient Greeks knew a thing or two about design, and this classic ratio has been used throughout architecture and art for some 2,500 years. On this humble wall cabinet it means that both doors are perfectly proportioned rectangles.

Unlike the plate rack, the lower edges of the end panels are not stepped. To do this would create a problem when it comes to hanging the doors. The centre section provides handy storage space for cookery books, so adjust the shelf height to accommodate your tallest volumes.

Softwood or MDF?

I used 25mm PAR pine for the construction, which finishes about 20mm-thick. If you want a painted finish it would be easier to use MDF throughout, though this does increase the weight. I simply prefer to work in softwood, though I still used MDF for the two door panels.

When building a carcass a sliding mitre saw is the most efficient way to cut boards to length accurately. If you don't have machinery, use a fine-toothed hand saw. Trim the ends square



1 To get sufficient width, glue boards together with PVA adhesive. Sash cramps above and below keep them flat



2 Clean up joints with a belt sander once the glue has dried. Use a bench plane for truing the surface



3 Saw the side panels to length, then clamp together and plane to width. Plane both ends square



4 A card template is useful for the side panel profile. To draw a suitable radius, make a simple trammel



5 Cut out the template with a craft knife and transfer to the timber. Use a jigsaw on the lower curve



6 Cramp side panels together and clean up the curve with a sanding drum, mounted in a drill stand



7 Estimate the centre shelf spacing by measuring the largest cookery book you're likely to use



8 Mark biscuit positions on the side panels for top and bottom boards. Check that both left and right are matching



10 These clear plastic shelf supports have collars, which are inserted flush with the surface



11 Mark support spacings and drill 10mm holes for the collars. Three rows mean you can alter the height of the shelf



9 Using a Clamp System or batten as a guide across the boards, cut the slots with a biscuit joiner



12 Sanding inside surfaces before assembly makes final cabinet cleaning-up easier. Use 120 grit abrasive



13 Cut slots in the ends of the top and bottom panels. Glue size 20 biscuits into the slots and you're then ready to assemble the cabinet



16 Once the glue has dried, trim the side panels flush with the top. Plane from both ends towards the centre



14 Glue the two vertical dividers to the top and bottom panels first. Check for square when cramping



17 With a finely-set fore plane, true up the front and rear panel edges, checking them with a straightedge



15 With substantial pads for the cramps, glue the side panels in place and remove excess glue while wet



18 Fit a decorative apron under the top panel in the centre. Cut out the arch with a jigsaw and clean up

with a bench plane, working in from both edges towards the centre to avoid splitting the wood.

Backs are essential for floor units as they hide unsightly pipes and cables. On a flimsy unit a rear panel will increase rigidity, though I chose not to fit one on this cabinet as it's already pretty sturdy. If you want to add one it's easy enough, though. Either rout a rebate around the rear edges or cut a groove into which the board slides. For simply hiding pipes a 9mm-thick MDF panel is sufficient. Anything thicker will obviously add weight to the cabinet, a consideration when hanging it on a wall.

Like the plate rack, the cabinet is fixed to the wall with French cleats, a simple yet safe system for mounting a heavy cupboard. Consisting of two battens butting against each other at 45°, the upper one is biscuit-jointed beneath the top panel, while the lower one is fixed to the wall with 6.0 (No. 12) screws.

In my quest for extra storage I added a row of 13mm diameter Shaker pegs to the lower panel for hanging more mugs. These seem to breed like ceramic rabbits! Alternatively, you could add a narrow shelf for spice jars or similar items. **WW**



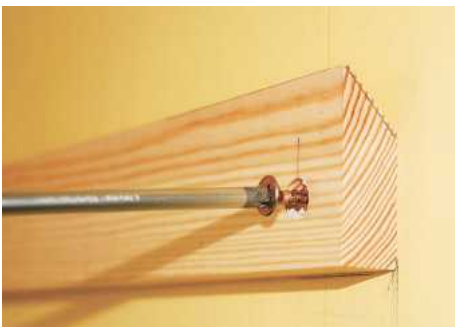
19 Shelves are made shallower to allow for door thickness. Cut boards to length and plane the ends square



20 The centre shelf can either be installed with biscuits, pocket hole screws or fitted with shelf supports



21 The cabinet is fixed to the wall with cleats. Plane a 45° bevel along the edge of both pieces



22 The lower cleats must be screwed securely to the wall. Use 6.0 (No. 12) screws for this and heavy-duty plugs



23 A row of Shaker pegs are glued into shallow holes in the panel along the base of the unit



24 With cleats fixed under the top panel, lift the unit so they locate over those screwed to the wall

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Jungle fever

Tom Wilson's fantastic gorilla build uses beech and London plane to create a wonderful wooden version of this magnificent beast

Many have tried to tame the wild animal, but few – if any – have succeeded. Although not renowned for our knowledge of the natural world, we at *The Woodworker* agree that this stylish project by Tom Wilson comes very close to capturing the essence of the mighty gorilla. We stand by in awe.

Initial sketches

Many versions and iterations of the gorilla were sketched (**Fig.1**), testing out variations in proportions, profiles and to explore the assembly sequence. The profile was then set up accurately as a CAD profile (**Fig.2**). This was a useful step in helping to refine the geometry, and to accurately set out

the exact locations for the connecting pins and tube.

Individual component profiles

The next step is to transfer the profiles for the individual components to the timber (**photo 1**), before roughing out the arm and leg profiles on a bandsaw, followed by final shaping and sanding. Once the profiles are fully shaped, cut them in half lengthways to make a pair of each. You also need to cut down the head and face blocks to size before profiling them on the bandsaw.

To form the body, firstly glue the beech chest and clamp this to the London plane, before gluing a sacrificial softwood block to the back of the body. Once the back profile is cut, you can then remove the hatched area of the softwood,

with the remaining softwood forming a sled for making further cuts (**photo 1**) while keeping the body orthogonal to the bandsaw.

Shaping the body

You can now shape and sand the body, before drilling 3mm holes for the connecting pins and cleaning up the internal 90° corners with a chisel. Now for the roughing out of the head and the drilling of a 12mm blind hole; this needs to be partially filled with a halved dowel, which provides a flat surface within the hole.

Use a 6mm brass tube to secure the head to the body; this should be drilled to take the 3mm brass pin that will also secure the arms in place. Once the body, head and limbs are shaped and sanded, the gorilla can be test assembled (**photo 3**). ▶

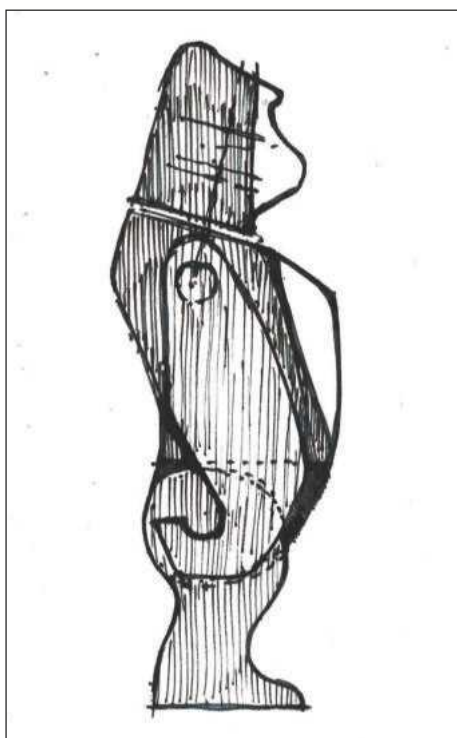


Fig.1 Initial sketch

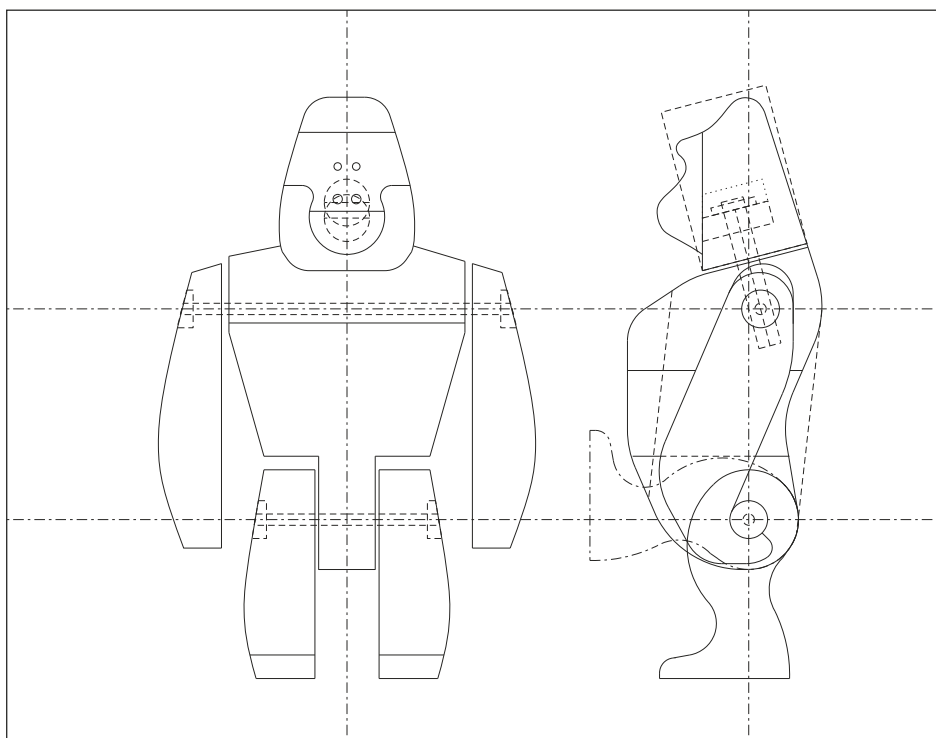


Fig.2 CAD drawing





Final shaping of the arms & legs

Before you start the final shaping of the arms and legs, you need to drill recessed holes using a 15mm Forstner bit (**photo 4**); this allows the push-on star-lock washers to be recessed. Once the shaping of the outside faces is completed, the holes can be deepened as required.

Before the arms and legs are shaped along their outer faces, the legs need to be held securely in the vice for stamping. My maker's mark is stamped into the bottom of one foot – this is the second gorilla I have made and so a No.2 is stamped into the other (**photo 5**).

Assembly

All the parts now need to be shaped, sanded to 240 grit, given three coats of finishing oil and rubbed back with fine wire wool. The next step is to cut the brass pins, make the felt washers, then all is ready and waiting.

