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June 2018



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Welcome

Lately I've been thinking about which part of a project is it that we enjoy the most, what might constitute the 'favourite moment'. Certainly the tasks involved will vary from job to job, and let's face it, some of them may rate quite highly on the 'little more than a chore' scale, but overall there are plenty of good parts to choose from. Other factors which could influence things would be general historical satisfaction levels with your finished work – and thus expectations all the way through – time and budget available, and external pressures of all kinds. If, for the sake of argument, we assume optimum conditions of ample time and funding, we might get a better idea of what constitutes the peaks of a project's timeline.

For a lot of us, the very start of a job offers unrivalled scope for pleasure and delight as we plan and sketch away, source our timber and materials in a blissful cloud of theory and imagination. For the older hands this is still very true as our practical skills have generally progressed to keep track with our dreams and even push them further if we're lucky. Once we get started on the actual work, it's more of a personal preference for which tasks we all prefer; the satisfaction of completing the accurate marking out, making the first few cuts or firing up the machines after fitting new blades and checking everything's square. I always enjoy making a test piece if there's a new joint I'm trying out or if I just want to refresh my memory on an old one; the sample produced becomes a temporary talisman for the duration of the project (and generally ends up in the oddments drawer with the rest of them).

It's great seeing a job progress and, if there are many bits of it (like modular parts of a large wall unit), watching them slowly fill the workshop as each stage is completed

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

mark



Another job begins, and unloading the timber scores fairly high on the pleasure index (unless it's raining)

and the next begun. It's when the end approaches that I can sometimes start to feel a bit strange. On the one hand the job is nearly done, customer satisfaction and payment are just around the corner, but – and especially with the smaller and special jobs that can have so much of the maker's soul invested in them – the thought of saying goodbye to something that you're more than happy with is often too much to bear. I often drag out the last few days – taking photos and frankly just fiddling about with the job – purely because I don't want to say goodbye to what I've made. Fortunately the realities of earning a living and getting paid generally help to mask the pain but, strange as it may seem, finishing a fabulous piece of work is not always the favourite moment for this maker.

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ON TEST

80 Triton five-piece chisel set

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84 iVAC 13A Switch Box

COMPETITION

50 Triton chisel sets

Win 1 of 5 Triton five-piece chisel sets. Good luck!



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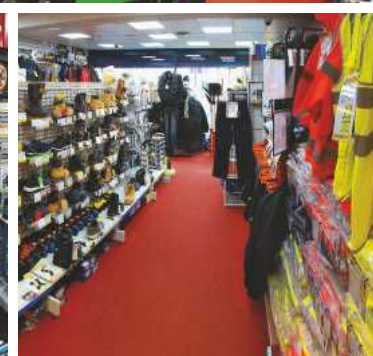
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ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A subject which frequently comes up for discussion in my workshop is starting out in woodwork and what sort of kit and tools are the best to get first. For the average home woodworker, a space in which to work is probably highest up on any list of requirements, and this is something which can't be readily obtained on a Saturday morning in the high street. Having experienced 'awkward' conditions myself over the years, I would have to suggest that anywhere with a door (but without a carpet) would probably do, and things like good light and sound insulation are generally considered to be items of considerable benefit.

For the casual woodworker, a permanent workspace isn't always attainable, so temporary measures have to be taken. While it's not too difficult to get the tools out of their boxes (and neatly replace them afterwards!), an interim bench-type working surface can be a bit trickier to conjure up. Although there are one or two knock-down benches around, they're generally a bit on the large side (and let's face it, space is

often at a premium for most of us these days), so the answer is likely to be a Workmate or similar.

I'm a big fan of this hugely versatile piece of kit and have only just had to retire my original from the '70s after nearly 40 years' hard labour. Invented by Ron Hickman (designer of the Lotus Elan among other cars) in the 1960s, the Black & Decker Workmate – famously rejected by Stanley tools – can be found in a huge number of homes both in the UK and around the world. I'd recommend it to anyone who wants to start woodworking at home, and if you can find an early one with the cast aluminium frame and steel leg clips, then that's the one to go for.

I'd be interested in hearing what sort of kit other readers would recommend for newcomers to our craft. Feel free to write to me at the usual address – editor.ww@mytimemedia.com – and I'll compile a starter list for a possible future article.

Mark

MARINA MAKEOVER BY OSMO

With summer on its way, UV-Protection-Oil 420 from Osmo UK has been applied to a café in Cheshire to rejuvenate the exterior cladding ahead of the busy season and enhance the wood's natural character.

Yorkshire-based professional painter and decorator, Rob Greenwood, was contracted to revive the exterior cladding on The Boathouse Café in Tattenhall Marina. The wood cladding had been weathered by the UV rays, destroying the wood's lignin. It required an upgrade – one which would improve the aesthetics of the building, but also protect the wood going forwards.

Based approximately 100 miles away from this project, Rob needed a finish that he could rely on. Having worked with Osmo UK products in the past, he recognised that the UV-Protection-Oil 420

finish would be the best option for this job, as it would protect, maintain, and restore the wood.

Rob used a 50mm flat brush to apply two coats of the product to the cladding, using around 10 litres in total. The oil has provided a clear, satin finish that does not crack, flake, peel or blister. It will maintain the wood's natural colour and slow the greying process by 12 times in comparison to untreated wood. It contains biocides to protect against algae, mildew and fungal attack. "We were delighted to be able to complete this project in just seven days" says Rob, "the finish transformed the wood almost instantly, giving it a stunning colour and bringing out the grain." To find out more, see www.osmouk.com.



DIARY – JUNE

5–6* Bowls & platters

12* Pepper mills

14–15 Wood machining

15* Fine-tuning hand tools

19 Scrollsaws

26* Pen making

28–29* Advanced turned boxes

* Course held in Sittingbourne, Kent

Axminster Tools & Machinery

Unit 10 Weycroft Avenue

Axminster, Devon EX13 5PH

Tel: 08009 751 905

Web: www.axminster.co.uk

9 Bark basketry

10 Carve a wooden bowl

Weald & Downland Living Museum

Singleton, Chichester, West Sussex

PO18 0EU

Tel: 01243 811 363

Web: www.wealddown.co.uk

16 Green woodworking experience

16 & 18 Kuksa carving

17 Father's day Greenwood experience

29 Scything

30 Spoon carving

Greenwood Days

Ferrers Centre for Arts & Crafts

Staunton Harold, Leicestershire LE65 1RU

Tel: 01332 864 529

Web: www.greenwooddays.co.uk

4–7 Marquetry – a decorated mirror

15–18 An introduction to picture framing

23 Woodcarving – a taster day

West Dean College

West Dean, near Chichester

West Sussex PO18 0QZ

Tel: 01243 811 301

Web: www.westdean.org.uk

1–4 Beginners' four-day course

8–10 Basic jointing weekend

Chris Tribe, The Cornmill, Railway Road

Ilkley, West Yorkshire LS29 8HT

Tel: 01943 602 836

Web: www.christribefurniturecourses.com

30–1 Wood machining

John Lloyd Fine Furniture

Bankside Farm, Ditchling Common

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Black Isle Woodturning (Scotland)
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Brodies Timber (Perthshire)
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EO Burton, Thorndon Sawmills (Essex)
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Web: www.eoburton.com

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Web: www.ockenden-timber.co.uk

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Oxford Wood Recycling (Oxfordshire)
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Web: www.owr.org.uk

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Web: www.scadding-son-ltd.co.uk

Scawton Sawmill (North Yorkshire)
Tel: 01845 597 733
Web: www.scawtonsawmill.co.uk

S.L. Hardwoods (Croydon)
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Web: www.slhardwoods.co.uk

St. Andrews Timber (Scotland)
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Web: www.standrewstimbersupplies.co.uk

Surrey Timbers Ltd (Guildford)
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Web: www.surreytimbers.co.uk

Sykes Timber (Warwickshire)
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Web: www.sykestimber.co.uk

The Timber Mill (Cornwall)
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Web: www.thetimbermill.com

The Wood Recycling Store (East Sussex)
Tel: 01273 570 500
Web: www.woodrecycling.org.uk

Thorogood Timber Ltd (Essex)
Tel: 01206 233 100
Web: www.thorogood.co.uk

Timberman (Carmarthenshire)
Tel: 01267 232 621
Web: www.timberman.co.uk

Tree Station (Lancashire)
Tel: 01612 313 333
Web: www.treestation.co.uk

UK Timber Ltd (Northamptonshire)
Tel: 01536 267 107
Web: www.uk-timber.co.uk

Waterloo Timber Ltd (Lancashire)
Tel: 01200 423 263
Web: No website

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Web: www.wenbans.com

Wentwood Timber Centre (South Wales)
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Web: www.wentwoodtimbercentre.co.uk

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Oak was the timber used when the earliest Royal Navy ships ruled the waves. Official figures show that in 1707 there were just 12,476 oak trees remaining fit for shipbuilding in the New Forest compared with 123,927 a century before.

But now there are sustainable plantations as green oak is fast becoming one of the ecologically sound materials for attractive modern day home construction, whether for new builds or erecting amazing new spaces and extensions.

Helen Flavel had the perfect brief when she approached bespoke oak specialists Living Oak, based in Cobham, Surrey, with the promise of "a building which will stir your emotions from the first time you enter." She wanted a design and build brief for the conversion of her 16th century cottage with a big new extension. Typically dark inside, she wanted lots of glass and green oak for the new environment of the extension, but at the same time enhancing the old cottage.

Stuart McArthur of Living Oak, said: "Roundles Cottage dates back to the 16th century and Helen asked us for a design that would open up the small, dark interior. She liked the fact that our design for the new wing was not a carbon copy of her existing home. Our 'less is more' ethos is a perfect example of how you can add to an existing traditional design and offer a modern, pared back version, complementing the oak frame in the house while creating a modern, spacious feature to this stunning home."

Living Oak designed the oak frame to form the main structure of the new space using 31 tonnes of green oak. Helen knew she wanted that perfect combination and balance with the beautiful oak components and state-of-the-art glass, which she sourced from Living Oak's partners, C7 Architects of Guildford.

What Helen got was a magnificent 240sq.m of additional space to create a new kitchen, dining room, master bedroom with en suite and covered walkway with a double garage and accommodation above it. This was in addition to the 180sq.m of the former cottage, giving the

best of two architectural worlds: the character and feel of the cottage blending smoothly into a modern, bright extension with a light and warm home fit for the 21st century.

"Green oak, by definition, has been felled in the last 18 months and has had no treatment – it is left with a relatively high moisture content when compared to air- or kiln-dried oak, and dries out once installed. This provides the opportunity for thicker and longer frame sections, is stronger and more durable as well as less expensive, is easy to work with, and gives that much loved character. At the same time, our oak is sourced from sustainable forests in France, which were planted in the 1800s and are very well managed with more timber growing than being felled," says Stuart.

And if the Royal Navy's hearts of oak are anything to go by, Helen's green oak masterpiece should be with us for many more centuries to come. To find out more, see www.livingoak.co.uk.



The amazing green oak structure built by Living Oak

COLLEGE STUDENTS EXPERIENCE INSPIRATIONAL EU CULTURAL EXCHANGE

Five WCG students from Leamington College recently flew to Toulouse, France, to learn about specialist French art and craft techniques. The Level 2 Furniture Craft learners spent two weeks undertaking a variety of skills and workshops focusing on marquetry, straw marquetry, woodcarving, gilding and furniture restoration with experts from Lycée des Métiers d'Arts College in Coarrazze – such techniques and training that are not readily available within the UK.

The trip was funded by Erasmus+, a European Union programme for education that offers exciting opportunities to UK students to study, work, volunteer, teach and train abroad.

Jamie Ward, Curriculum Leader for Visual Arts & Performance, said: "This is the first time we have provided our students with this opportunity to learn under specialist French art and craft professionals. We hope to continue such trips in the future and look to invite other college students from within Europe to exchange and enhance their skills and knowledge."

Simone Chester, a student who took part in the visit, said: "I have been positively challenged, elated, technically astounded and had a fantastic learning experience."

WCG provides a range of Furniture Craft courses from entry level to a Diploma in furniture design and making. Over 70% of students are successful in gaining a career within the furniture making industry and progression into a Higher Education course on completion of the qualification. For more information, see www.warwickshire.ac.uk.