Firstly, the legs need to be assembled, with felt washers between them and the body, and a dome capped star-lock washer pushed onto each end of the brass pins. The brass pins have to be cut accurately in order to ensure a tight fit. The felt washers provide friction and so allow the limbs to be posed in different positions.

Next, push the 6mm brass tube into the neck hole, and insert the 3mm arm pin, making sure it passes through the drilled hole in the tube. The arms can then be fitted in the same way as the legs.

In the last act of construction, push the head on to the tube, and locate a star-lock washer into the hole before pushing down over the tube. Then, take a length of dowel, halved and slotted, and use this to push the washer onto the tube. Once everything has been checked and all is secure, glue the face into position where it covers the hole. **WW**



1 A sacrificial softwood block is glued to the back of the body; the offcut forms a supportive sled for further shaping. Note chest in beech and rough-cut arm and leg



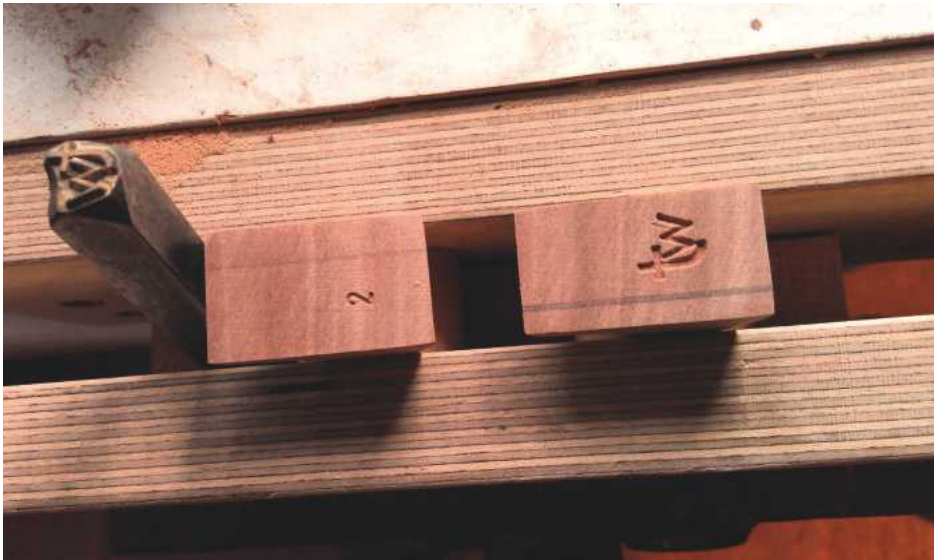
2 Head blank and body. The head has been drilled and plugged with half a dowel, the body cleaned up and drilled with 3mm holes for the connecting pins



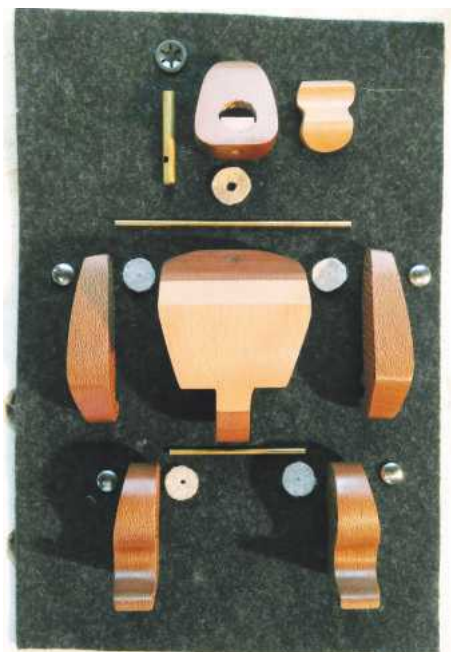
3 Ready for test assembly; note 6mm brass tube (drilled) to secure the head to the body



4 The arms and legs have a 15mm recess drilled part-way to house the star-lock washers



5 The maker's mark is applied – always a satisfying moment



6 With all parts oiled and ready, the final assembly can begin



7 Finished vs. pre-finished face-off



8 Posing on all fours and showing off the extraordinary fur-like grain of the London plane...



9 The finished gorilla in a sitting position, demonstrating the success of the felt washers, holding a raised arm aloft...



10 ... and standing squarely on level feet eyeing up the competition



FURTHER INFORMATION

To see more of Tom's work, visit his website:
www.curiostudio.co.uk

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Climbing the ladder

Commissioned by a friend, Peter Bishop gets rustic with the design of a simple 'ladder' style bookcase/shelving unit

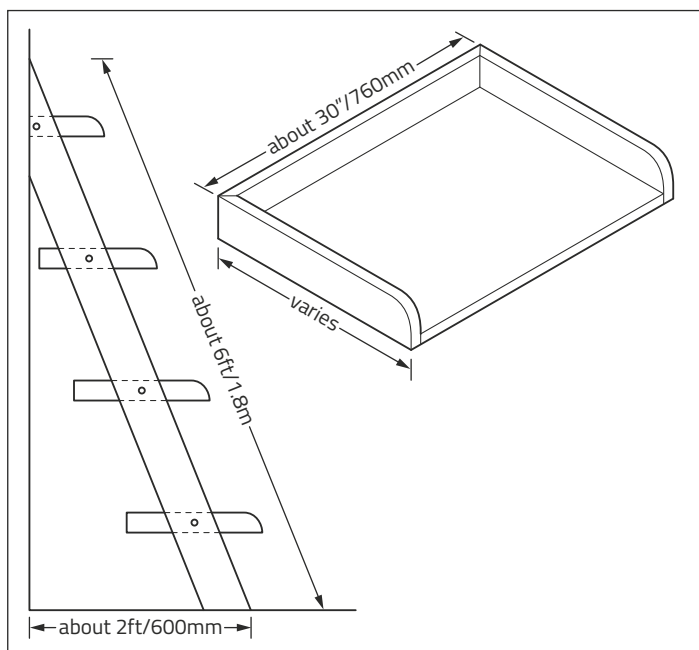


Fig.1 Ladder bookcase/shelving unit

I keep telling everyone I've retired, but little notice do they take of that. I have decided, however, that I'll do what I want to do rather than just boring old stuff! A little while ago I was asked to make something I'd not done before, so I thought I'd have a crack at it. The request was for a simple 'ladder' style bookcase/shelving unit for a friend. They seem quite popular at the moment and often use old pairs of wooden steps. Having looked online at what's available, I scratched my head a bit and then decided to go slightly rustic.

Please note that although many of the photos here show machines unguarded for clarity, you should ALWAYS ensure that when operating equipment the appropriate guards are in place.

Principles of design

The principles of this type of design are simple: two legs are propped against the wall with shelves suspended in between. If the angles are not too deep or shallow, then the assembled unit will be self-supporting. The weight of whatever is loaded onto the shelves will force the legs back and down, rather than out. Depending on the height, an optimum distance from the wall to the outside of the bottom of the legs is about 600mm.

I went for this bottom measurement combined with an overall height of around 1.8m, mainly because these sizes suited the stock I had available. The shelves would be partly graduated in width. A narrow one at the top – that's all it

would take – a slightly wider one following, and two the same size at the lower end. I was using oak veneer-faced MDF with a solid oak edging for the shelves and, here comes the rustic bit, two legs that I would leave with sanded sawn faces. As a bit of a twist, I decided to make the unit collapsible. With a more, possibly, rustic look, the shelves were to be fixed on and retained with the aid of coach bolts and wing nuts – a nice touch for a change.

The importance of angles

Getting the angles right is important. I have a large, flat surface workbench (photo 2) that I can lay out full-size drawings on, although



CUTTING LIST

All can be varied to suit height, width and number of shelves

Component	Pieces	Nom length	Fin width	Fin thickness
Legs	2	2m	140mm	25mm+
Shelves – MDF	2	760mm	300mm	22mm
	1		280mm	
	1		150mm	

Shelves, oak edging: Enough 16 x 50mm to wrap around 3 edges x 4

Shelves, front lips: 4 lengths squared to fit the thickness of the MDF



1 What stuff have I got?



2 My big, flat topped bench is great for laying out



3 One of the first jobs is to get the solid edging glued onto the oak-faced MDF



4 Cutting the mitre joints for the sides and back of the shelves



5 Marking out the rounded front edges using a suitable tin as a template



6 Two at a time, the three-sided, wrap around edging is glued on

any old, large piece of sheet material will do as an alternative. So, with tape and straightedges in hand, I set out a side view of the unit. I worked out the shelf spacings and marked those as well. Deeper at the bottom and graduated as I went up, I could now work out the width of the shelves and set about preparing them.

Using oak-faced MDF is convenient but any showing edges need to be covered with solid wood. I planed some oak offcuts up square to fit, then the four blanks of MDF were chopped out of a large piece. At this stage they just needed to be slightly oversize with one squared, straight edge to take the lip. With a little care, to make sure the lip on each one finished flush with the top and bottom surfaces, these four were glued and cramped on. I left them overnight for the PVA glue to cure completely and once set, the excess was sanded off flush. Working off this front, solid wood lip, I then cut each shelf blank to size.

Solid wood edging

I now needed the strips of solid wood edging. Using some more oak offcuts, I square planed enough to cover the back and two sides of each shelf. Having taken the measurements from the shelves, the four back pieces were then mitred

at each end. The sides followed and, once happy with the joint fit, these were cut to length flush with the front edge of each shelf. I marked out and cut a round on the front corners, with the help of a small paint tin (**photo 5**). With all the pieces shaped, mitred and cleaned up, they could then be assembled. I have two sets of mitre framing cramps, which allowed me to do a couple of shelves at a time. Over two days, allowing for the glue to cure, the edges were fitted to each shelf.

Sanding rough surfaces

I sanded the worst of the rough surface off my 'rustic' legs, leaving plenty of saw marks. They had planed edges where I had finished them to width but the faces looked unfinished as intended. I needed to cut the bottom and top angles. Each piece was laid directly onto the full-size drawing and the bottom angle lead points marked. Taking this angle off the drawing with my sliding bevel, the cut line was marked and then made. Each leg went back on the drawing in turn to have the top, wall end angle marked out using the other piece as the straightedge (**photo 9**). With the two ends cut on both, I then cramped them together and planed both top edges to smooth them off and make them identical in length.

The trenches

Each shelf was now to be let into the inner face of the legs by about 6mm. The amount was not critical but the angle was. Having marked the point where each shelf bottom came I used the still already sliding bevel to mark across the face the lower edge of each shelf trench. A piece of gash shelf side edging was laid on this line and the top one marked (**photo 10**). I now had the eight trenches marked out ready for cutting.

Eight 8mm coach bolts with wing nuts hold the shelves in place. I marked the centre point of each bolt hole out on the outside face of the legs. Using my drill press, I then bored the holes out driving through to the inner face. I used a 9mm drill bit to give me a little clearance. These holes were set to drop into the centre of each trench when cut and any break out could then be chopped away cleanly at the same time. I'd bore the shelf edges to match later on.

The next job was cutting the trenches. The waste removal could have been simply done by saw cutting the edges to the correct depth and removing the waste with a chisel, but I like my power tools! A straight cutter in a router, set at the correct depth, would take the waste out with the outer edges sawn as another alternative;

however, I used my pull over cross-cut (**photo 11**). All the fences were stripped off this machine to give me a flat surface to work off, and I then assembled some temporary, short fences set at the required angles for the left- and right-hand trenches. With the saw head raised high enough each trench was cut, chopping to the shoulder lines by eye. Extreme care needs to be taken when doing this. It didn't take long and the job was done.

Finishing & assembly

All the components were now cleaned up ready for sealing. One coat of Osmo Poly-X clear satin applied with a brush and the excess wiped off did the trick. All six pieces were then left for a day or

so to dry thoroughly (**photo 12**). Having checked, I could see that the coach bolt heads would not fit from the inside of the shelves; I needed to slice off one part of the round head. Out with the hacksaw first and a sliver of each head was cut off in line with the one side of the under head square. These rough edges were then cleaned up and finished on the grinder and that was sorted.

I was now ready to assemble and finish off the unit. On a flat bench the first side was laid trenches up. I slid the top shelf into its trench and held it in position, flush at the back. Using the ready cut hole in the leg, I then pushed and turned by hand the 9mm drill bit through it so that I had the centre of the shelf hole marked. This was repeated on the

other side and also with the bottom shelf. I then drilled a 10mm hole through the edges of these two shelves. I used the larger bore so that I had a little more leeway when sliding the bolts in. The trenches themselves were the key to securing the shelves in the correct position – the bolts were there simply to hold everything together. I now fixed the two legs to the top and bottom shelves. I propped this lot against a wall and checked that the shelves were level both ways. This is when you know if you've got the angles right! I positioned the other two shelves in their trenches, marked the hole and drilled them out. Both were then slid back in and bolted on and there we have it – the finished piece. **WW**



7 Working off the bench, using one leg as a straight edge, the back angles are marked



8 Once sawn, the faces are cleaned up as a pair



9 Marking the shelf positions onto each leg directly from the laying out drawing



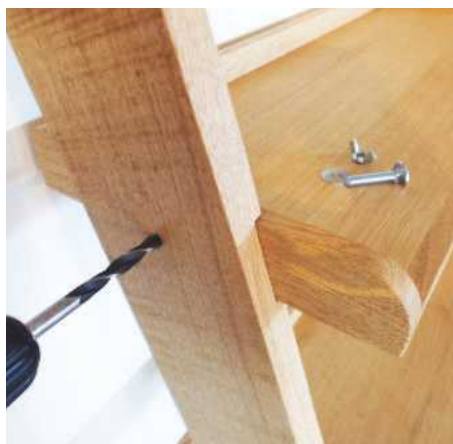
10 Using a scrap piece of side stuff, the trench widths are marked out



11 With care the trenches can be cut on a pull over cross-cut saw



12 The six component parts of the bookcase are sealed and left to dry



13 The side holes act as a guide for the shelf sides



14 The completed ladder bookcase/shelving unit, ready for stacking with books and ornaments

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FESTOOL

Tools for the toughest demands

Thoughts on sanding

Colin Simpson discusses the importance of sanding and the joy of a well finished surface, in addition to offering some handy hints and tips to help you achieve the best possible results



I do many demonstrations at turning clubs throughout the country and as part of the demonstration, I am often asked to critique members' work. I have also in my time been asked to judge many woodturning competitions. While a lot of this work is of a very high standard, there seems to be a common theme in as much as I seem to say the same thing time and again.

Those of you who have seen me at one of these critiques will no doubt guess what I'm going to say. A lot of the work I critique is let down by the finishing process. So, rather than do a step-by-step project this month, I thought I would give you my advice on sanding techniques.

The finished surface of any piece of turned wood, or any piece for that matter, is what you will see for the rest of that piece of work's life. If there are faults or blemishes in the finish, that is what you will see, so it is worth spending a little bit more time getting a good finish. Don't be fooled by thinking that the finish – oil, sanding sealer and wax, or whatever – will hide a badly sanded surface. It will not. If anything, it will show up blemishes even more.

Many people think that sanding is a necessary chore that has to be done before they can move on to turning their next piece. However, it can be done relatively quickly providing you use the

correct techniques. Aim to achieve the best finish you can from the tool as this will minimise the amount of sanding you have to do. Sharp tools and correct techniques will greatly help here.

The basics

When I hand sand, I use resin-bonded cloth-backed aluminium oxide abrasive that I buy in rolls of 25m x 100mm wide (**photo 1**). You can also buy them in 1m lengths from various suppliers. Abrasives come in various grit sizes and the higher the number of grit, the finer the abrasive. For general work, I find a good selection of grits is 120, 180, 240, 320 and 400. For fine gallery work, I will also use 600, 800, 1,200 and 1,500. For the finer grits, I tend to swap to silicon carbide or wet and dry abrasive as they are more readily available in this form. Cloth-backed abrasives are more expensive than the cheaper paper-backed ones you might use for rubbing down paint work prior to re-painting, but they are very flexible and you can bend them without the grit delaminating from the backing (**photo 2**).

These abrasives are generally longer lasting and cut well, but they are a cutting tool and, just like your turning tools, they will blunt. We can sharpen our tools but we cannot do this to abrasives. When the abrasive stops cutting well, throw it away. Do not be tempted to use a worn out piece of 120 grit abrasive as a 180 grit. This does not work. The grit on the abrasive is blunt, not finer, and will start to overheat your work, which can cause its own problems. Some woods react badly to excessive heat and tiny cracks could appear, called heat checks (**photo 3**). Having said that, you can increase the life of your abrasive if it becomes clogged with dust. Simply pass a rubber abrasive cleaning pad over the surface to remove the dust (**photo 4**).



1 Typical cloth-backed resin-bonded abrasive...



2 ... can be creased and folded without delaminating



3 Overzealous sanding can result in heat checks



4 Use a rubber abrasive cleaning stick to clean your abrasive

Abranet is a good alternative to cloth-backed abrasive (**photo 5**); this comes in sheets or discs for power sanding and there is a good range of grits. It is very flexible and, because it is a mesh, rather than a solid sheet, the dust disbursts easily.

Hand sanding

Once you have achieved the best finish you can from the tool, start with the coarsest grit you need. For me this is usually 120 or 180 for bowls and around 240 grit for spindle work. I tear off a strip of about 50mm from my roll and fold it into three. This gives my fingers some protection from the heat that is generated by sanding but it does allow me to know if too much heat is being generated. I tend to hand sand at a lathe speed of around 750rpm and, on the outside of the bowl, in the bottom quarter, between 6 o'clock and 9 o'clock (**photo 6**).

Hold the abrasive with your fingers flat and thumbs on top. Keep your elbows into your sides and keep the abrasive moving over the surface of



5 Abranet is a very efficient abrasive in sheet or disc form

the wood. Stop the lathe occasionally and examine your work critically. Get down close to your work and view it under a light at a 45° angle (**photo 7**) – that way you will better see any blemishes in the surface. Keep sanding with the coarsest grit required until all the blemishes have disappeared. Only when all the blemishes have gone should you go down to the next grit. Sanding with subsequent grits should be quicker because all you are doing is removing the scratches that the previous grit put in. Don't be tempted to take too big a jump between the grits. For example, don't go from 120 to 240 grit, missing out 180. It is false economy. The 240 grit will probably wear out before it has removed 120 grit scratches, it will take longer and generate more heat. Again, examine your work closely and keep sanding until all the scratches from the previous grit have been removed (**photo 8**). In **photo 8** there are two problems. Firstly, I started with too coarse a grit and have put some very nasty deep scratches into the wood that will take considerable work to remove, and secondly, I have gone down to a finer



6 Sand in the bottom quarter – between 6 o'clock and 9 o'clock

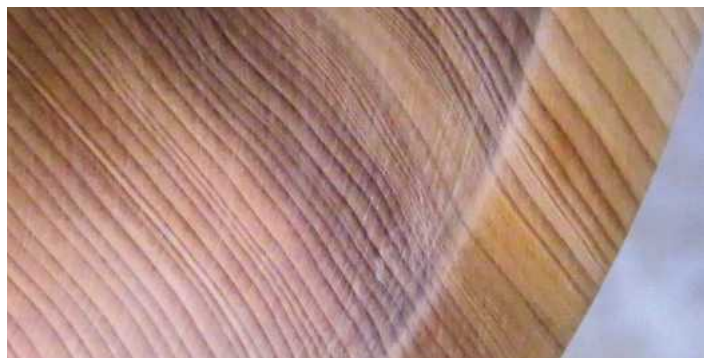
grit too soon, before previous scratches were removed. Change to the next finer abrasive when all scratches from the previous grit have gone and repeat this process until you have achieved the desired surface finish.

When sanding up to a detail, such as a foot on a platter or a bead on the rim of a bowl, I find it useful to support my wrist with my other hand (**photo 9**); this provides more stability and takes some strain from my wrist. **Photo 10** shows me using the same hold for sanding a bead.

Wet sanding is sometimes a useful technique. I use it often on wet wood and sometimes on softer spalted wood. Normal sanding on wet wood will very quickly clog the abrasive so wet sanding is advantageous. Other advantages are that the surface of the wood remains wet and does not dry out due to heat generated by friction. Wet sanding does not create dust. Instead the dust becomes a slurry on the abrasive that can easily be washed off. You can wet sand with water, oil or even paste wax. **Photo 11** shows me wet sanding the rim of a spalted beech bowl with



7 Examine your work very critically, looking for any fault



8 Here you can clearly see scratches from previous grits



9 Supporting your wrist is more stable and puts less strain on the wrist...



10 ... use this method for sanding details



11 Wet sanding is a useful technique on occasion...



12 ... wash the slurry off with oil or water

oil. Give the surface a good coat of oil, slow the lathe down to avoid the oil spraying out and sand in the bottom quarter, as normal. **Photo 12** shows the slurry that is produced. Wash this off with more oil.

Wet sanding is not a good idea if the wood you are using has a great contrast in colour between the sap and heartwood. This is particularly true if the wood is open-grained – for example, padauk. The slurry produced from the darker heartwood will contaminate the lighter sapwood, leaving a mess.