CRAFT SUPPLIES LAUNCHES WITH INDUSTRY WEB FIRST

Woodworking retailer Turners Retreat is incorporating Craft Supplies into its name to reflect its growing brand portfolio and follows its recent advancement into the art of pyrography. The move coincides with the launch of an industry ground-breaking website.

The new website promises a fresh approach to online shopping in the woodworking industry with a browsing bar enabling visitors to quickly click through related products. Only seen in some of the large high street fashion retailer sites, this feature makes website navigation similar to browsing the aisle in your favourite store.

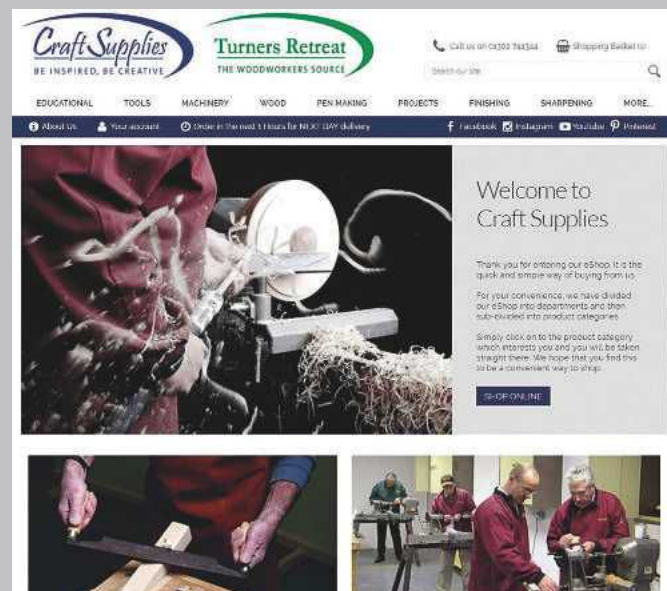
For those who know what they want, an intuitive search facility will quickly select products and direct visitors to where they want to go. Alternatively, a neatly arranged menu option will take you to tool categories and product pages.

The new website will boast more than 3,000 listed products, including over 200 exclusive items. There are new items for pyrography, branding irons and ceramic stones, along with a range of Foredom rotary power tools to celebrate the launch.

A series of unique features will provide thousands of loyal customers with an enhanced user experience. Demonstration films, 'how to' tool guides and an inspirational gallery of finished projects showing what can be achieved with a little dedication are just some of the things visitors to the new website can expect to see.

A product review and comments section will provide an opportunity for shoppers to have their say and an events page will keep users informed of upcoming shows, open days and craft workshops. Sign up online to receive the blog and newsletter and you could win over £1,000 worth of tools. Registered users will be the first to hear about the latest fantastic offers and new product releases.

The Nottinghamshire-based outlet is a favourite for woodturners, woodcarvers and pyrographers across the UK. Excited by the launch, store manager David Green, said: "The coming together of Turners Retreat and Craft Supplies gave new direction to our company. The launch of our ground-breaking website has provided us with the platform to branch out into new areas of the craft world. The browser bar makes navigating quick, simple and easy. It brings a real-life sensation to online shopping normally only found in-store. Our vision is for our customers to make this their website of choice. We want it to be the go-to place for all their woodworking needs and provide the opportunity for them to help create an environment for like-minded woodworkers." To find out more, see www.turners-retreat.co.uk



WOOD AWARDS 2018 – CALL FOR ENTRIES NOW OPEN

The Wood Awards: Excellence in British Architecture and Product Design has now launched its 2018 call for entries. Anyone involved in a UK-based wood project is invited to enter and has until 25 May to submit their applications.

Established in 1971, the Wood Awards recognises, encourages and promotes outstanding design, craftsmanship and installation using wood in projects throughout the UK. The Wood Awards' elite independent judging panel not only judges all submitted entries but also visits the shortlisted projects in person, making this a uniquely rigorous competition.

The Wood Awards shortlist will be announced in July and the winners will be unveiled at a ceremony on 20 November 2018, held at Carpenters' Hall in London. The shortlisted projects will be on display here and during the London Design Festival in September.

Stephen Corbett of Green Oak Carpentry and design critic Corinne Julius are the new Buildings and Furniture & Product judging panel chairpersons. Stephen comments: "Every year the call for entries for the Wood Awards casts its net ever wider and deeper, as the new wave of enthusiasm for working with wood gathers pace. Years ago, timber buildings and furniture were the pre-eminent choice – now it's clear that their time has come around again, presenting enormous opportunities for our foremost architects and designers."

Corinne adds: "Wood is such a beautiful, versatile material. It reveals the history of its use, with a richness of patina. There are so many ways to work with it both for commercial production and to make one-offs. In the last few years there has been a re-appraisal of its qualities with an increasing number of designers responding to its potential, matched by an increased appreciation by consumers."

With permission from the owner, anyone associated with a building or product completed in the last two years can enter. Buildings must be located within the UK while furniture and other products must have either been designed or manufactured in the UK. Fitted furniture must be in the UK. The competition is free to enter and entrants may submit more than one project. There are no restrictions on the size or budget of a project.

The 2018 categories will be confirmed at the shortlisting. Building categories are likely to be 'Commercial & Leisure', 'Education & Public Sector', 'Interiors', 'Private' and 'Small Project'. The Furniture & Product competition will be split into 'Bespoke', 'Production Made' and 'Student Designer', which is open to anyone currently in education or who has left education in the past 12 months. Within the 'Student' category there are two cash prizes (£1,000 for the Winner and £500 for the People's Choice). Other awards, such as 'Structural' and 'Existing Building', can be given at the judges' discretion.

The organisers are delighted to announce that Mears Group will be sponsoring this year's Gold Award. The Mears Group Gold Award is given to the winner of winners, chosen from the winners of all the categories. To find out more, see the website: www.woodawards.com.



Case Furniture's award-winning 'Narin' chair



Eleanor Lakelin's stunning selection of turned vessels



Winner of the 2017 Arnold Laver Gold Award & Interiors Award – Coastal House, Devon

NEW SNAPPY MICRO BIT HOLDERS FROM TREND

The latest addition to the ever-popular Trend Snappy range sees the introduction of two new screwdriver bit holders, available in two lengths: a standard 66mm, and an extra-long 150mm option for applying fixings in deeper recesses or hard-to-reach areas.

The Micro Bit Holders are designed to take standard 25mm hex shank bits and have sleeve style spring-loaded chucks that retain the bits securely until the sleeve is pulled back to release them, thus eliminating any problems of the bits pulling out once the screw or fixing has been driven; a major advantage over standard bit holders.

At only 10.8mm diameter, these new holders are especially suited for gaining access into tighter or narrower spots, and with the quick chuck hex shank they are designed to be used in both drill drivers

and impact drivers and have a torque rating of 50Nm along with 3,900-4,000 Gauss magnets to hold the screws on the bit.

Made from chrome vanadium and stainless steel, the new Trend Snappy Micro Bit Holders are durable, affordable and are set to become an ideal and essential part of your everyday kit. The SNAP/BH/M is priced at £9.54 and the SNAP/BH/M/A at £11.94 (inc VAT). They are available from all Trend Routing Centres and stockists across the UK. To find out more, see www.trendm.co.uk.



VERITAS LAUNCHES NEW MARKING GAUGE

The Veritas micro-adjustable wheel marking gauge draws on over 20 years' of experience in designing and manufacturing high quality and highly functional tools. The stainless steel rod features a built-in adjustment mechanism. After setting the approximate projection, you can fine-tune the position of the cutter within a range of just over 6mm. A fine-pitch internal thread allows slow, careful adjustment for a very precise setting. Locking knobs keep the setting from shifting in use.

The offset placement of the rod through the brass-faced aluminium body ensures a large reference surface and square registration on the stock. It also prevents the gauge rolling off your bench.

The hardened steel wheel cutter scribes perfectly at any point of its circumference, cutting neat marks even on cross-grain. The wheel's single-sided bevel also pulls the gauge face against the stock, helping to maintain accuracy. Its cutting edge is at the extreme end of the rod, allowing you to use the gauge for transferring dimensions such as tenon shoulder and mortise depth. When not in use the cutter retracts into a countersunk hollow in the gauge face for protection.

For more information and current pricing, visit www.brimarc.com.



ADDED FLEXIBILITY FROM BOSCH

At just 140mm in length, the Bosch Professional 18V drill driver with FlexiClick's compact dimensions is suited to operation in tight spaces, and with the addition of flexible adaptors, it reaches even further. Its exceptional application versatility enables drilling in wood, metal and even concrete, as well as classic screwdriving.



The main FlexiClick adaptors are:

- 1. GFA 18-M Professional Drill Chuck Adaptor:** a highly robust attachment, with a solid metal construction, holding drill bits of up to 13mm diameter.
- 2. GFA 18-W Professional Angle Screw Adaptor with HEX socket:** allowing easy and precise screwdriving even in very tight spaces, it effectively drives screws around corners.
- 3. GFA 18-E Professional Offset Angle Screw Adaptor:** enabling precise screwdriving close to edges.
- 4. GFA 18-H Professional Rotary Hammer Adaptor:** with this attachment the drill driver becomes a high-powered SDS-plus rotary hammer with an impact energy of 1J.

Also available are the GFA 18-B Professional Drill Chuck Adaptor, with a plastic construction for lighter tasks, and the GFA 18-WB Professional Angle Screw Adaptor, for round-shank drill bits. These are quickly and easily attached to the drill driver using the 'turn and click' motion already familiar to users of keyless chucks. Simply place the adaptor on the FlexiClick interface, turn it clockwise, and repeated clicking will indicate a secure connection. Uniquely, FlexiClick adaptors can be adjusted without removal from the tool. They offer adjustment through 360°, with 16 different locking positions.

In-built user protection

The risk of kickback-related injury is minimised by Bosch KickBack Control. If this system's sensors detect a sudden blockage, the motor is switched off within a fraction of a second.

Thanks to the latest brushless EC technology, users can expect a long motor lifetime and maximum battery runtime. In addition, Electronic Motor Protection (EMP) uses an integrated temperature sensor management system to safeguard against overloads. Meanwhile, the battery features Electronic Cell Protection ECP, to avoid damage from overloading, overheating and deep discharge.

Another electronic control function, Precision Clutch, prevents overtightening of screws. This saves wear and tear on the work material, the screw, the screwdriver bit, the clutch and the tool.

Bosch connectivity

A Bosch connectivity module, slotted into the tool, establishes Bluetooth wireless communication between drill driver, smartphone and the Bosch Toolbox app. This connection can be used to configure the KickBack Control, Precision Clutch and other settings according to individual needs and preferences. Instructions for adjustment can be given via the phone, even at a distance, and the system will handily remember them for future reference. Other benefits of connectivity include warning of malfunctions, checking of essential indicators, advice on troubleshooting, plus more.

A choice of packages

The Bosch GSR 18 V-60 FCC Professional drill driver with FlexiClick is supplied with all attachments, 2 x 5.0Ah batteries, charger and L-BOXX, and is priced at £609.31; see www.bosch-professional.com.

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MANUFACTURER: Bessey

D&M GUIDE PRICE: From £21.99 (GK15) (inc VAT)

Bessey is introducing a first of its kind in the world with the GearKlamp GK: the clamp that conveniently masters clamping applications in a perfect way – even in the tightest of spaces. For example, the compact BESSEY GearKlamp GK can be skilfully used even in places that were previously difficult or impossible for clamping tools to access.

Clamping in narrow section can cause problems when using classic screw and lever clamps as the handle prevents the clamp from being placed correctly and can damage the workpiece or even cause injury.

The Bessey GearKlamp eliminates these problems, is extremely flexible, and can even be used in the tightest of spatial conditions thanks to the patented mechanism that separates the handle from the spindle and positions it around the rail and crossed V-grooves on the upper section, for securely holding round, pointed and angular components.

The GearKlamp comes in four sizes: GK151 (150mm), GK30 (300mm), GK45 (450mm) and GK60 (600mm), and all have a throat depth of 60mm with a clamping force of up to 2,000N.



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Curious woodies

Robin Gates demonstrates some of the wooden planes that were everyday tools of the trade but are rarely seen in action today

The scrub, jack and smoother are three wooden planes I use often, but others have charmed their way onto my bench for less practical reasons. These planes, once the everyday tools of joiners and cabinetmakers, have become mere curiosities since being replaced by more sophisticated metal planes and machines, and they are surrounded by an air of mystery.