Hand sanding spindle work

Spindle work, such as a candlestick or chair leg, normally has sharp, crisply defined features, which can easily be destroyed by careless sanding. I normally start with 240 grit and sand underneath the work or, when sanding detail, on the side of the work nearest me. Sand flat areas and sweeping curves underneath with fingers

held flat (**photo 13**); that way the dust will be flying away from you into the extraction hose. Sand details with folded abrasive, getting right into the bottom of the detail (**photo 14**). Small coves can be sanded by wrapping the abrasive around a dowel or shaft of a gouge, to help keep the crisp radius (**photo 15**).

To sand the inside of small boxes, goblets and the like, hold the abrasive between your finger and the side wall of the workpiece (**photo 16**). The rest of the abrasive is held by my thumb. Go inside small pieces like this with one finger only. There may not be enough room for more fingers, and if you get a catch, your fingers could twist round each other, which could be painful, or worse. Do not be tempted to wrap the abrasive around your finger.

Power sanding

I tend to power sand the majority of my faceplate

work. I think it is quicker and produces a better result. However, I know some people don't like to power sand. Some say it creates too much dust. It will, if you over-sand, but I believe it creates the same amount of dust but far more quickly.

Power sanding makes use of an arbor with a foam rubber pad with a hook-and-loop face to which the abrasive disc is attached. The power source is usually a drill – mains or cordless – and you need to apply sufficient pressure to just make the drill's motor labour a little. If you press too hard, you generate too much heat and pressing too lightly will take too long. The disc is applied to the revolving wood but if you try to use the whole of the sanding disc you will find it difficult to control. Instead, just use one edge of the disc (**photo 17**). On the outside of a bowl, I sand in the bottom quarter. The basic principles are the same as with hand sanding: sand with the coarsest grit necessary and remove all blemishes with this,



13 Sand spindles on the underside...



14 ... and details on the side nearest you



15 A dowel or shaft of a gouge can be used as an aid when sanding coves



16 Sand boxes and small hollows with one finger only



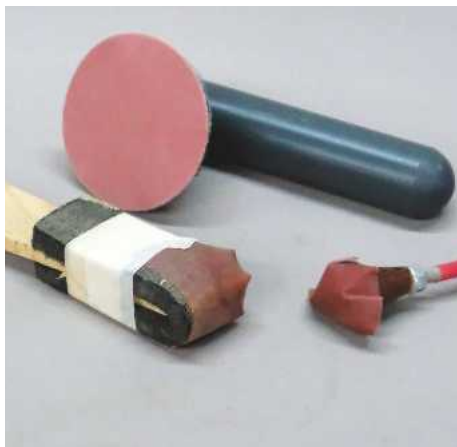
17 Use just the edge of the disc when power sanding...



18 ... and the right-hand edge on the inside of bowls

then go down through the grits, removing the scratches from the previous grit.

On the inside of a bowl, I usually sand at about



19 A small selection of sanding accessories

4 o'clock (**photo 18**) using the right-hand edge of the arbor. The rubber pad distorts to the inside curve of the bowl, and, with the dust extraction close by, most of the dust disappears up the hose.

Additional help

Photo 19 shows a small selection of accessories that can help with sanding awkward areas. The one at the top of the photo uses a sanding arbor but instead of a drill, it makes use of the revolving wood to spin the abrasive. There are many similar on the market. These are useful when sanding areas that a drill might not be able to access.

Photo 20 shows mine in use on the inside of a natural-edge cherry bowl. The accessory on the right in **photo 19** is the Simon Hope sanding ball and is useful for sanding inside small vases and the like and the accessory on the right is a home-made device – a stick with some foam wrapped over the end and abrasive taped over

the foam. I use it to sand the bottom of larger vases (**photo 21**).

The arbors, or more normally the hook-and-loop surface, wear out and no longer hold the abrasive securely. When this happens, I replace the hook-and-loop. Mount the arbor in a chuck on the lathe and use a skew chisel to slice off the worn out pad (**photo 22**). I buy sheets of Velcro and cut off a suitably sized square. These sheets are self-adhesive, but the 'glue' isn't that strong. I prefer to coat both the rubber on the arbor and the back of the Velcro with a heat-resistant contact adhesive (**photo 23**) and marry the two surfaces together when the adhesive has lost its tackiness. This repair doesn't last as long as the original, but it can be repeated and certainly extends the life of the arbors.

So there you have it – my thoughts on sanding. If you follow these tips, then I will have to think of other things to say at critiques! **WW**



20 Here I'm using a bowl sander on the inside of a natural-edge piece...



21 ... and here a home-made stick to sand inside a vase



22 Slice off worn out hook-and-loop with a skew chisel



23 Contact adhesive offers better adhesion than the self-adhesive on the Velcro

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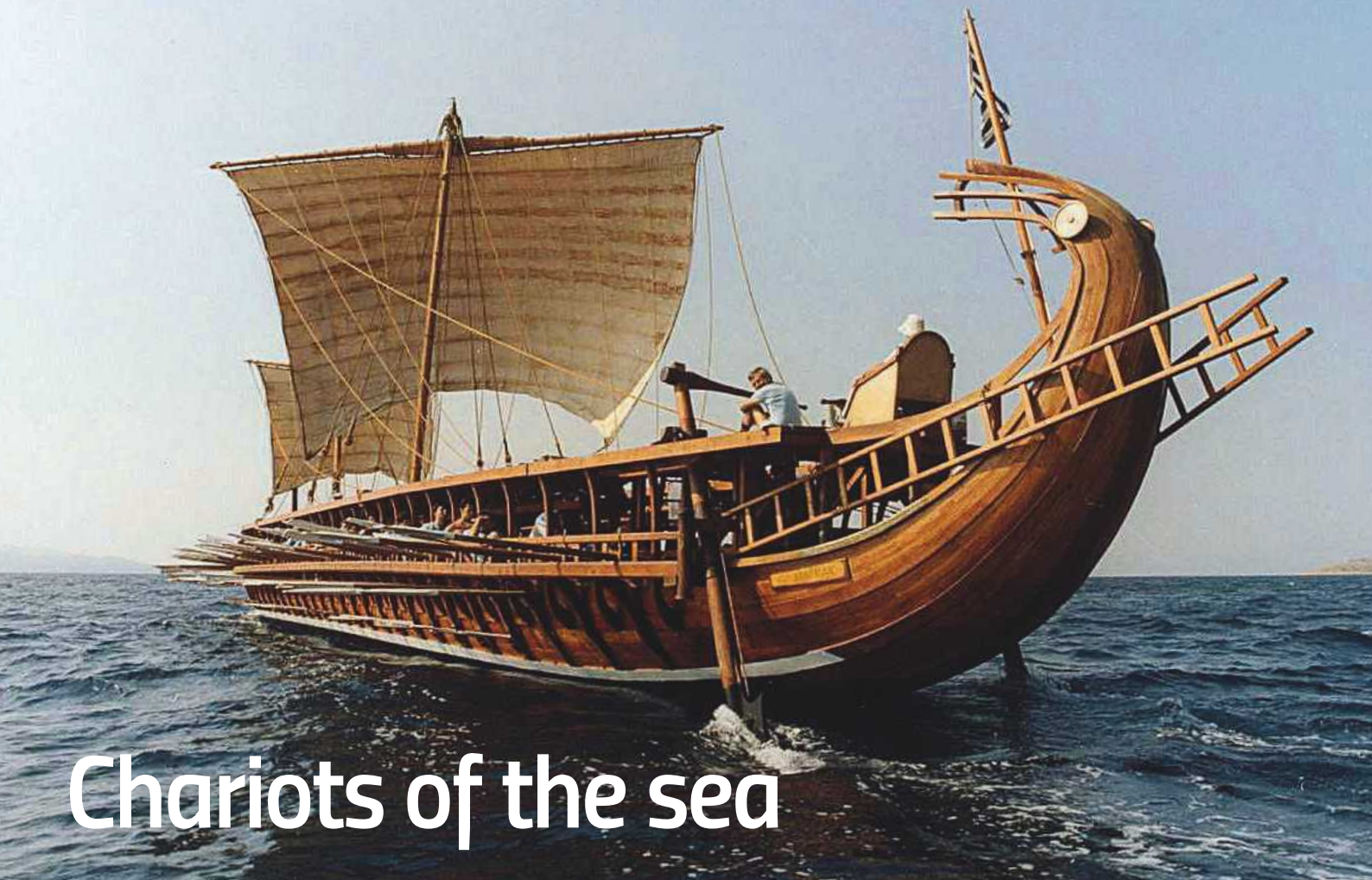
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Chariots of the sea

Antiquity boasted about the amazing prowess and manoeuvrability of the ancient trireme. Here, **John Greeves** looks at the building and testing of *Olympias*, a replica brought to life by the Trireme Trust to assess such claims

The trireme was the most important warship of the ancient world. It was so called because of the arrangement of rowers in three lines down the length of each side of the ship. Fast, manoeuvrable, and with a bronze-sheathed ram, this devastating warship permitted Athens to build her maritime empire and dominate the Aegean in the 5th century BC.

The *Olympias*, (a reconstructed ancient trireme), was the inspiration of classicist John Morrison who first proposed a method by which three vertical banks of rowers using the same length

oar, could row such a vessel, without snarling up the oars. Morrison teamed up with John Coates, retired Chief Naval Architect of the UK Ministry of Defence, Frank Welsh (banker, writer and enthusiast) and others to form the Trireme Trust.

John Coates created the trireme blueprint reconstruction in partnership with John Morrison and had received further advice from Charles Willink, a classical scholar. No remains of an ancient trireme has ever been found and so evidence for its reconstruction relied on classical plays, a variety of ancient texts, pottery and archaeological finds both

above and below the water. Possibly one of the most important pieces of evidence was the ancient remains of ship sheds in the port of Piraeus, which gave a true indication of size. From these the trust could gauge the dimensions of ancient ships. Morrison's hypothesis of three banks of rowers having the same oar length was met by hostile scepticism in some quarters and created one of the longest ongoing debates in *The Times* newspaper in the '80s.



Photos: The Trireme Trust



Detail of bottom planks as work progresses



A mock-up section was built to test the proposed arrangement of the oarsmen system as suggested by Sinclair Morrison. Following the testing, an important improvement was made to the position of the thranite rowers



Construction of the hull shows the classic lines of the keel

Early developments

The Trust wasn't deterred, and set out to determine the sailing characteristics, the strength, battle tactics and living conditions, which existed on a trireme. Even before *Olympias* was built, elaborate preparations and testing was undertaken. A mock-up was built to show the ranking of the three tiers of oarsmen as Morrison had suggested. The mock-up had three levels: Thranite (upper level oarsman); Zygian (middle level oarsman); and Thalamian (lower level oarsman). The mock-up proved workable and only slight modifications were made afterwards by placing the top rowers canted at an angle to the middle line of the ship.