There's an element of nostalgia in using obsolete tools, but there's also a need to understand them. I've seen similar planes behind glass in museums, but that context tells only part of their story. It isn't until a plane is in

the hands with shavings pouring from its throat that it begins to sing, and make itself understood.

There's nothing exotic among this motley crew, no fancy decoration, and no plane costing more than a very ordinary tool off the racks of the DIY store. These are the purposeful tools of yesterday's quiet and conscientious workman, well used and cared for, and in some cases user-made – a sure sign of the craftsman dedicated to their work. As a counterbalance to the impenetrable technology of our black box age, I find these wooden time travellers refreshingly accessible.

Panel raiser

Frame and panel construction was devised to accommodate timber's movements with changes in humidity. When large boards are fastened together and lose moisture, the tensions set up as they shrink causes them to split. Where smaller panels are free to move, with their edges in a grooved structure, these tensions are avoided.

The panel raising plane cuts a bevelled rebate (**photo 2**), which allows the edges to fit inside the grooves of rails and muntins. It also plays an aesthetic role, relieving an otherwise monotonous surface with a variety of levels and angles, reflecting light and casting shadow.

This plane was made in France by Peugeot Frères, and was known to the *ébéniste* (cabinetmaker) as a *guillaume à plate-bande*, in which *guillaume* signifies a rebate plane and *plate-bande* compares the rebate to a neatly dug flower bed.

The plane is made of *cormier* – the hard-wearing timber of the service tree *Sorbus domestica* – and its construction is very different from the typical British woody. The throats for blade and nicker are cut from the side, with side openings subsequently covered by a piece, which also functions as a fixed depth stop (**photo 3**). The fence allows the width of the rebate to be adjusted, much like a moving fillister. The skewed blade slices cleanly across the grain,



1 The left hand keeps the panel raiser's fence up to the edge



2 A flat surface in; a bevelled rebate out



4 Bevelled rebates meeting at a mitre



6 Hollows for thumbs in the boxwood guides



3 Stepped arrangement of fence, sole and depth stop



5 The chamfer plane straddles the arris



7 The end-grain of the guides runs perpendicular to the stock's

with a chisel-edged nicker going before it to sever the surface fibres.

After practising on softwood, I took the plunge with a small board of recycled mahogany and found the going much easier – producing a passable panel in a matter of minutes. Where the bevelled rebates met, a smart mitre appeared, as if by magic (**photo 4**).

Chamfer plane

Like the panel raiser, the chamfer plane creates an angled surface, subtly enhancing the architecture of a piece. There's also a practical advantage, in that chamfering converts a sharp arris into a facet (**photo 5**), which reduces the risk of splintering and makes edges more body-friendly.

This is a user-made tool. Purpose-made chamfering planes were commercially available when this tool was made, but evidently none was quite right for the job. The typical wooden chamfer plane is essentially a squared-up stock with the blade projecting into a 90° channel in the sole.

Alternatively, there's the chamfer shave, resembling a spokeshave but with guides flanking the iron to adjust the width of chamfer. In this plane, the maker has married features of both tools. The wide body echoes the chamfer shave, but the chunky boxwood guides and stock of quartersawn beech lend this plane the authority of a small smoother (**photo 7**). It's five times the weight of a typical wooden spokeshave. The fine mouth is defined by a steel sole and a steel nose plate, while a sleek brass plate completes the housing for the boxwood wedge and hefty tapered iron, which is apparently borrowed from another plane.

As my thumbs nestled into their hollows and pushed (**photo 6**), sending shavings spiralling from the escapement, a clean and constant chamfer paid homage to the skill of this plane's maker. Tools are often impersonal things these days, used to exhaustion then thrown away. Every time I pick up this chamfer plane, I am impressed by the time and effort that went into making it.

Spar plane

The sole and blade of the spar plane are shaped to a shallow concave, yielding a gently convex surface (**photo 8**). Spar planes were made in a range of widths and curvatures, often by hollowing out a wooden smoother. This example was used to shape the spars of small sailing boats, but it could just as easily have served in making tool handles or the rounded uprights for ladders (**photo 9**).

To make a spar, first the corners of the squared-up timber are taken off with a jack plane, making eight faces, and this is repeated to make 16. Then the spar plane takes over, generating shavings by the basket-load as the maker pushes the plane from end to end repeatedly.

This plane has a 75mm radius and is of the Northern European type, with a Viking influence in the 'cow horn' front handle dovetailed to the toe. Pale lines of medullary ray visible in the heel show the stock is of quartersawn beech from a tree of considerable age (**photo 10**).



8 The blade and sole are concave



9 Rounding a solid spar



10 Lines of medullary ray in the heel



11 Sharpening with abrasive paper on a former



12 The bollow's sole is rounded both ways



13 Friction is greatest in front of the blade

It's typical of a wooden plane that the ray runs perpendicular to the sole, both for toughness and dimensional stability. The corners of the plane are rounded but you can still see the maker's scribe lines. Although worn, and with the hammer marks of a lifetime's work showing through a treacle-dark patina, this plane has the feel of a tool that has been treated with respect.

In the absence of a rounded stone, I sharpened the concave blade using fine abrasive wrapped around a wooden former – being careful to draw the blade backwards only, so as not to tear the paper (photo 11).

Bollow

This plane with its sole rounded both ways is a 'bollow' (photo 12), used for shaping the spoon blades of oars. That said, it's essentially the same as a 'stoup', used by coopers to plane the concave inner faces of staves that go to make a barrel. And given the finesse of its construction, with a fine mouth and brass wear plate (photo 14), it could also be a luthier's plane, shaping the contours of a cello or double bass.

Broadly speaking, the cooper's planes I've encountered have been larger and more rugged, while luthier's planes are smaller and more delicate, which is why I picture this plane in the hands of an oar maker. After roughing out, the convex back of the spoon blade would be further rounded with flat-soled planes and spokeshaves, but the work of sculpting the spoon's concavity would be down to the bollow. A coarser tool with a wider mouth would do the donkey work, with this finer plane taking over for the smoothing, before finishing with a scraper. Ultimately, the advantage of the spoon-shaped oar blade, as with other curved structures, is that it achieves strength with lightness. The bollow is typically

a user-made plane, and as such you rarely find two the same. That said, in the 1930s, Stanley launched what was effectively a bollow, albeit with a rather small-scale boatbuilding connection, the No.100½ 'model maker's convex plane'. This was said to be 'just right for planing that part of a model yacht where hull and keel meet'.

As for technique, the bollow bears comparison with a round-soled spokeshave, requiring a deft, scooping action, pushing in and out of the cut.

Dado plane

This is one of the slim, upright planes housed cheek-by-jowl deep in the joiner's tool chest. The dado plane cuts a channel – or dado – across the grain of a board (photo 15), such as might house the end of another board in building, say, a bookcase. This plane cuts a dado 18mm wide;

for a different width you'd need a different plane. Characteristically, this plane has a double-spurred nicker to sever surface fibres on both sides of the blade (photos 16 & 17). The brass thumb screw adjusts a stop, which allows repeat cuts to a consistent depth – up to 12mm in this case. Fully withdrawn, the stop lies flush. As with the majority of wooden planes, the blade is adjusted by eye and feel using a hammer. Tap the blade to extend it, tap above the toe to withdraw it, or whack the heel to release both blade and wedge and start again.

The dado plane doesn't have a fence to keep it running straight, so it's usual to fix a batten across the work for the stock to bear against. The first pass is in reverse, allowing the nicker to do its work. Then the forward planing begins, working progressively backwards from the end of



14 The radiused blade and brass wear plate



15 Cutting a dado across the grain



16 Nicker, depth stop and blade



17 Showing how the double-spurred nicker precedes the blade



18 Side rebate planes work in grooves and dados



19 Left and right planes are mirror images



20 A mouth as narrow as a loophole

the dado until you're taking full-length shavings. Both hands are used, one above the toe applying down force at the beginning of the cut, the other at the heel to propel the plane and ensure the blade remains cutting to the very end.

This plane has had at least four previous owners, and survived them all in fine fettle. In use, it zips through the timber as quietly as a pencil sharpener.

Side rebate plane

The work of the side rebate plane is tuning the width of a dado or groove by taking fine shavings off the walls (**photo 18**). That need arises if the end of a board proves too tight in its housing, for example, or a sliding door jams. These planes are in mirrored pairs (**photo 19**), left and right, so you can plane with the grain whichever side

of the dado or groove requires adjustment. This pair, made in Birmingham by Martin & Shaw, is at least 125-years-old.

They're odd-looking planes, with the stock tapering to a base a mere 1.5mm wide, and unable to stand up by themselves. I say 'base' because, theoretically, the sole, if that refers to the part bearing on the surface being worked, is the side of the tool – where the blade peeps from a mouth as narrow as a loophole in a castle wall (**photo 20**).

The tapering stock results in a small triangular blade that's none too easy to grasp when honing (**photo 21**). Not that you'd want to sharpen these too often, because there isn't much steel behind the edge to replace what's ground away, and finding a replacement to fit would not be easy. It's a plane of few but significant shavings.

A time-served cabinetmaker would have these planes set up and yielding tissue-thin shavings in a trice, but I find it a fiddly operation getting the edge of the blade and mouth in perfect parallel, protruding by the right amount. It's not a blade to be set by hammer taps, but rather using fingertips, with a careful push on the wedge to secure it.

Moving fillister

A moving fillister looks a little mysterious and sounds almost sinister, but it's just a rebate plane with an adjustable fence (**photo 22**). It's used for shaping the likes of rebated corner joints, flush-fitting panels and the meeting edges of double doors.

This mid-19th century plane, made by Gleave in Manchester, is fairly typical in having a few more of the bells and whistles that the simplest stock-blade-and-wedge rebate plane lacks. There's a depth stop, for example, that's raised or lowered by a brass thumb screw, so as to prevent cutting too deep – it's easy to get carried away with this plane when it's cutting nicely. The foot of the depth stop is a little work of art in itself, having a hard-wearing steel face riveted to the softer brass body, with cutaways for the protruding nicker and the edge of the blade (**photo 23**).

The fence is tightened by three machine screws, ensuring it doesn't move during use, which would be disastrous, and they bear on brass wear plates. The corner of the sole, where the friction is concentrated, is fitted with a double-dovetailed boxwood insert.

A good square rebate from this plane depends on careful set-up and remaining focused while using it. Setting the fence at the exact width and parallel to the edge takes a bit of trial and error, and if the plane is allowed to tip it'll make a bevel



21 Small triangular blades are awkward to hone

of what should be a horizontal surface. How do I know this? Ah, well... moving swiftly on, when the shavings are spiralling from the escapement like streamers, the feeling is simply wonderful.

Sash fillister

Displayed high on a gloomy wall in Portsmouth City Museum there's a window sash from the wreck of HMS *Royal George* (photo 26), a 100-gun first-rate ship, which rolled over and sank while taking on supplies at Spithead in 1782, with over 800 drowned. It was looking into that mud-grey frame which stirred my interest in the sash-making process. In the 1700s, they must have used a sash fillister not unlike this one.

A sash is installed with the decorative ovolo moulding facing the interior, and the glazing rebate facing outwards. Since the moulded side is the best or 'face side', it is used for reference when cutting the glazing rebate. This is why the sash fillister's fence is mounted on arms, which

straddle the work (photo 27). The blade, nicker and depth stop are on the opposite side to the moving fillister (photo 28), but otherwise the components of the two planes are similar. As with the moving fillister, the blade protrudes by a whisker from the side of the mouth so as to cut a clean right-angled corner, and is also bevelled to minimise drag. This sash fillister has certainly seen a lot of use, because the blade is worn to a stub. The fence arms are locked by wedges, and you've got to be careful when setting them that you don't knock the fence out of parallel. It also takes a few pushes to get used to working on the opposite side of the timber from where you're standing. That said, when this plane is on song the effort required in setting up only adds to the satisfaction of using it.

Bullnose

This dinky bullnose plane arrived with damaged cheeks, requiring a minor gluing operation before

making shavings. Since then, it's proved useful on a number of occasions, and not only for planing into a tight corner as it was designed to do. Its overall compactness enables the bullnose plane to work where my block planes are simply too long or too wide, and it'll smooth inside a hollow that other planes simply won't touch. Planing an edge is, perhaps, a little outside its comfort zone, but for that odd shaving in an odd situation it has the magic touch.

Many a bullnose of this type has been made from a sawn-off wooden smoother (photo 31), fitted with a brass plate to protect the iron, but I'd say this plane was born a bullnose. It's just 83mm long, has a 25mm blade, and is all boxwood – a dense, hard timber, but not immune to splitting, as those broken cheeks bear witness.

The brass nose is let into the shapely sides canting slightly aft, which helps the plane reach inside the angle of a corner; a scraper finishes



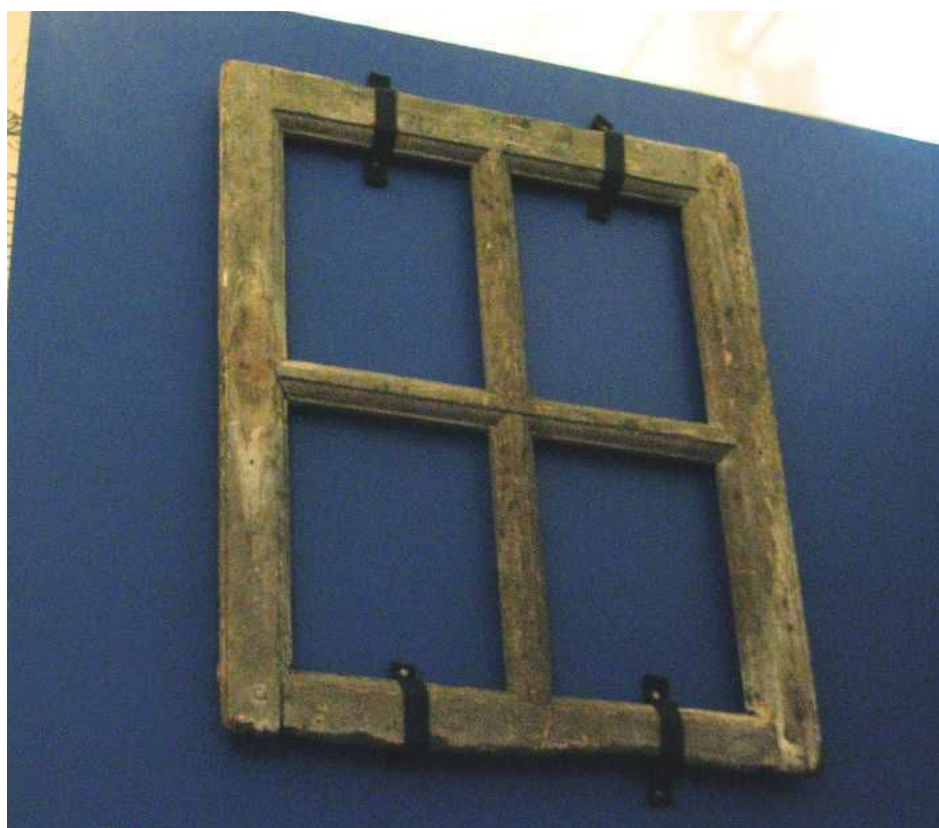
22 Moving fillister cutting a rebate in elm



23 Depth stop, nicker and its boxwood wedge



24 The fence adjusts the rebate's width



26 The sash from HMS *Royal George*



25 The nicker is for cutting across the grain



27 The sash fillister's fence bears on the side opposite the rebate

the small area left untouched. The blade is mounted bevel down, the opposite of more recent bullnose planes, but the steeper bedding angle means the effective cutting angle, about 45°, is not too dissimilar. I find the playful look of this diddy plane irresistible; it's all I can do to stop myself chuffing like a steam locomotive as I push it across the timber.

Chisel plane

Like the bullnose, the chisel plane can sneak into a tight spot, but I find it especially useful for removing the residue of old glue from recycled timber (**photo 33**), for example. Where a scraper would be too harsh, and abrasive indiscriminate, I find a chisel plane to be more sympathetic and precise.

The edge of the blade is level with the sole, so it cuts only what's standing proud of the surface. A chisel laid flat might do the same job, but it would need a cranked handle in order

to work in the middle of a board, and there's always a danger that the corners of the chisel will dig in if you lift the handle. The long reference surface of the sole makes a chisel plane more stable in use.

It's a simple tool, and there's a nice twist in making a wooden one since the original – the Stanley 97 – was all metal. I made this one of jazzy spalted beech from a tree blown over in a gale, some years ago (**photo 34**). When I use the plane I'm always reminded of that old tree and the rolling countryside around it.

The dimensions were dictated by a Record No.4 plane blade lying spare; had I had a smaller blade from a block plane, I'd have made it to suit that. The plane consists of a wedge-shaped stock with its bed sloping at 17°, the blade, a tapering cap, and a couple of 31mm screws holding everything together. At the time, I worried that the sharp leading edge of the bed might prove fragile, but it's still there – touch wood! **WW**



28 A dovetailed boxwood insert has withstood heavy use



29 The nicker precedes the skewed blade



30 A brass plate protects the blade



31 The bullnose resembles a sawn-off smoother



32 A little plane on edge



33 The chisel plane removes old glue from recycled mahogany



34 Spalted beech, a No.4 blade and two screws

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MODEL MOTOR DEPTH OF CUT EXC. VAT INC. VAT

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Formers
Abrasives
Steamer
Stanley knife
Iron block
Making horse
Ball pein hammer
Bradawl
Pinchers
Spacer
'T' square

1 Trug maker Robin Tuppen

The Royal Sussex Trug — a true gardener's delight

Robin Tuppen explains to John Greeves
the intricacies of making a traditional
handcrafted 'Royal Sussex Trug'

The Royal Sussex Trug is quintessentially English, being traditionally handcrafted and universally loved by all those who own one. Prince Charles, Alan Titchmarsh and Meryl Streep all share the same passion for them. The word 'trug' may seem unfamiliar to many of us but when you observe a garden basket used in a period drama, or one carried by a modern guru in a gardening

programme, they come easily to mind. They might be laden with cut flowers, fruits or vegetables, among all its other varied uses, but one thing is certain: they have become a cherished tool and symbol of the English garden.

The word 'trug' is derived from the Anglo Saxon word 'trog' meaning boat-shaped vessel. It has origins in Old Norse and Old German and was originally hewn from solid timber.



2 Smaller garden trug



3 Flower trug



4 Fireside log trug



5 Oblong trug



6 Bowl trug



7 Cucumber trug

For hundreds of years they were indispensable farming tools for bagging grain, gathering potatoes and other essential jobs. Sussex farmers used their own version of the trug to measure grain and liquids and they were always made in several sizes ranging from 0 to 8 in volume (0 being a pint and size 8 holding a bushel). The last reference to these 'trog's' was in an inventory carried out at a farm in Newhaven, East Sussex, in the mid-1600s when "a dozen of trogs" were listed in the milking parlour.

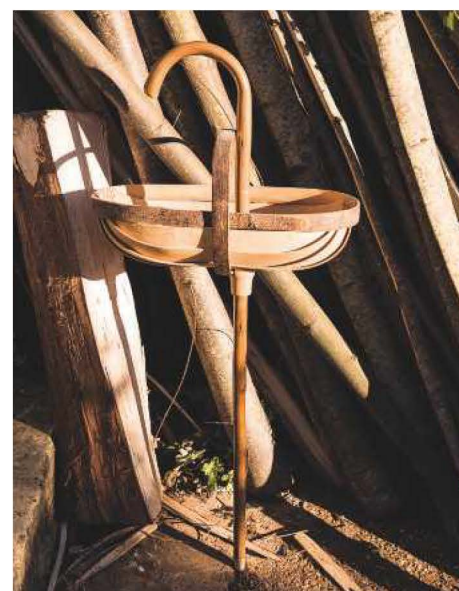
Traditional trugs are made from sustainable sweet chestnut and cricket bat willow, which grows rapidly in the milder climate of Sussex and Kent and helped to spawn the industry in this geographical location. Much of the trug making industry centred around Herstmonceux in East Sussex, as it still does today.

Thomas Smith started the trug industry in the 1820s and made his first trugs in Hormes House, Windmill Hill, Herstmonceux, where he

lived with his wife. The company moved into Herstmonceux village at the end of World War I and occupied the defunct Cavalry Barracks there. Trugs are Smith's invention based on the idea of the old 'trog' and updated to be light in weight and easier to use.

In 1851, Queen Victoria attended the Great Exhibition where she admired his craft and ordered a number of trugs for members of her Royal family. Thomas was awarded not only a Gold Medal and Certificate of Merit but a Royal Warrant later, and so The Royal Sussex Trug was born.

Thomas Smith, The Royal Sussex Trug (established 1829), is now part of the Cuckmere Trug Company. Situated just outside Herstmonceux, it's now owned by Robin Tuppen (**photo 1**) who, with his craftsmen, continues to make traditional trugs in the same way as Thomas did many years ago. Robin has also introduced a new generation of handcrafted ply



8 Walking stick trug



9 The craftsman uses a cleaving axe and wooden maul to split the chestnut

trugs called the 'South Down Range,' but today he's explaining to me how the traditional Royal Sussex Trug is made.

Construction

There are several steps involved in the process of making a traditional trug. Robin and his craftsmen make 35 different shapes and sizes. The company makes eight sizes of garden trug (**photo 2**) as well as flower (**photo 3**), fireside log (**photo 4**), oblong (**photo 5**), bowl (**photo 6**), cucumber (**photo 7**) and walking stick trugs (**photo 8**). To become a Master Trug Maker takes approximately 10 years and the steps outlined here do little justice to the skill and dedication needed by these master craftsmen to construct one.

Cleaving the chestnut

The sweet chestnut coppiced poles used in the process are 10-12 years old and have a maximum diameter of 200mm. These poles are known as 'cooper poles' or 'trug bats' and are cut to the required length. The handle and rim that make the 'frame' of the basket are derived from the sweet chestnut. Larger sized trugs have a rim that requires two pieces of chestnut, while smaller trugs need only one piece. The craftsman uses a cleaving axe and a wooden maul, which is hammered through the top of the pole (**photo 9**). Once the cleaving axe is embedded in the wood, then it can be transferred to the brake for further splitting (**photo 10**). The craftsman follows the natural grain to split it down into two. These halves are then left to dry out for about six weeks before they are cleaved down again to remove most of the heartwood. Robin tells me to imagine



10 In the brake for splitting

a Dairstyle cheese piece to picture this step: "You've got the point that's the heartwood and you have the rounded bit, which is the outer piece with the bark on. Using a smaller cleaving axe, we cleave the heartwood out." And when that's done, it's ready to be hand-shaved.

Shaving the chestnut

The Royal Sussex Trug handle and rim are shaved by a craftsman on a 'shaving horse' (**photo 11**). "You shave the handle and the rim using a drawknife to the required width and thickness (**photo 12**). "You've got the bark down against the tongue of the shaving horse. It's a very skilful job: it's all done by eye and that's why it takes so long," Robin says. There are many different shapes and sizes to master in the total range of trugs made in the workshop. For larger trugs, two pieces are always needed to make the rim and then one piece to make the handle. You have to make sure the wood is fairly straight and that the two pieces which form the rim will match up, otherwise difficulties will arise later.

Although this step is quite complex in its exactitude, the actual process of shaving is quite simple but requires a well trained eye and lots of practise in order to achieve consistent results. At this point, any additional excess heartwood is also removed. The handle too needs further refinement, with a slight curve shaved on the inside. The trug needs to feel comfortable in the hand when picked up. It's easier to shave the rim and handle pieces if they are on the green side, but care needs to be taken before it goes into the steamer, as if it's too wet, the bark will come off.



11 The shaving horse

Steaming the chestnut

When the shaving is complete the pieces are then ready for the steamer. The boiler runs on LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas) and not hardwood as it did in the old days. A colleague of Robin's invented the steamer they use today. It provides free circulating steam, some of which is always condensing and running back into a header tank so it doesn't need topping up with water all the time.

The shaved chestnut pieces (three in all today) are placed inside on a wooden rack (**photo 13**) where it's steamed for about 15 minutes, but this again depends on the dryness of the wood (**photo 14**). Not only does the steam make the hardwood more pliable, it also has the added benefit of cleaning off any residual dirt. One piece is taken out of the steamer at a time and bent around the appropriately sized former (**photo 15**). One former is used to shape the rim (with two pieces bent round for larger trug sizes) and another former is required to shape the handle. You've got about 30 seconds to work each piece of chestnut into shape.