While the mock-up was being built, a model of the whole ship was made in a simple 1:25 scale to give a general idea of the proposed reconstruction and to stimulate further discussion. A floating trial piece of the hull was then constructed. This was successfully tested on the Thames and later at Henley Royal Regatta in 1985. Tank tests followed and were undertaken in Greece using a model (in collaboration with the Hellenic Navy) to assess the hull form, wave resistance and the attested speeds the proposed hull could achieve.

The project was financed largely by the Greek Ministry of Culture and the Hellenic Navy and from individual donations to The Trireme Trust. It took just over two years to build the ship in Greece. The trireme had a length of 36.9m, a beam of 5.5m and a draught of 1.25m. Propulsion was attained by 170 oarsmen or from two large square sails, which were removed prior to battle. The ancient crew were not as everyone supposed, slaves, but freemen drawn from different levels of society.

Materials

Fir, mountain pine and cedar were standard timber used in antiquity. Fir because it was light and pine because it was slow to decay, while the trireme keel was built originally of oak. The disadvantage of softwoods is the high absorption of water and triremes were usually pulled out of the water in former days, using slipways and then housed in protective ship sheds.

Choice of timber and details of fastenings had to be carefully considered in view of the high stress nature of the triremes and the availability of indigenous timbers in the Mediterranean area. After consultation the trust decided to use Douglas fir due to its ability to withstand heavy loads and Virginia live oak, which was harder and

more akin to the Mediterranean Turkey oak used by the ancients.

The keel was the first part of the construction and was made from iroko, a massive hardwood tree also known as African teak. Each oar shaft was made from a young fir tree as were the sail yards and masts. In former times, Euripides explains how sails were either made from flax or papyrus and ropes from flax. In the reconstruction, canvass was used for the sails and ropes were made of polyester instead of flax. The ship was made as watertight as possible by stopping the seams below the lower wales with a modern sealant. No aspects of the later performance were lost due to these steps and all substitute materials were chosen because they provided advantages in terms of cost, availability, durability and safety.

Construction

Unlike modern ships today, the outer hull was built first, and the ribs added afterwards. The planks forming this shell were joined edge to edge with oak tongues (tenons) pegged into slots (mortises). The method is completely different from anything practised today. After the tenon had been hammered in,

it was secured in place by driving in a wooden dowel. The planking of the hull used 20,000 tenons and 40,000 mortise joints.

Initially the reconstruction started by laying down the keel. This was formed by joining three long timbers, which were scarfed together and rose gently to the stem and stern. As the shell rose, the internal timbers and ribs were fitted to the keel. Garboard strakes, a continuous row of planks, extended from stem to stern. These strakes reinforced the keel and had to be carved to shape at each end to allow for the rising keel and were fastened in place with tenons.

Gradually as the shell grew, transverse timbers were progressively added to the inside.

The ribs were formed largely of futtocks and top timbers, which reached to the top wale. A wale comprises of thick planks forming a reinforcing strake fitted along the outside of the ship. The hull shell had a lower, middle and top wale to give added rigidity. Outriggers were fitted above the top wale and jugged out one-third of a metre. Curved brackets extended down and were attached to the lower wale to support the outriggers. The outriggers served for the attachment of oars by the oarsmen on the top level. Oar ports were cut in two lines along the hull for the thalamian oars (closest to the waterline) and the zygian oars (middle level).

In order to hold together a hull, so long, shallow,

narrow and light, something more was needed to reinforce it. The hypozoma (pl. hypozomata) was well known in Plato's time and was an integral part of the design. This was an arrangement of two large bracing ropes that ran from bow to stern and reduced sagging (where the hull structure droops in the middle under stress) and hogging (where the structure curves upwards in the middle) and was an ingenious way to increase the rigidity of the hull. Today in modern construction it is called pre-tensioning. Because the modern builders could not find a similar material with the same elastic composition as hemp, steel ropes were used in the reconstruction.



The hull was made secure with tenons between each plank



Workers take a day off from the Perama boat yard and the Olympias build



Detail of the trireme outriggers used by the top level rowers



John Coates with the *Olympias* in September 1986

The ram & sea trials

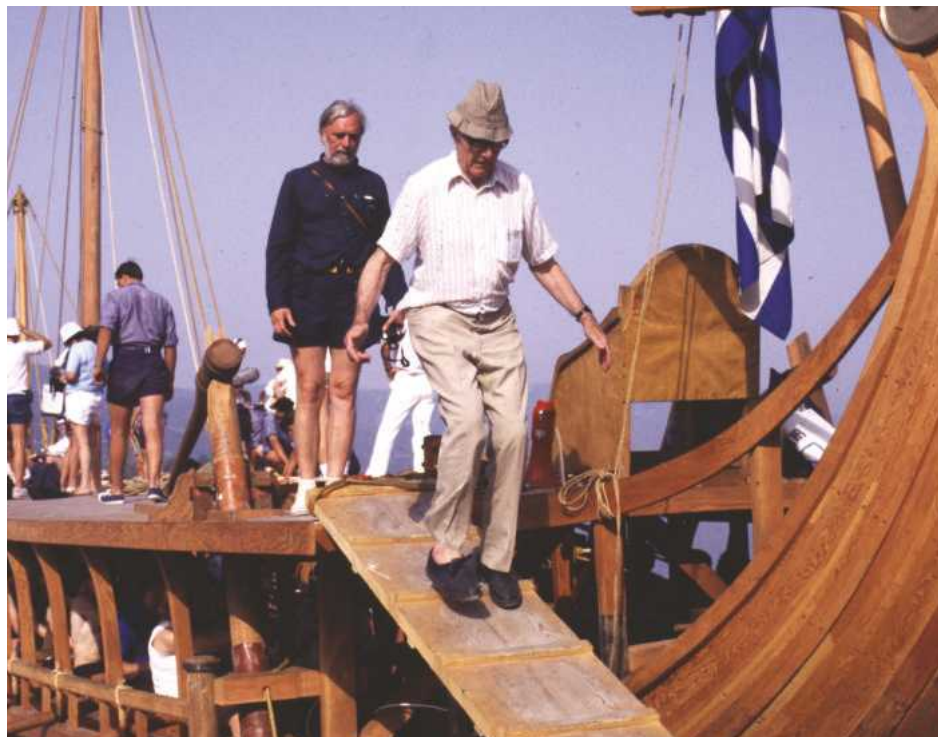
The principal weapon of the trireme was the bronze-sheathed battering ram fixed to the prow of the ship. It weighed 200kg and was a copy of an original ram now in the Piraeus Archaeological Museum.

After she was launched, the Trireme Trust subsequently conducted sea trials in 1987, 1988, 1990, 1992 and 1994. Fully laden often with an inexperienced crew she was rowed continuously for more than 30 miles at cruising speeds of up to six knots and achieved just under nine knots in a sprint under oar. Equipped like the ancient

ships with a square-rigged mainsail she touched 10.8 knots in a following gust. Her extreme manoeuvrability became apparent to all. She was able to perform 360° turns in just under two ship lengths with only a 50% loss of power. Thucydides was not exaggerating when he spoke highly of the capabilities of triremes, which defeated 1,000 Persian ships at Salamis in 480 BC. In 2004, *Olympias* fittingly transported the Olympic flame as part of the relay to the opening ceremony of the games. Today the ship can be viewed at the Naval Tradition Park (floating museum) at Palairo, Faliro in Athens, where it is kept as an exhibit. **www**



The fearsome ram cuts through the water during tests on the Thames



John Morrison navigates the gangway of the *Olympias*, note helmsman's chair at side



Cramped conditions can't stop the enthusiastic volunteers during summer tests in England



The trireme is currently afloat at the Naval Tradition park at Palairo in Athens



Setting out the deck for the upper level of oars

FURTHER INFORMATION

Naval Tradition Park (Greece)

Web: www.hellenicnavy.gr/en/history-tradition/floating-naval-museum.html

The Trireme Trust

Web: www.triremetrust.org.uk

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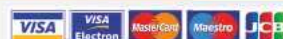


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A bowlful of sugar



Tony 'Bodger' Scott makes a sturdy jar from an old worktop

My son and his family are not long in their new home. They wanted a sugar bowl, but they didn't specify how big. So I made them two, both with lids: a table-top version from a small silver birch log I was given by a kindly chainsaw carver at a woodworking show last summer; and a larger storage barrel, which stands about 150mm high and is made from an old beech kitchen worktop.

The larger one, described in detail here, was more complicated. To make it big enough to hold a full kilo bag of sugar, it needed to have four layers of worktop: three for the bowl; and one for the lid, but my bandsaw is too small to cope with more

than three layers at once. In addition, my turning tools are of modest quality and beech is very hard.

Cutting out the centre

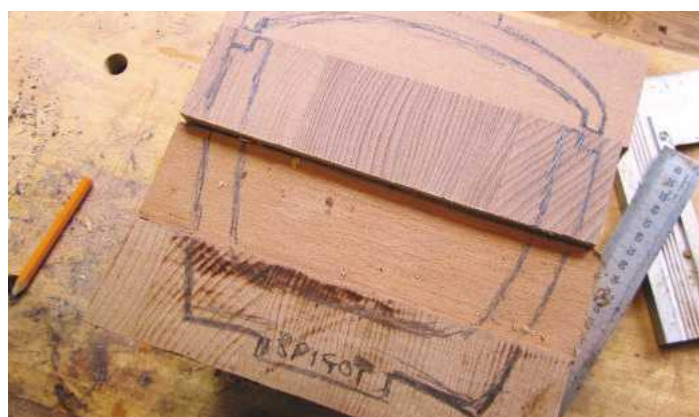
The solution was to cut out most of the centre – one layer at a time – on a scrollsaw, and only then glue the layers of the bowl together. Once the glue had set, I could bandsaw the outside roughly to shape and use that to mark out the lid. A piece of paper was then glued between the bowl and the lid so that I could shape the outside into a single curved barrel – with spigots on both ends – before separating the two pieces to work on the insides.



Thinning the bowl's walls from the inside was fiddly but not overly difficult. Having got rid of most of the bulk before putting the bowl on the lathe, it was fairly easy to slide a scraper down the wall to smooth the side, and then use a bowl gouge to hollow out the bottom layer and blend the curve into the wall.