When you are making the handle, you first shape it around the former, then holding it, you bradawl in (**photo 16**). A copper tack is hammered in using a ball pein hammer (**photo 17**). This is done against an iron so the tack bends itself round and clasps the wood. The rim ends are also fixed with copper tacks. Again, they have to be embedded into the wood to avoid people catching their fingers.

Robin then explains: "Once the rim and handle have been fixed with the copper tacks, we use a gate hook on the side of the willow



12 Shaving the handle and rim to the required width and thickness



13 The shaved pieces are put in the steamer for about 15 minutes



14 A length is removed from the steamer



15 The different formers used



16 The chestnut is shaped around the former



17 The ends are fixed with copper tacks

brake to ensure the corners of the handle and rim are squared." The completed rim and handle are gently tweaked to make these fine adjustments (**photo 18**).

The rim is then placed inside the handle so it keeps its shape. A 'T' square, with markings on it for the various sizes of trug, is placed on the rim; this allows the craftsman to determine the correct depth of the trug against the rim. The handle and rim are then nailed together using galvanised nails; this avoids splitting the wood to make the frame (**photo 19**). There's one nail on either side. The handle may move back and fro, but it's only "when you put your first board in that you are able to sort out the handle in respect to the boards," Robin says.

Assembling the trug

The trug is assembled while sitting on a making horse (**photo 20**). Here the willow boards will be fitted (**photo 21**). Sized trugs 4 to 8 have seven boards while smaller trugs like a number 3 will use five boards in their construction. The width of the boards vary for each size of trug. The boards are made from recycled cricket bat willow, obtained from J.S Wright, who supplies nearly 85% of the world's cricket bat clefts. Robin buys the rejected clefts: "Years ago I used to buy it in the round," he says, "but these days they slat it up for us, which means reduced wastage all round." The slats are either supplied in 711 or 914mm lengths. These are then cut for the width of the different sized trugs. The boards are then

hand-shaved on the shaving horse, with the end thirds of each board being shaved more so they will become more pliable and flex up. Once the boards are shaved they need to be bent up, and there are two ways of doing this: you can either put them in a steamer or in hot water. Robin uses boiling water as there is less creasing where the boards are bent. There's a special 'brake' to bend the boards on. Several boards are bent at the same time to produce the sloping ends.

The boards are fitted while they are still wet. The centre board is first fixed to the frame using copper tacks. The bottom of the board must be fixed to the bottom of the handle. The first fix is critical (**photo 22**). If you don't get it right, the other boards won't fit together properly.



18 Gate hook in the background for tweaking the rim and handle shape



19 The chestnut frames made up



20 The making horse



21 In the foreground you can see hand-shaped boards ready for assembly

"You have to get that board central and you also have to make sure the ends bend properly. You do that by adjusting the board backwards and forwards, towards one end or the other," Robin says. "When you've got it even at both ends, you put the copper tack in the bottom to fix the board to the handle."

The two boards either side of the central board (called seconds) are then fitted. Four side boards – two on either side – are then fixed to complete the assembly (**photos 23, 24 & 25**).

Some of the ends will sit out proud and these need to be trimmed with a Stanley knife. To conserve the use of the willow, the two legs are made from a softwood such as pine. They are shaped with an arch underneath and are guided in place using a spacer. Three copper clout nails are used to fix each leg. The central copper nail is hammered in first, the legs are then checked for alignment before the other clout nails are hammered in through the holes made by a bradawl. The trug is then levelled off by being placed on an old flower press base and the

clouts are hammered to ensure the legs are level. The trug undergoes a final quality inspection before being signed by the craftsman, stamped and given a unique reference number before it is dispatched (**photo 26**).

The future

What drives Robin now is his endeavour to prevent the demise of the handcrafted trug industry in 10-15 years' time. To this end he has set up a new non-profitable company called the Sussex Trug Heritage Centre in the hope of safeguarding the future of the craft.

The traditional English trug is under threat due to a decline in the number of traditional trug makers and from the constant import of cheap poorly constructed equivalents. These are often fixed together with small-headed pins and are often marketed online as being 'genuine' rather than being recognised as poor facsimiles of the real thing.

Robin has also self-funded his own apprenticeship scheme over time to help

reverse this decline. Each autumn and spring, he and his fellow craftsmen run an appreciation course over two days for students who wish to make a Royal Sussex Trug at the Weald & Downland Museum in Singleton, West Sussex, and sometimes in his own workshop, when demand permits.

A small group of eight students are supported and guided through the process by Robin and two other craftsmen. Tutors demonstrate the various skills of cleaving, shaving, steaming, bending and assembling the trug. By the end of the two days, most students emerge with a respectable trug to take home. "The important thing," Robin says, "is that they enjoy what they are doing and don't feel bored or overwhelmed. We are here to help and support and don't want them to feel hurried or under pressure." So far, the courses have been very successful, but it's always worth remembering that completing a two-day course doesn't make you a qualified trug maker – only years of practise and endless patience can really achieve this. **WW**



22 Central board fitted and being checked



23 Attaching the other boards



24 Copper tacks secure the boards

FURTHER INFORMATION

Buy your own trug – www.sussextrugs.com/our-retail-shop

Take a trug-making course – www.wealddown.co.uk/courses/sussex-trug-making-workshop-2



25 With feet fitted to complete the assembly

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COUNTRY ARMCHAIR, MADE NEW

Peter Bishop puts his restoration hat on yet again as he sets about transforming a rather worn out traditional, country armchair

I choose what I work on these days, so you might wonder how it is that this chair, which was ready for the bonfire, attracted my attention. The answer is simple: it's a bit of a trade-off, bartering with no money changing hands. I sort this decrepit family 'heirloom' and, in return, I get both my mowers serviced and maintained for a year. Not sure who's coming off best with this one but, hey ho, I agreed to do it anyway.

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

The chair at a glance

So, what did we have here? It was a traditional, country armchair probably made in Buckinghamshire sometime in the early to mid-20th century. All the smaller components were mainly made of beech, with a shaped, elm seat. You find these chairs all over the country but

the bulk of the production was in High Wycombe due to all the beech forests and woodlands that surrounded that region. This chair featured double stretchers in the undercarriage – which may be changed – turned legs and arm spindles, flat, curved 'splats', and a pair of shaped and fitted arms. The whole chair was badly affected by woodworm to some degree or other.

A bit of a mess

Having made the fatal decision to restore this chair, I got it into the workshop for a closer look. Once most of the loose muck was removed, I could see that it was worse than I'd thought. Apparently it was 'granddad's chair' and had been abandoned in a shed for at least 10 years or so. Mr *Anobium punctatum*, the furniture beetle, or woodworm to you and me, had been busy! Not only that, but the legs had been attacked by a human with a saw: they had been shortened and patched on their ends with old bits of carpet. What a mess!



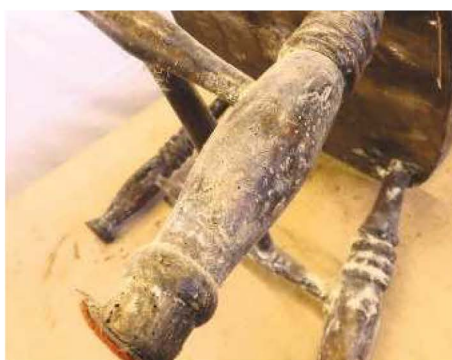
1 This one arm had come right off and the supporting spindles long gone



2 A close-up of the wormy arm shows the extent of the damage



3 Oops! The legs have been cut off and a stretcher is missing



4 Here you can clearly see the extent of the woodworm infestation





5 All the joint sockets required the broken off, wormy stuff to be removed and the loose stuff cleaned out



6 The salvageable parts of the chair required a deluge coat, or two, of woodworm killer to be applied



7 Deluge means deluge! I made sure plenty of the treatment was brushed on

However, in a way, this made life easier. The whole of the undercarriage could be discarded and replaced along with the broken arm. With luck the rest of the remaining components were not too 'friable' – crumbly – and could just about be salvaged. I could then contemplate building the replacements as I wished and only had to match the arm and two spindles as best I could.

Clean up

A bit of rough work removed the rubbish and cleaned out the joint sockets in the retained structure. This was followed by the application of a proprietary woodworm killer treatment. Do please follow the manufacturer's guidance when using this stuff. I applied the first of two 'deluge' coats, followed by a good soaking of

the preservative to all the exposed surfaces and into the joint sockets. Deluge means deluge. Don't just wave the brush at it but make sure everything's had a good soaking at least once or twice. When dry, I went over the remains with a clean rag and removed any surface residue and loose dust.

Making replacement components

Now, because I'm throttling back, my stock of wood has diminished. Did I have any beech the right size for the replacement components? No. Oh well, because it's a 'country' chair, I had some leeway. Beech is traditionally used because it's a good wood to turn, and there was plenty of it. I didn't have any in stock so I picked the next best, which was a lump of 50mm cherry.

All being well it was thick enough to make the one, replacement arm, and there was plenty for the legs, stretchers and spindles. This heavy, wide piece was a bit twisted but I had to get a straight edge cut. Once this was done, I was able to rip to nominal widths and cut some generous lengths. I was now ready to take these rough-sawn pieces and turn them into the replacement components.

I started with the four legs, roughing them down to simple cylinders as large as the stock would allow. I measured each socket on the underside of the seat and fixed a gauge at a slightly larger diameter. Each roughed out leg was then remounted on the lathe and the round tenon turned to fit. I then numbered each socket and its matching leg so that I'd get them right



8 Cherry wood for the replacement pieces. Marking a straight edge on the wane to start



9 It's a bit wonky but the first cut was made



10 The rough-sawn components were now ready to be worked



11 All the turned components were roughed down before the profiles were defined



12 I fitted the legs to the sockets before starting the main turning

every time I fitted them. I then turned the fancy bits in stages on each leg, swapping them over on the lathe as I turned the shapes and beads on each one. These four were then followed with the three stretchers. Yes, I was dumping the fourth one because I didn't have enough stock. All these turned pieces were subsequently cleaned up on the lathe.

In the past I've drilled out the leg socket holes for the stretchers on the lathe, but decided to have a change this time. The seat was inverted, fixed to my bench and each leg was taped firmly in place. Now I used a bit of modern technology: a laser level. I knew my bench was flat and true so with the seat securely fixed and the legs in place, I could give this a go. The stand for the laser gubbins was too tall, so I simply rested the main gubbins



13 My interpretation of what the four legs should look like

on some levelled gash wood. With the beam switched on, I could then mark the first socket centre and swivel it slightly to do the others. Quick, easy and clean – I was pleased with that.

The ends of the stretchers had been turned to the correct diameter for the matching flat bit hole. With this bit mounted in a cordless drill, I used the old-fashioned technique of drilling by eye. Fortunately there was enough room between the legs for the whole drill and bit to fit, so this was not too much of a risk. A similar exercise took place for drilling the two socket holes in the front to back stretchers.

Now for the replacement arm. It was going to be a bit narrower, due to the initial stock size, but I decided that would be fine. I used the old arm as a pattern and roughly cut its shape out



14 Using a laser to mark the stretcher sockets on each leg

on the bandsaw, then it was a case of getting stuck in with a spokeshave to fettle the final shape. The judicious use of various sanders made the final shape appear. The tenon end, into the back, vertical piece, could be fitted in later on. A couple of socket holes were drilled on the underside to match the supports and, once done, the two supports were turned to fit.

Fuming the cherry components

Cherry is pinkish and I wanted to darken it. Ammonia works well with a lot of timbers for this. If the wood is exposed to these fumes a chemical reaction occurs that will deepen the basic colour. I made some gash wood supports for each piece and popped them in a large plastic bag. With care, I then poured some ammonia into a dish and



15 Freehand drilling of the socket holes



16 The old, broken arm was used as a pattern for the new one



17 Rough cutting the shape of the arm on the bandsaw



18 The shape is about there but just needed refining and finishing



19 Job done, apart from the final fitting



20 All the new components were sealed in a bag with some ammonia



21 You can see how this treatment with ammonia darkens the wood. Compare the colour with the gash piece at the bottom of the photo



22 Everything then received a coat of stain



23 The gap filling, foaming adhesive had hardened and was then ready to be cleaned off



24 I got the chair level and used a piece of waste to mark where the legs needed to be trimmed

sealed it inside the bag. All was left for well over a day to darken. Ammonia is not to be treated lightly. It probably won't kill you but will hurt like hell if you get it into any fresh cuts. It'll also make you gasp and make your eyes run if exposed to it, so work out how to handle it before you start. Holding your breath and plenty of fresh air helps. Always test a small sample first – in a jam jar, for instance. This way you'll be able to work out how long to leave your wood exposed and what, if any, the reaction will be. Take care and do check online as to how to use ammonia safely.

Staining & sealing

All the new components had been fumed and next I applied some stain – Georgian medium oak – to finish it off. I gave the old stuff a coat as well. My workshop is based on a farm with no heating, apart from a gas stove I fire up when I'm there. It's much too cold in the winter for the glue to cure properly so I took the chair home with all the bits and pieces I needed to get it together. I used a polyurethane, expanding, gap-filling adhesive, which is great for this type of job. Once cured, it went back to the workshop and all the excess was cleaned off and some of the staining touched up. The legs were also trimmed to length so that it didn't rock. The seat should be set at a height of between 460-480mm, in order to be comfortable.

Back home again I then sealed the wholly assembled chair, all over, with one of Osmo's walnut coloured natural oil finishes. Once this had dried, more was applied. It's a very thin coating as I wipe it off with a rag. A light going over with fine wire wool followed and then some wax. All things considered, I was pretty pleased with the end result – let's hope my mower man is as well! **WW**



25 The completed chair, once restored

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A HOME FOR KEYS

This cabinet by Phil Davy will give you somewhere to house an ever-increasing hoard of keys

The more security-conscious we become, the more locks there seem to be to cope with, whether on doors, windows, padlocks, bicycles, garden tools or whatever. I've lost count of the number of keys I have, especially when some manufacturers provide three keys to each lock... With several bunches stuffed in the drawer, I decided it was about time to build a simple key storage cabinet. As I had plenty of oak offcuts from various projects, this seemed the obvious timber choice. I hadn't cut any dovetails for a while, so this felt like the perfect opportunity for practising a few hand tool techniques.

You could make a simpler version from softwood or even MDF, using lap joints or biscuits for speed. If there are children around the house you could always add a lock to the cabinet door, though you'd then need somewhere safe to keep that key as well! Where will it end! You could argue that such a cabinet would be aiding a potential intruder, so probably best not to label keys hanging inside...

There are several ways to make dovetails, though the principle is the same each time. Most woodworkers cut the tails first, though some advocate cutting pins first. If you're new to this very traditional joint, try cutting dovetails in PAR softwood first to get some practice. Oak is not the most forgiving timber and it's far easier to pare back pine with a chisel to get pins and tails to fit. On hardwoods use a slope of about 1:8 when setting out the tails, either using a fixed dovetail template or adjusting a sliding bevel. The back panel is screwed into a rebate, though

you could rout a groove around the rear edges so that it slides into place. It's easier to rout the rear rebate before you glue up the carcass, though I routed mine after assembly. This is more tricky, as the router has to balance on a narrow edge. Cramp a batten in place to provide extra width for the tool.

Making the door

Stub mortise & tenons are perfect for a cabinet door, though they're quite fiddly to make at this size. Originally I'd planned to feature a fielded panel, but as the cabinet is quite small and I still had some thin oak left, I decided on a simple panel. This is 6mm thick and sits in a groove routed around the inner edges of the framed door. In frame and panel construction always try to make sure the groove is the same width as the mortises (in this case 6mm) to match the chisel. This makes life so much easier. Make the panel about 2mm less than the overall height and width between the grooves with the frame assembled. It should be a dry fit, with no glue to allow for some timber movement.

Architectural hardware

This is the sort of project where the choice of hardware can make all the difference. You could choose brass fittings, with neat butt hinges and matching door knob. I decided not to use standard cup hooks, which look rather bland. Instead I went for a more traditional look, with black iron hooks.



I decided to go for a traditional look with black iron hooks

To continue the theme on the outside I chose H hinges and door knob. Finished with beeswax, they certainly create a rustic feel contrasting with the oak. All fittings were supplied by From The Anvil (www.fromtheanvil.co.uk), which produces some lovely hardware, manufactured in Wales.

If using brass butt hinges rather than H hinges, I would reduce cabinet components to a thickness of around 12mm – more for aesthetics than anything else. The flaps on my H hinges were a tad too wide to do this. In hindsight I'd probably make the cabinet shallower, though you need to check the hook projection first if you do this. As the hinges were quite stiff, I didn't bother with a door catch, though if these loosen up in time I'll probably fit a ball catch or perhaps think about using concealed magnets.

I finished the cabinet with a couple of coats of Chestnut Finishing Oil, followed by Wood Wax (mellow brown), from the same company, all applied with a cloth. **WW**

TOOLS YOU'LL NEED

Steel rule
Square
Dovetail template or sliding bevel
Marking knife
Bradawl
Mortise and marking gauges
Bench and block planes
Chisels
Mallet
Tenon or dovetail saw
Coping saw
Hacksaw
Circular saw
Drill and bits
Router and bits
Sander

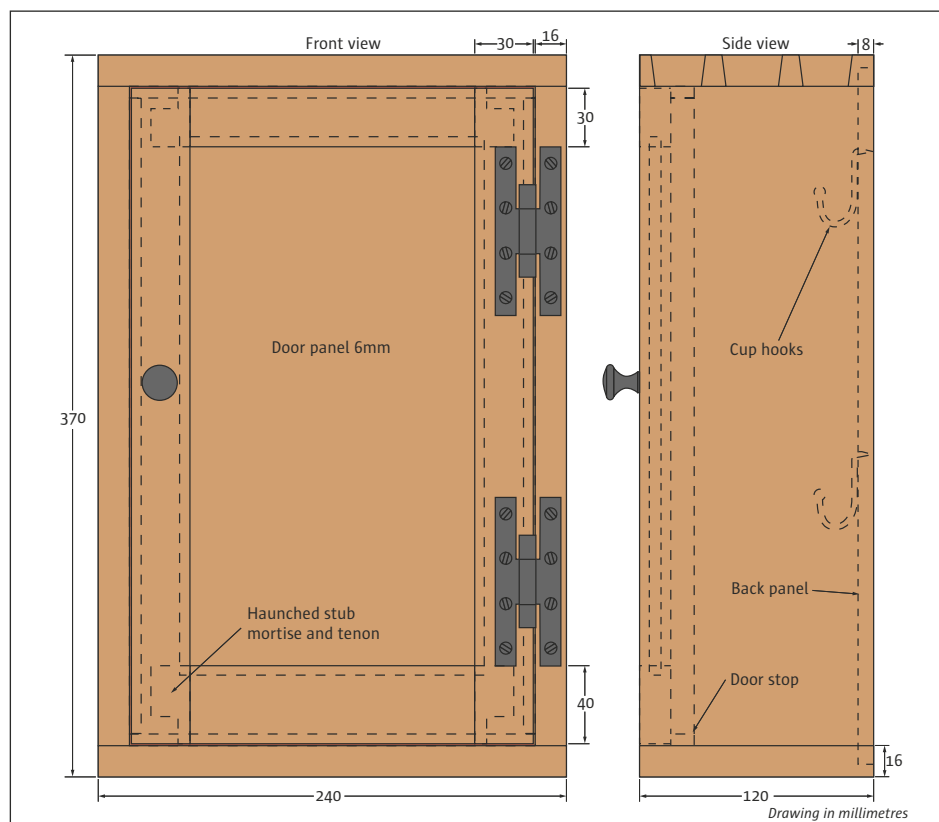


Fig.1 Key cabinet



If using butt hinges instead of H hinges you should reduce the width of the stock used



1 To estimate the overall size of the cabinet, lay out bunches of keys, allowing for hooks and adequate hand space



2 If necessary, reduce your timber to a thickness of 16mm or less. Check hinge dimensions first, though



3 Plane an edge, then saw the boards down to width for the cabinet. Allow for rear panel and the inset door



4 Mark out the sides, top and bottom, working around any large knots unless you want these to be a feature



5 Cut the sides, top and bottom to length, then cramp pairs together and plane them to finished width



6 Plane the ends of the components square and set out the dovetails. Pencil in to avoid confusion when sawing



7 Set out a sliding bevel to a slope of 1:8 or use a dovetail template to mark out the tails accurately



8 With the point of a marking knife, scribe shoulder lines across each of the ends. Alternatively, use a cutting edge



9 Cramp the sides together and saw each tail in turn, cutting carefully on the waste side of the line



10 Remove most of the waste between the tails with a coping saw, keeping the blade completely level



11 Saw the outer shoulders neatly with a dovetail saw, keeping the tool square



12 Cramp a square block along the shoulder line as a vertical support for the chisel. Trim back to the shoulders



13 Clean up the tails with a chisel, then lay the tail piece on the corresponding timber. Carefully mark the pin positions



14 Continue to mark the pin lines around the ends using a square. Cut these neatly, keeping the saw vertical during this process



15 Instead of a coping saw to remove waste from the sockets you can use a chisel, cutting vertically first



16 Lightly tap each corner joint together (about 2mm) and check where tails or pins need trimming back



17 When each joint fits snugly, assemble with PVA glue and sash clamps. Measure the diagonals to check for square



18 Tails and pins should be slightly proud, so remove with a fine-toothed saw. Use card to prevent the blade scratching the oak



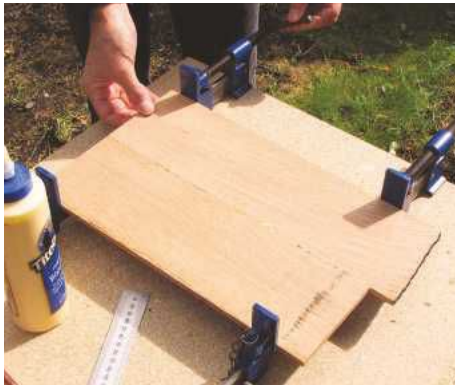
19 Carefully trim the joints flush with a finely-set block plane, working at an angle across the ends



20 Next, true up the front and rear edges of the box, checking this does not rock when placed on a flat surface



21 Rout a rebate around the rear edges for the back. You'll find this is easier to do before you start to glue up the cabinet...



22 The back panel is made from two pieces of 8mm thick oak. Plane meeting edges and glue together



23 Plane the panel's long edges parallel and check for width. Saw to length and trim with a block plane if necessary



24 Check the back fits into the rebate. It should not be too tight, to allow for possible wood movement



25 The back panel is held in place with No.4 brass countersunk screws. You can then mark out and drill clearance holes



26 Fill knots and splits with stopper such as Mohawk (Behlen) epoxy putty. Sand interior surfaces before fitting the rear panel



27 Set out the components for the door frame. Stiles and top rail are 300mm wide, with the bottom rail wider at 40mm



28 Adjust the mortise gauge pins to the chisel you'll be using. Mortises should be central on stile thickness



29 Mark out mortises on the stiles and tenons on the rails, always working from the face side of the timber



30 Rout mortises to depth and proceed to square up the ends with a chisel. Use masking tape to indicate overall depth



31 With a 6mm straight cutter, rout a groove along the inner edges of rails and stiles. Stop this short of the ends on both rails



32 Haunched stub tenons are used for the frame. Saw tenon cheeks first, followed by the haunch



33 Carefully saw the tenon shoulders and tidy up the cheeks by paring with a wide chisel held horizontally



34 Check each corner joint fits together snugly. The haunch should fit neatly into the routed groove



35 Sand the panel and apply oil to both sides before assembling the door. Wipe off the excess oil after a few minutes



36 Make sure the panel is not too tight in the groove when cramped. When gluing up, try to avoid gluing the panel



37 Saw the protruding horns off the stiles, then trim the end-grain carefully with a block plane



38 The door stop is simply 12mm wide strips of oak glued around the inside. Fit these with the door in place



39 Sand the cabinet with 180 grit abrasive, dampen and sand again. Finish with two coats of oil, denibbing each time



40 Hinges are easy to fit as they're simply surface mounted. Mark the screw centres with a bradawl and drill



41 Position the door knob slightly above the middle of the cabinet. Drill for the bolt and cut this to length if necessary

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CHASING THREADS

Colin Simpson gives a brief introduction to the topic of thread chasing and explains that like everything in woodturning, it requires practice, but the results are incredibly satisfying

There are many thread cutting jigs on the market nowadays and all of them work well, but they are quite expensive. Unless you are planning to cut hundreds of screw threads, for most hobby turners, it could be difficult to justify buying one. The same can be said of computer controlled lathes, which are also outside the scope of most hobby woodturners.