1 Beech is hard and heavy, so I cross-cut the worktop into manageable pieces before ripping them with a bandsaw into squares about 175mm on a side



2 To ease the workload on the lathe, I drew out the rough shape on the beech pieces, alternating the direction of the grain on the three layers to add stability and interest



Hollowing the lid

The lid was hollowed out into a shallow saucer with an inset lip that fitted snugly inside the top of the bowl. That was helpful during the turning because it meant I could later hold the assembled barrel firmly between centres – with the lid at the tailstock end – while I removed the spigot on the lid.

A jam-chuck served the same purpose for removing the spigot on the base.

If all that sounds effortless and organised, it wasn't in practice. I cannot claim to have produced a clean surface from the tools. Before removing the spigots, I spent hours sanding – working through the grits, wetting the wood to raise the

grain, then working through the grits again – to get a finish that felt smooth to the touch.

First lesson

I learned a cautionary lesson as well. The jam-chuck for cleaning up the base of the bowl was made from a piece of MDF. It held



3 The walls were left over-thick to start with, to give me maximum flexibility when they reached the lathe. But cutting out the middle cut the turning work in half



4 A couple of drill-holes through the middle layers made space to thread through the end of a scrollsaw blade. Cutting at a slight angle served to minimise the hollowing work

the bowl tightly enough, but I must have been a bit eager about trimming off the spigot quickly. The MDF came apart along the line of its spigot, and the bowl spun out on to the lathe table, denting itself against the lathe bars as it fell. That meant remaking the jam-chuck, remounting the bowl, some fine skimming cuts to remove the dents, and then starting the sanding process all over again.

Marquetry patterns

One element that did work easily was thanks to the skill of Quentin Smith (www.qjsmarquetry.co.uk). He makes beautiful marquetry patterns and images in his Staffordshire workshop, and sells them online for very modest prices – the only cost in my two bowls. Since his patterns are perfectly round, it's simple to measure their diameter, cut a shallow recess in anything you're

turning, and glue them neatly into place. In this project I tucked one of Quentin's fan patterns into the underside of the lid, just for the surprise value.

Second lesson

I learned a second cautionary lesson at the end of the project. Had I left the spigots on for longer, I could have varnished and polished the bowl and lid while they were still on the lathe. De-nibbing



5 The base of the hole in the top layer served as a template for the top of the next layer, which again was cut out at a slight angle to match the planned shape of the outside



6 The bowl's three layers – two with cut-outs, the bottom layer left intact – lined up pretty well from the scrollsaw. The walls were left thick at this stage to ensure a strong glue-joint



7 Once the glue had dried, the three layers were trimmed roughly to shape on the bandsaw. The outside was left vertical so that, once turned, the walls would thicken towards the base



8 The trimmed bowl became a template for the lid. The idea was to make bowl and lid into a single flowing barrel shape, before separating them to work on the insides



9 Since it was important that the glue-joints shouldn't fail on the lathe, I used maximum clamping pressure, both in gluing up the bowl and in attaching the lid over a paper gasket



10 There are clever tools for finding a centre accurately, but drawing a couple of pairs of arcs from anywhere on the edge with an old school compass does the job just as well



11 A heavy spindle roughing gouge makes short work of turning the assembled lid and bowl to a reasonably clean cylinder, ready for a parting tool to cut a spigot on each end



12 Once the cylinder had been curved at both ends into a continuous barrel shape, a couple of taps with a chisel split the paper gasket and released the lid

between coats would have been a breeze as well. Removing the spigots at that stage would have left me only to varnish and polish the base of the bowl and the top of the lid.

Varnishing the pieces

As it was, I had to seal and varnish the parts off the lathe. And since I know of no way to keep a workshop completely free of dust – I haven't yet

made a dust-free aquarium-sized cabinet, perhaps of acrylic sheeting – I found myself putting on a coat of varnish, leaving it overnight, and coming back the next morning to find a surface as gritty as a loofah, sometimes with lumps of dribble as well. That meant an hour or two rubbing down the pieces by hand – which of course put more fine dust into the air – and then putting on another coat.

In all, the pieces got a total of a dozen coats: six of Ronseal gloss varnish, the first two thinned a little with white spirit; three of Le Tonkinois varnish, two thinned a little; two of finishing oil; and finally a spray of Pledge furniture polish. There has to be an easier way, though I confess I haven't found it yet. All the same, the bowl – and its table-top cousin – did get smooth in the end. And my son's family seem to like them both. **WW**



13 Fine cuts with a scraper gradually smoothed the sides and the joints between the pieces. Pull cuts from the centre with a bowl gouge gradually hollowed out the bottom



14 A shallow flat-bottomed recess made space for a decorative veneer – the only part that cost any money. A chamfer round the outside edge made it easier to grasp the lid



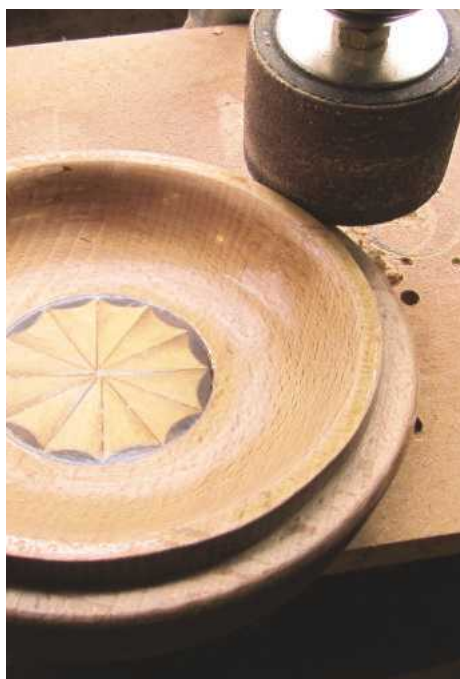
15 A tiny smear of glue in the recess (not on the veneer) is enough to hold the insert. Too much and you risk staining. Clingfilm between veneer and clamp avoids the risk of sticking



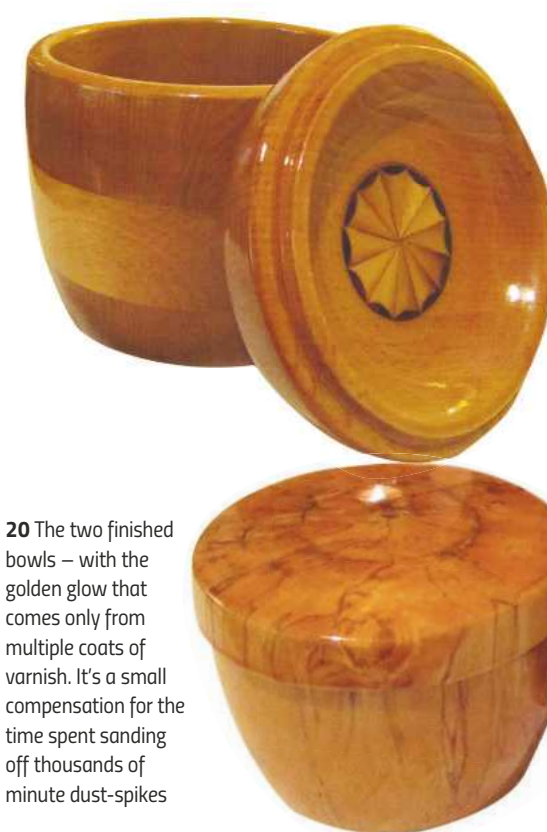
16 The veneer insert is less than a millimetre thick, so it's important to keep clear of it while working through the grits, until you get to the final stages of burnishing



17 The bowl was held safely between centres while most of the spigot was turned away. For the final part, I added insurance in the form of several layers of masking tape



18 The lid was extremely hard to remove once I'd put on an initial coat of varnish, but it didn't take long to trim the lip with a small drum sander attached to a drill



20 The two finished bowls – with the golden glow that comes only from multiple coats of varnish. It's a small compensation for the time spent sanding off thousands of minute dust-spikes

19 Getting the surfaces smooth took ages: in all a dozen coats of varnish, finishing oil and polish. Has any reader worked out how to create a completely dust-free environment?

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Woodwork Course 1 (Tools and Things)

A self-interest woodwork course where the aim is to give you the confidence and the knowledge to use basic hand tools and some of the more common power tools.

You will be able to pick from a list of projects before you arrive that I believe you can complete in 5 days or less so that you will go home with one of them and you can proudly say "I made that".

I cover the teaching of how to handle tools by getting you started on your project and, as you need to use a new piece of equipment, I show you how. This means that the instruction is fresh in your mind and you do the task there and then.

On all courses there will only be a maximum of 4 at a time, this will mean that I will be available when you need help and advice.

Woodwork Course 2 (Wood and Things)

This is a continuation of course 1 (tools and things) with the emphases on timber, what are acceptable defects in timber and what isn't, how do you write out a cutting list that means something to your supplier, what to look for when buying wood and what to avoid.

You will ideally have done course 1 (tools and things) or have a good working knowledge of how to use hand tools and have used hand held power tools.

The projects for you to pick from will be more complicated and will involve the use of the more sophisticated hand tools and hand held power tools and will include using some of the static power tools in the workshop. We will also be looking at buying timber, making cutting lists and drawing plans.

Woodwork Course 3 (Project Days)

The advanced course is rather different from the previous two.

To come on this course you will need to have done both the other courses and have used your skill at home on your own projects and be ready to take on something more difficult.

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NEXT MONTH

Coming up in the next issue...

WW June – on sale 5 May



A REAL ROCKING BEAUTY

Peter Vivian makes 'Sultan' – a medium-sized rocking horse using reclaimed oak, and gambolling on an ash stand



MUSIC FROM TREES

Andy Smith makes a handmade gift: a xylophone for his one-year-old niece



UP, UP & AWAY!

Part 1 of Ian Wilkie's toy aeroplane build

WIN!



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Specification

Voltage: 18V
 Blade speed: 3,100rpm
 Blade diameter: 165mm
 Max cut @ 45°: 42mm
 Max cut @ 90°: 57mm
 Weight inc battery: 4.1kg
 Battery capacity: 4.0Ah
 Bore size: 20mm
 Rating: Industrial

Price: £399

Web: www.bosch-professional.com

PROS

- Guide rail compatible
- Powerful performance
- Takes all current 18V Li-ion batteries

CONS

- Chips on melamine without scoring cut
- No sprung-loaded plunge so needs to be plunged and lifted manually
- No fine adjustment on the rail

RATING: 4 out of 5

Bosch GKS 18V-57G Professional circular saw

If you're looking for a standard circular saw that is capable of doing the basics of a plunge saw, then take a look at this offering from Bosch

If your work entails a crossover of general ripping and cross-cutting in solid and sheet stock as well as some finer work where a very straight cut is needed but you can't justify owning both a circular saw and a plunge saw, then the GKS 18V-57G is a good compromise as it works on the Bosch plunge rail system.

As well as giving you a rail system and standard circular saw option, you have the freedom of battery power, and if you are already a Bosch Li-ion user, the saw is compatible with all of the current 18V versions, including the new wireless charging ones, and if you are on board, the saw is available as a body-only option as well as kit versions with batteries.

Clean cutting

This new saw operates in the same way as a dedicated plunge saw by snugging up tight to the rubber zero tolerance strip and allows you to simply make a couple of marks to the size you need, position the rail to these and make the cut for pin-point and speedy accuracy.

The rubber strip ensures a clean cut on the work although

the waste side will of course still have breakout, more so on cross-cutting or melamine work.

However, the saw comes fitted with a 36-tooth TCT blade with a rake angle that while still positive, is knocked back from the normally very aggressive angle that is associated with the standard circular saw. This makes for a very clean cut as well as keeping the breakout on the waste side to a minimum.

I put this to the test on some melamine sheet stock, and while the cut was pretty clean throughout, despite the rubber zero clearance strip there was still some chipping in a few areas. I found that by having the blade set at a couple of millimetres' projection, I could make a scoring cut first and then a full plunge, which yielded excellent results.

Cross-cut setup

On a cross-cut setup on a veneered sheet of MDF the saw left a great finish without the need to score first. For a saw that is essentially a standard circular type with a base that suits the rail system, it punches with plenty of power on sheet stock but the design also means it is likely to be used on thicker stock and



Viewed from beneath you can see the blade snug to the rubber strip



Alongside the Bosch narrow slot, the wider slot is Festool rail compatible



Angles are locked with front and back knobs to help keep things rigid

with a 57mm blade projection, it needs to be man enough for ripping and cross-cutting thicker stock around 50mm as required as well.

So the next stop was to put it to the test on some 45mm-thick sapele. I used it on the rail as this offers a great way of dealing with any timber that needs quickly straightening. It ripped through with plenty of power to feed the saw at a steady rate without any sign of struggling, so it does cover the options very well. If you want to use it for quick, simple repeat rips, then there's also a side fence included.

Lacking plunge saw refinements

As it's a circular saw first and foremost, it lacks the refinements of a dedicated plunge saw so there's no spring-loaded plunge; it's a manual operation that is achieved with the large paddle lever to the rear of the motor.

You have two choices here: you can either plunge through the work by loosening the lever and dropping the blade through, or, as there is no plunge depth restrictor, if you want to restrict the depth of cut you can preset it, lock the position and then run the saw from the end of the rail to make the cut.

For any cut to be made the ABS plastic lower blade guard has to swing out of the way. If the saw is placed directly to the track this has to be done first by simply using the lever to rotate it up enough so it sits on top of the track. If you run in from the end

of the track, it automatically lifts as it comes into contact with the track and progresses through the cut.

The saw can also tilt to 45° for any bevel work and the pivot action of the cast aluminium base is set to ensure the blade always addresses the rubber zero strip so any bevel cuts still benefit from the use of the rail in keeping a crisp, clean edge after cutting. There are no 'snugs' or micro adjusts to set the saw to the track and nudge it across for optimum performance to gain perfect alignment, but with a saw that is designed to cross both areas while keeping the costs down enough to make it viable, it fits and runs well on the track without binding.

In summary

There's also a second slot in the base that is compatible with the Festool and Makita rails and while it won't match the ease of use and results of a plunge saw, Bosch have a model here that allows a standard circular saw to do the basics of a plunge saw as well, which works well if you need the two options in a portable battery system.

There is also a second saw option with a basic non-rail compatible base if you just want a solid performing circular saw to fit in with your existing Bosch 18V battery system, or both saws can be bought as sets with batteries if you are looking to enter into the battery driven tool market. **AK**



I found that cutting melamine-coated boards was quick and easy...



... but the resulting cut showed some chipping on the cut edge...



... although I found that making a shallow scoring cut first eliminates the problem



Specification

Voltage: 18V

Orbits per minute:

Up to 2,200opm

Sanding pad:

Hook-and-loop

Weight: 0.61kg

Battery: 0 (body-only batteries and charger sold separately)

Price: £39.99 (bare)

Web: uk.ryobitools.eu

PROS

- A great value sander
- Comfortable to use
- Light in weight and easy to manoeuvre

CONS

- Flimsy rubber flap
- You will have to factor in the cost of a One Plus battery if you haven't already bought into this system

RATING: 4 out of 5

Ryobi R18PS-0 18V palm sander

This sander represents good value for money, but unfortunately, the lower price does mean it suffers from a few minor niggles

For more detailed sanding the R18PS-0 palm sander is a cheaper alternative to the Ryobi R18ROS-0 18V random orbit sander tested in the last issue (see *WW* Apr). Again, the battery is mounted vertically and you hold the tool at the top. Textured, soft-grip rubber makes this comfortable to use, particularly when sanding vertical surfaces or overhead. Lighter and more compact than its random orbit brother, this sander weighs 1.05kg with a 1.5Ah battery on board.

The tool comes with six triangular abrasive sheets, punched to match the extraction holes in the hook-and-loop-backed pad. There's no dust collection box, but you can still hook it up to an external vacuum extractor. A rubber flap at the lower edge of the tool is flipped open and a plastic adaptor inserted in the slot, although the flap does seem a bit flimsy...

Power on/off is via the push-through button, reached from either side of the nose. No-load speed on this sander is 11,000rpm, giving an orbit rate of 22,000opm. Orbit motion is 1.8mm, so you can expect a slightly finer finish than with the

random orbit machine. Fitted with the same 1.5Ah battery (fully recharged), this time I managed to complete an impressive 30 minutes of sanding.

In summary

Faced with plenty of shiplap cladding on a shed to sand before applying a finish for winter, this was the perfect opportunity to take both these tools for a spin. The fact that both are cordless makes life easier outdoors, but you do have to factor in the cost of a Ryobi battery unless you've already bought into their One Plus system. A 1.5Ah lithium battery and one hour charger will set you back around £70, with larger batteries costing a fair bit more.

For indoor use the palm sander ideally needs to be used with an extractor, though for small jobs you can get away without one. The more expensive random orbit tool is perhaps better for sanding larger areas and has an efficient dust collection system. The run time is far less, so you'd really need a couple of batteries, but either makes a great sander for outdoor use. **PD**



This sander weighs 1.05kg with a 1.5Ah battery on board



Six triangular abrasive sheets are supplied, punched to match the extraction holes



A rubber flap at the lower edge of the tool is flipped open...



... and a plastic adaptor inserted in the slot



Power on/off is via the push-through button, reached from either side of the nose



The triangular pad design allows for sanding up to the edge in tight corners



WIN!

To be in with a chance of winning **1 of 8** IRWIN 300mm Medium-Duty One-Handed Bar Clamps & Corner Clamp accessories, see **page 37**

IRWIN QUICK-GRIP One-Handed Bar Clamps

We get to grips with this new range of clamps and accessories from IRWIN

It's something of a woodworking adage that you can't have too many clamps, and a pair or so of these QUICK-GRIP versions from dependable and long-established manufacturer IRWIN would be an excellent addition to everyone's clamp collection. Clamps are top of the list of most useful pieces of kit in the workshop, and without them life would be a lot harder, not to mention the adverse affect it would have on our work.

Even more versatile

Since its introduction to the market some 20 years ago, the quick clamp has proved its worth, providing one-handed operation and more than adequate holding force in countless situations. The IRWIN QUICK-GRIP clamps come in medium- and heavy-duty versions (as well as

a mini one) and represent the latest evolution of the genre. They are now even more versatile with the addition of a number of well thought-out accessories. Both jaws on the clamp have removable pads – one of which will pivot to increase functionality on awkward shapes – and can be replaced with a number of specific attachments. These include the following:



The Clamp Coupler enables two clamps to be joined end-to-end to achieve a wider clamping capacity. Simple and effective



The Deck Tool Kit is designed to assist in laying decking, but would find uses in many similar flooring and restricted access applications



Medium- and Heavy-Duty QUICK-GRIP clamps



Heavy-Duty clamp



The Corner Clamp converts the clamp into a dedicated clamp for all 90° work; ideal for drawers and frames

In summary

I found that the clamps themselves, and all the component parts, were of a strong and robust build, and jaws and accessories clipped together firmly and stayed that way during operations. Good stuff. **MC**

Every QUICK-GRIP clamp breaks down into its component parts for adaptability with a new range of accessories

Specification

Heavy-Duty clamps available in six sizes: 150, 300, 450, 600, 900 & 1,250mm

Medium-Duty clamps available in five sizes: 150, 300, 450, 600 & 900mm

Light-duty clamps: The Mini is available in 150mm and 300mm; the Micro is available in 115mm

Available accessories: Edge Clamp; Wide Pads; Corner Clamp; Clamp Coupler; Hold-down Jig; Deck Tool; Clamp Stand

Price: From £13

Web: www.irwin.co.uk

PROS

- One-handed operation
- Versatile
- Robust

CONS

- The price of the accessories can mount up

RATING: 4.5 out of 5

By drilling a 22mm hole in a temporary (or permanent) worktop, the Hold-down Jig creates a table clamp for securing large or awkwardly-shaped workpieces



Specification

Motor: 3kw
Power supply: 16amp
Cuts per minute: 19,200
Cutterblock diameter: 70mm
Cutterblock speed: 4,800rpm
Feed speed: 5m/min
Cutters: 56 x TCT spur cutters
Length of table: 1,380mm
Max depth of cut – planer: 4mm
Max depth of cut – thicknesser: 2mm
Max planing width: 310mm
Max thicknesser capacity: 225mm
Overall L x W x H: 1,385 x 705 x 1,000mm
Min extraction airflow required: 1,500m³/hr
Weight: 272kg
Noise Level dB @ 1m: 89

Price: £1,799.95

Web: www.axminster.co.uk

PROS

- Sheer cutting action
- Superb finish
- Quiet operation

CONS

- Surface adjuster located at the back
- Fence has to be removed for thicknessing

RATING: 4.5 out of 5

Axminster trade series AT129PT planer/thicknesser

This impressive machine leaves a premium finish and despite a few areas for improvement, would be ideally suited to a busy workshop where the three-year warranty would prove to be a big bonus for all potential customers

Axminster's new kid on the block has a different approach to the usual cutterblock found on traditional planer/thicknessers, dispensing with knives in favour of individual rows of cutters – 14 per row – and in four sets, so it's essentially a four-knife block. It immediately has the advantage of a premium finish, especially with a feed speed of 5m per minute and a 4,800rpm block, equating to around 3.8 cuts per millimetre; the average is normally around 2.4–2.8 cuts per mm.