There is, happily, another way, which is hand cutting, or chasing threads, as it's called. Once you are proficient at it, this method can be strangely satisfying. It will, however, require practice in order for you to become good at it.

Thread chasing in action

To cut a matching pair of screw threads – internal and external – you will need a matching set of thread chasers (**photo 1**). Many turners who chase threads for a living also use an armrest or tool support – see far right of **photo 1**. The armrest is, in effect, an extension of the toolrest and means that you don't need to move the toolrest when cutting the internal thread (**photo 2**). By all means use an armrest, but personally I don't. For the few threads I need to chase, I can put up with moving my toolrest. The thread chasers come

in different sizes from three threads per inch (tpi) up to a very fine 42tpi. If you are new to thread chasing, I would recommend you practice using chasers with 20tpi. Cutting threads coarser than this becomes increasingly difficult.

You'll find that a little preparation on both the chasers and the toolrest will reap dividends. Make sure the top of your toolrest is flat and without major indentations. Draw file it if necessary and then apply a little candle wax to help the tool slide along it smoothly. Remove any sharp corners on the shaft of the chaser and, again, apply a little candle wax. I sharpen my chasers by rubbing a diamond file or card across the top surface (**photo 3**).

I was taught to cut screw threads with the lathe running at around 400–450rpm. This made sense because, for many lathes that do not have variable-speed controllers, this was the speed of the slowest pulley. Cutting threads at this speed clearly works, but if you are new to it, and if you can, slow the lathe down to around 250–300rpm.

I recommend that you practice cutting threads on offcuts of any close-grained hardwood before attempting to do one on a project. I also suggest that you practice making the external – known

as the male – thread first. This isn't because it's easier to do, but simply because it's a little easier to see what you're doing. To practice, use pieces of wood from about 10mm diameter up to about 50mm. When I practice I start with a 50mm piece, chase the thread and then turn it off. Then I repeat this process until the diameter of the wood gets too small.

Start by cutting your blank to a cylinder and put a small 45° chamfer on the end. Chasers are used in the same way as scrapers – with the handle held slightly higher than the cutting edge. Raise the toolrest to just above centre height and place the external thread chaser on the toolrest. Start making small anticlockwise circles with the chaser (**photo 4**). When you are happy that the small circular movement you are making is smooth and rhythmical, make a cut on the chamfered part of the wood with this circular movement (**photo 5**). Aim to use the third or fourth tooth of the chaser for this first cut. Continue with the circular movements and make a second cut, again using the third or fourth tooth. The teeth of the chaser should automatically slip into the groove in the wood made by the previous cut. As part of the circular movement of the chaser, try to use all



1 You will need a matching pair of chasers to cut screw threads



2 Using an armrest means you don't need to move the toolrest



3 Sharpen the chasers by rubbing a diamond file across the top surface



5 Make the first cut on the chamfered part of the workpiece



6 As the thread gets deeper, swing the tool round to 90°



7 Allow the chaser to follow the spiral to complete the thread

the teeth to the right of the third or fourth tooth, in effect elongating the circular movement. Continue this circular movement and make a third cut. As the thread in the wood gets deeper, swing the chaser's handle round until it is 90° to the wood and then you can use the first, or lead, tooth of the cutter (**photo 6**). The biggest mistake you can make at this stage is to try to control the chaser. Unlike other woodturning tools where you control where the tool goes, you must let the chaser follow the spiral it is cutting. With the small anticlockwise circular movements, just let the tool slip into the previously cut spiral and it will move along the thread by itself.

With practice you should end up with a screw thread like that shown in **photo 7**. Here I have tapered the thread to nothing. This isn't ideal and male threads should really be parallel. They are also usually cut on a tenon that will have a shoulder on it so when you have practised cutting a male thread on a cylinder, it is a good idea to practice cutting on a tenon (**photo 8**). Note the relief groove cut just to the left of the shoulder. This allows the chaser to complete the screw thread without hitting the shoulder and damaging the thread (**photo 9**).

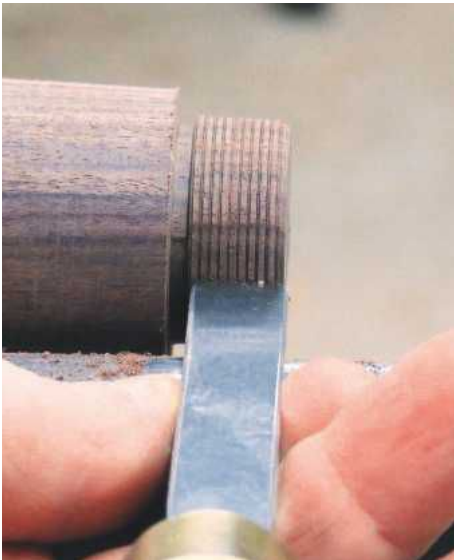


4 Practice making small circular movements on the toolrest



8 Male threads are normally cut on a tenon. Note the relief groove...





9 ... which allows the chaser to cut the thread without hitting the shoulder

Internal threads

To cut the internal – or female – thread, you first need a hole. If it is a blind hole – for example, the inside of a lidded box – then you will need to cut a relief groove at the bottom of the hole so that the chaser can complete the thread before it comes into contact with the bottom. Special relief cutting tools can be purchased from all the major turning tool manufacturers. **Photo 10** shows the tool in use. The sides of the hole where the thread is to be cut should be parallel and again, it is easier to cut a small chamfer at the start of the thread. Use the internal chaser, and again practice making little circular movements on the toolrest before entering the wood. This time the circular movements must be in a clockwise direction (**photo 11**). Start the thread on the chamfer using the middle teeth of the chaser and, as the thread progresses, swing the handle of the tool away from you until the teeth are cutting down the side wall (**photo 12**). Take care

not to hit the bottom wall of the hole with the chaser as this will damage the thread you've created. Keep up the gentle clockwise circular movements with the chaser until you have cut the thread (**photo 13**).

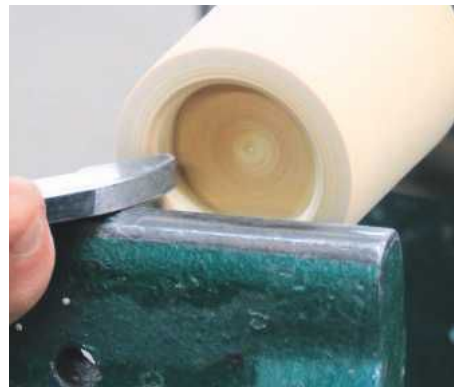
Putting it all together

When you are reasonably proficient at cutting both external and internal threads, you need to marry the two together. There is no hard and fast rule as to which thread you cut first, but my preference – and the way I was taught – is to cut the internal thread first and to make the external one fit it.

I suggest you practise on offcuts before trying it on your latest project, but for this article, I am going to make a small box with a threaded lid. The male thread will be on the box lid and the female thread on the base. The shape of the base means that I do not need to cut a relief groove for the female thread because the box's cavity



10 The internal relief tool in action



11 As with the external thread, start the chaser on a small chamfer...



12 ... then swing the handle to cut down the side wall of the recess



13 The internal thread should look something like this



14 Roughly shape the box then part the lid from the base



15 Cut the female thread after polishing the inside of the box



16 Measure the internal diameter of the threads...



17 ... then cut the tenon slightly larger than the internal diameter before chasing the male thread



18 Initially, the threads were a little too tight

is a larger diameter than the thread. The next step is to roughly shape your box, cut a chucking spigot on either end, cut the tenon to receive the male thread on the lid, then part the lid from the base (**photo 14**). At this stage you can now hollow the base and sand and polish the inside. If you sand after you have cut the screw thread, there is a risk you will damage the threads. Ensure the opening of the base – the area to be threaded – is parallel, then cut the small chamfer and chase the female thread as previously described (**photo 15**). Polish the threads with paste wax. Use Vernier callipers to measure the diameter of the screw threads (**photo 16**).

Mount the lid in the chuck, transfer the diameter of the female threads to the tenon on the lid and reduce the tenon to just larger than this diameter. Cut a chamfer on the end of the tenon and the relief groove at the shoulder of the tenon and chase the male thread as previously described (**photo 17**).



19 Take a small shaving off the peaks of the threads and re-chase



22 Use the base as a chuck to finish the lid of the box...



23... and cut a male thread on scrap wood to screw the base onto to complete the bottom

Check whether the base screws onto the lid (**photo 18**). If you cut the tenon a little larger than the female threads, the base should be a little tight. Use a skew or parting tool to take a fine shaving off the tops of the male threads (**photo 19**), then re-cut the thread with the chaser. It is much better to shave off the threads with a parting tool than to continue to chase the thread to try to make it a smaller diameter. If you try to do this with the chaser, you will ruin the thread.

It is highly likely that when the two threads screw together nicely, the grain on the base and lid will not line up. If this is the case, take a very fine shaving off the shoulder of the tenon with a skew or point tool (**photo 20**). However, I prefer to take the shaving off the base of the box (**photo 21**). Repeat this process until the grain lines up properly. You can then use the base of the box as a screw chuck to finish the lid (**photo 22**). Next, part the base from the scrap wood and chase a thread on this scrap to screw the base



20 To align the grain take a small shaving off this shoulder or...

onto. In this way you can finish off the bottom of the base (**photo 23**).

So, there we have it: a brief introduction to thread chasing. Like everything else, you will need to practice a lot before you become proficient at it. Incidentally, if you want to cut left-handed threads, make the little circles for the external thread in a clockwise direction and for the internal thread, anticlockwise. **WW**

TOP TIP

It is possible to use softer woods but you may need to flood it – or at least the bit you are going to chase – with wood hardener or CA adhesive. You may need to do this several times as you progress with the thread. If you do this, it is a good idea to rub the teeth of the chaser with candle wax; this will prevent them from clogging up



21 ... I prefer to remove a shaving from here



24 The completed box

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Alexandra Michelsen with her Tormek

Alexandra's story

Last year, Alexandra graduated from the advanced course in furniture and cabinetmaking at Capellagården's School of Craft and Design. She impressed the jury with her 'Skilla' wall cabinet, a modern piece of furniture with a retro design. The cabinet was designed to store note pads, pens, stamps and other creative materials. Inspired by the phone book shelves of the '50s, she began to sketch a functional wall cabinet with a retro aesthetic. The dimensions of the cabinet were carefully planned to accommodate both her creative materials and personal belongings.

"The middle section is made to fit my A3 sketch pads," says Alexandra, "and the upper part is high enough to store my pencil case so it is standing. The two boxes are for personal items such as my wallet, keys and mobile phone. I also included coin storage at the bottom of the cabinet because, for some reason, I always have change scattered everywhere."

Alexandra has greatly benefitted from her Tormek sharpening system, both during her studies at Capellagården and now in her cabinetmaking workshop. "At Capellagården, I really learnt how to sharpen using this system and realised how amazing it is, especially given how quickly and easily a sharp and long-lasting edge can be achieved. In my cabinetmaking, it's so much more fun for me to work with sharp tools."

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Alexandra's 'Skilla' wall cabinet



Alexandra unpacking her new Tormek T-8 sharpening system



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Scribe to the line

A reminder on how to make a good joint between mouldings in an internal corner

If anyone thinks about it at all, and pressed for an opinion, the average home-dweller of a non-practical disposition will probably imagine those internal corners where dado rail or skirting meet will contain mitres or something similar. Let's face it, once a mitre has been seen and noted by the human eye, it's only natural to think that they'll be used in all manner of situations around the home, decorative trim included. When we first encounter a top quality scribed joint, it may come as something of a revelation. The thought that here is a clear example of some genius thinking – maybe someone should have won an award – is a natural reaction to the sight.