Multi-cutter block

Alongside, the cutter rows are arranged in a slow helix around the block giving a sheer cut as it addresses the work, which again helps in gaining a premium finish, especially on grain patterns that are prone to tear-out.

Each individual cutter has four edges allowing any damaged ones to be rotated or swapped out in seconds, and there's no problems in setting the height as they self-locate, so down time for cutter maintenance is minimal. It also makes life far easier

when dealing with a nick in a blade, with just the damaged ones needing to be spun or swapped rather than sending a whole set away for re-grinding.

There is a cost implication in having this block, however; the standard three-knife planer is available at £1,349.95, but to opt for this multi-cutter block will set you back a further £450. If you don't need the extra capacities there's also a smaller 260 x 190mm machine available in both cutter formats, saving £400. There are additional benefits with the multi-cutter block, however: noise levels are lessened in use, especially on harder timbers where the sound tends to resonate more, and alongside, less power is needed to drive the block.

Further to this, if you've ever used timbers such as pine where the shavings can be quite voluminous from a standard knife block, these individual cutters make the shavings smaller and therefore compact more into the extractor, meaning less downtime in this area as well.



Individual cutters are arranged in a slow spiral to give a sheer cut



Cutters are self-setting and swapped with a Torx driver



Adjustments can be made to the fence stops for 90 and 45° positions



You have to remove the fence to use the thicknesser function



A couple of brackets keep the fence stowed safely on board

In use

It seems like it's all 'win, win' at the moment, and it is backed up by a solidly built all-steel welded fabrication for the base cabinet with heavy cast-iron tables for the surfacer as well as a central ram-driven thicknessing table.

The thicknessing table is a beast of a casting, deep and solid, and sitting atop a central column lift that's like an elephant's leg, it is solid enough to hold its position without the need to lock it off, although there is provision for this if needed. The adjustment for thicknessing height is sweet and fluid, and there's also a lever to disengage the drive rollers when you're working the surfacing function.

The tables are hinged to lift away to the back of the machine for easy access to the power switching and thickness adjusters, and to prevent any inadvertent dropping back when planing, simple gravity stays drop into place when the beds are raised to keep them securely in their 'up' position.

I do have a niggle here, borne of my love of the old-fashioned 'over/under' planers I was taught on where everything stays on board as you work, and that's having to take off the fence to deploy the tables for thicknessing work. It is pretty painless, though, only needing to slacken one Bristol lever to slide it forwards and lift away, and with a couple of built-in storage hooks at the back of the machine for the fence once removed, it keeps things neat and tidy when you do so.

The feed rollers are comprised of a serrated infeed and steel outfeed, and with the beds swung up out of the way, access for general maintenance to the block or rollers is excellent, as is the access when feeding timber through the thicknesser – I'm beginning to swing my allegiance towards the lift up beds over my preference of old-fashioned over/unders, especially as this one is very easy to swap between modes!

A built-in extractor hood pivots through to enclose the block, activating a micro-switch as it does so you can work on the block with the machine automatically protected by this switch.

In surface mode the fence locks very firmly into a basic looking dovetailed casting, but it needs to be no more than this; being able to hold its position without flexing is the prime target and it does this without qualm, as does the heavy aluminium fence extrusion itself.

Bristol levers lock the settings for position across the block as well as the tilt of the fence for bevelling, with adjustments to set stops for 90 and 45° positions.

Great finish

You can cut up to 4mm per pass in surface mode and with an overall bed length of 1,380mm, there's plenty of support for



The surfacer depth of cut adjuster is located at the back



Both beds lift away on spring-assisted hinges



These simple gravity catches drop in to hold the beds up safely



The built-in extractor hood hinges into place to cover the block

joinery work, such as door stiles. Setting the depth of cut is a slight downside for me, as the adjuster is on the back side of the machine while the indicator is at the front, which means you have to reach under the infeed bed or over the top of the fence while squinting at the front to see how far you've adjusted. It's not a massive problem, however, and the design of the machine puts the bulk that houses the bed hinges, table adjusts and so forth at the back, but an adjustment alongside the indicator is a simpler operation when you need to do so rather than having to have a gibbon-like arm to get things altered!

But it's all about the finish and performance and it more than comes up trumps here. I had a 300mm-wide test plank of poplar at my disposal, and I've found it can be quite woolly on occasion when machined (although not as woolly as Donald Trump's comb over!). Running over the surfacer was a breeze and I found the machine was very quick to knock off the high spots ready to go through the thicknesser.

Checking the finish from the surface mode it was silky smooth, with no hint of cutter ripple or tear-out. It will take up to 2mm per pass in this mode, and I set it to pretty much maximum so as to see if the finish suffered as a result. Again, no cause for concern here; I was left with a premium finish and holding it to the light there was no sign of any cutter marks at all, either as a ripple across, as is the case with standard knives, or tracking lines in the length from the individual cutters.

The slight radius of each cutter, along with its spiral design, gives each cutter a sheer angle that doesn't start with a leading point so the finish is super-smooth, with overlapping cuts as each cutter comes into play.

The finish achieved is certainly more than good enough to go straight to painting without sanding, and if a gloss lacquer or polish is being used, a mere flash over with a fine abrasive would certainly get it in the right ballpark if it isn't close enough already.

In summary

This is undoubtedly an impressive machine given the premium finish it leaves on the work, and at a price that stacks well in its favour against others of its class.

The individual TCT cutters give fast turnaround for nicks and chips, coupled with edge retention of 10 times that of a normal HSS knife, which provides the cutters with a potential 40x work load in comparison with standard knives – a great advantage for the trade user, and with a three-year warranty for a trade-rated machine, it could earn its keep very quickly indeed in a busy workshop. Definitely worth looking at if you're in the market for a professional planer/thicknesser, which you can rely on to get the job done, and well. **AK**



There's a fold-in handle on the thicknesser to stop it from getting hit



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The superb finish from the cutters is ripple and blemish-free



With the beds up there's excellent access to the thicknesser

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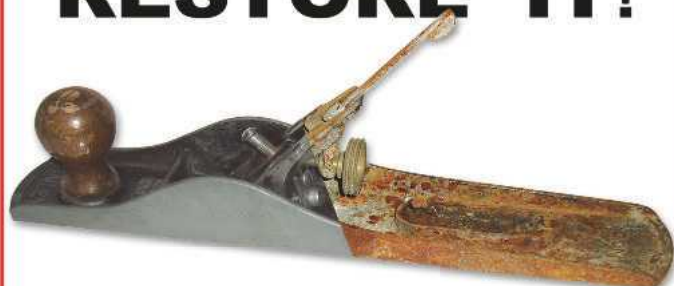
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Lebus day trip to Southend in the early 1950s

A walk around the factory PART 5

Peter Baker tells us about the impressive polishing shop at Harris Lebus, which stretched from east to west across the whole factory

In my last episode I digressed, not once but twice. I promise that this time I will tell you about the polishing shop at Harris Lebus, which stretched from east to west across the whole factory. The eight conveyor line/belts were continuously moving, albeit at a very slow pace, because once on the belt a piece of furniture did not leave that belt until it was totally, finally, finished. It was then passed by the final inspector who then moved it across onto another belt, also slow moving, which carried this article to the front of the factory, under the roadway and into the warehouse where the porters would place it into position with identical items. When I first went to work there the warehouse was within the main building, which would have made the final belt only a third of the eventual length. It was during the '50s that the company built the warehouse in the car park and extended the final belt to travel under the

road and to the new home. This section of conveyor was, naturally, fully covered all the way.

The polishing process

An 'In-The-White' (which means not polished) piece of furniture was placed, according to which timber it was made of, on its appropriate belt. Unless there was a problem it did not leave the belt until the end. It would then be stained, grain filled, sealed, de-nibbed, colour sprayed, top coat applied and then 'pulled over'. To explain, for the benefit of those readers who have not experienced the intricacies of 'modern' furniture production or a polishing shop, all furniture is stained to even out the variety of colours, which live within timber of the same species and even of the same log. Filling the grain is only applied to some timbers, like mahogany and walnut, to give a very smooth, highly polished, gloss finish. A sealer coat is applied after the 'stain and fill' primarily to seal grain filler and also provide a 'key' for the top coat. The sealer coat will 'bring up the grain', or 'nibs', which have to be removed and determines the smoothness of the final finish. The 'colour spray' is an application of colour by spray gun, which is, again, balancing out variations of colour in the nearly finished article. This is quite

the most skilful of tasks in the polishing shop. As an aside, I once employed a polisher who took a 6 x 3ft white, Melamine-faced panel and, by using his colour gun, made that panel look as if it had been veneered with the most beautiful curl mahogany veneers. That is skill. The penultimate operation is to apply the top coat or coats. Two coats increases the depth of shine. The final operation is to 'pull over' the piece of furniture. The polisher has in his hand a 'rubber': a wad of cotton wadding about the size of the palm of the hand over which is placed a piece of lint-free cloth. Something like an old pillow case is ideal or, in desperation, well-worn knickers. Into the cotton is poured 'pull over solution', which is a mixture of cellulose and 'thinners', the cloth laid over this and twisted tightly to form a triangle and held in the hand. A dab of linseed oil on the face of the rubber will enable the rubber to traverse the surface without 'pulling' or sticking and thus damaging the eventual shine. This takes quite some practise for 'the shine sells the product'. Then, at the end of the line is the inspector, whose word is law and who will place the finished piece onto the next conveyor belt to the warehouse. Bear in mind that the piece of furniture has just travelled a quarter of a mile, on a continually moving conveyor belt, with different operators each undertaking a separate task, all working on Payment by Results – or piece work – and never taking that piece off the line if it can be avoided. And this factory was built before World War II! What foresight; what imagination; what a commitment. I think it even rivals Henry Ford. **WW**

GET IN TOUCH

In part 15 of this series, Peter talks about some of the other things which took place within the confines of the factory. And if any other readers have a story to tell, we'd be glad to listen. Just write to editor.ww@mytimemedia.com and we'll see how we get on

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Contractor Saw Module Powerful & accurate table saw with full length fence

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Workcentre



Clamping Table Module
Clamping table supplied as standard
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Optional Modules

TWX7 RT001
Router Table Module



TWX7 CS001
Contractor Saw Module



WG200-PK/A 8" Wet Stone Sharpening System Package

Includes Full Instructional DVD



This indispensable DVD covers in detail the whole process of sharpening, from finding and setting the correct cutting angles to easily achieving razor sharp edges on even the most challenging of tools. Duration: 74 minutes.

12 mm support bar

Adjustable torque

Variable speed 150 - 250 rpm



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