Tricky little joints

Anyone who has fitted a room out with new skirting will know the joy of pulling off a number of these tricky little joints, especially when walls are out of true (almost always the case) or the floor is undulating badly. Although straightforward in many ways, a good scribed joint will require full concentration to look professional – no filler – especially if it's in unpainted hardwood, and each one should always be offered up for scribing to check that any vertical parts of the joint are indeed just that. Having learned much of my trade 'the hard way', i.e. trial and (sometimes costly) error, it was an exciting moment when I discovered that, by cutting a mitre from the front face, I could instantly see the exact profile of the moulding and proceed to cut it out with ease – and a nifty coping saw.

Spreading the scribing word

This instructional piece from *The Woodworker* of June 1931 does a good job of spreading the scribing word, and I hope that it remains of interest and help today. It still amuses me to observe other peoples' interior work; most of it is OK, but sometimes the horror-show on view is only an opportunity for a good laugh as opposed to a chance for enlightenment. So, let's do all we can to maintain – and raise – the standards, for the benefit of all.

Mark

PRACTICAL HINTS ON SCRIBING WHAT IT IS AND HOW TO DO IT

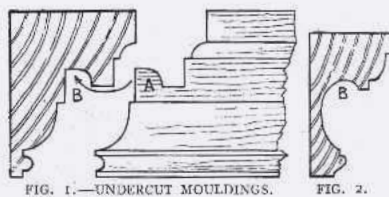


FIG. 1.—UNDERCUT MOULDINGS.

FIG. 2.

THE word "scribing," when used by the carpenter, means to mark by a rule or by the compasses so that when the cut is made to the pre-determined line one piece of wood will fit the other. The term is used somewhat loosely and "scribing to a fit" may be applied to other media than wood. The joiner scribes wood mouldings such as sash bars and skirting boards and the finished joint has a similar appearance to a mitred joint.

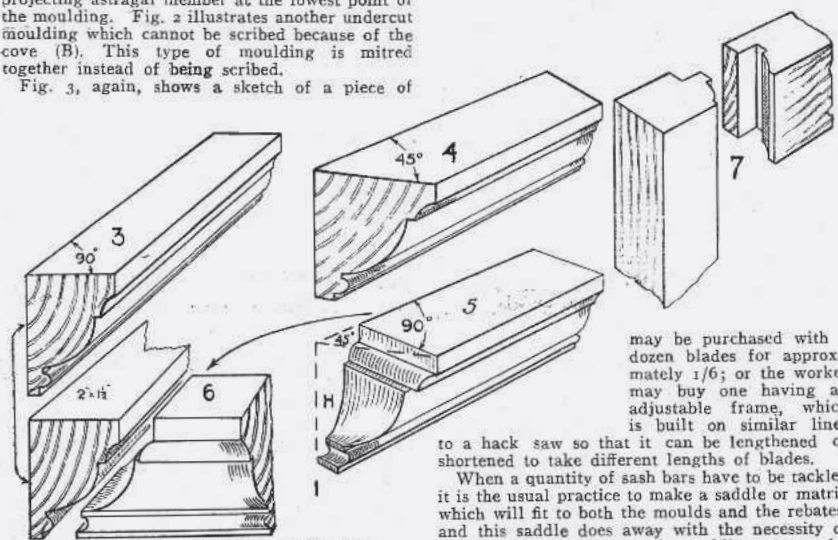
In the case of wide and thick mouldings the scribing method has some advantage over the mitred joint, because wood does not to any appreciable extent shrink in the direction of its length. Mouldings which are composed of undercut members, such as that given at Fig. 1, cannot successfully be scribed together. It is impossible to insert the projecting member (A) into the portion (B) which should receive it because of the projecting astragal member at the lowest point of the moulding. Fig. 2 illustrates another undercut moulding which cannot be scribed because of the cove (B). This type of moulding is mitred together instead of being scribed.

Fig. 3, again, shows a sketch of a piece of

moulding which is to be scribe-jointed as suggested at Fig. 6, and the following method is the one usually adopted to determine the profile. Mitre the moulding as at Fig. 4, when the profile so obtained will give the correct shape for the scribing. At Fig. 5 we show a sketch of the scribed joint, and at Fig. 6 is indicated the same piece ready for assembling.

Readers have occasionally asked how these joints are marked out and cut, and what tools are used for the purpose; so, as an example, we will deal with this particular piece of moulding. After cutting the mitre as at Fig. 4, all the square or right angled channels and projections across the end of the wood (Fig. 5) may be carefully sawn away with a fine toothed dovetail saw, whilst the straight cuts may (if thought necessary) be clean-pared with a sharp bevelled edged chisel. The rounded top member near the 45° mark will present no difficulty to those who have good command of a chisel, but when we come to the large hollow portion (H) and the hollow of the astragal below it, the chisel will be of little use. The worker may, of course, fall back upon his gouges, which will be ground and sharpened from their inner or concave faces.

Where a quantity of mouldings have to be scribed by hand it is advisable to use a coping-saw or scroll-saw (Fig. 10). This little tool is somewhat neglected by the amateur, possibly because he does not realize its possibilities. It



FIGS. 3 TO 7.—EXAMPLES OF SCRIBING.

may be purchased with a dozen blades for approximately 1/6; or the worker may buy one having an adjustable frame, which is built on similar lines

to a hack saw so that it can be lengthened or shortened to take different lengths of blades.

When a quantity of sash bars have to be racked it is the usual practice to make a saddle or matrix which will fit to both the moulds and the rebates, and this saddle does away with the necessity of marking the profile of each moulding separately.

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

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Ian Wilkie comes up with three different designs for wooden wind spinners, all of which will look great hanging in the garden

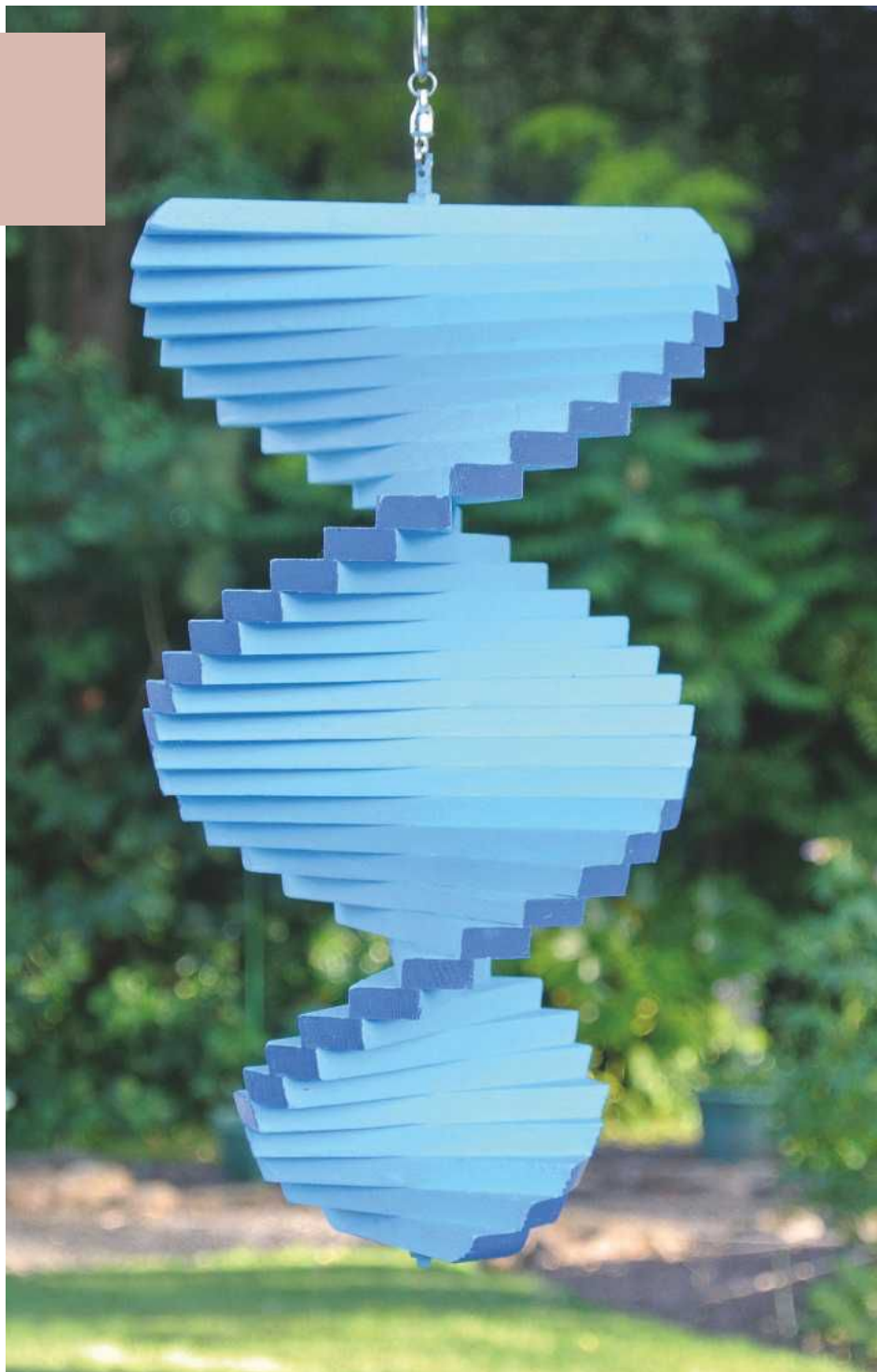
The spinners in this article are designed to hang in the garden or in front of an open window, or perhaps in the porch where they will catch any passing breeze. As the decoration spins, it makes fascinating patterns. These projects are simple, inexpensive and fun to make and will give pleasure to anyone you decide to give them to. I was rather flattered when my grandson, over from the USA on a visit, asked if he could take one back with him. **WW**



1 Start preparing the wood by cutting it into strips. I used inexpensive DIY pine for the example shown. A simple jig to set the width required for repetitive cutting speeds up the process. I am using the Proxxon FET table saw, which is an ideal machine for small projects. It is portable enough to set up on a bench outside the workshop on a suitable day, which is an advantage and keeps the shavings and dust down



2 These are relatively narrow strips, so use a pushstick to guide the wood



3 I cut plenty of strips to make at least two spinners



4 Cut the strips into 120mm lengths. Make a template to ensure they are all the same length. Wherever practical, I prefer to cut small pieces of wood using a scrollsaw, which I consider safer



MATERIALS REQUIRED FOR THE PAINTED EXAMPLE

- Light-coloured wood: 120mm long 14mm wide x 6mm thick – 35 pieces
- 1m length of 4mm diameter plated threaded studding
- 2 matching washers and nuts
- 1 swivel hanging hook
- Paint and varnish



5 Sand the wood. The Sand-Flee mop (which I tested some time ago), is very popular with scrollsaw users in the USA. The multi-abrasive surfaces quickly remove any whiskers on the cut surfaces to leave a very smooth finish. I found this product hard to source in the UK and when I did the price was rather steep, so I only purchased one mop to use with my Kirjes sander. However, I followed some helpful instructions on a YouTube video and made my own version with a bolt and strips of abrasive, and now have several mops with different grits for a fraction of the price

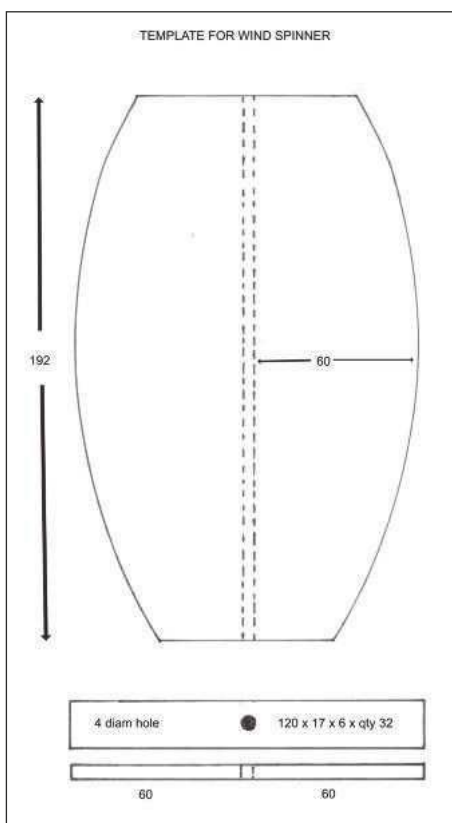


Fig.1 Wind spinner template



6 Hold each strip in a machine vice and set a gauge, or make a template to mark the centre hole position



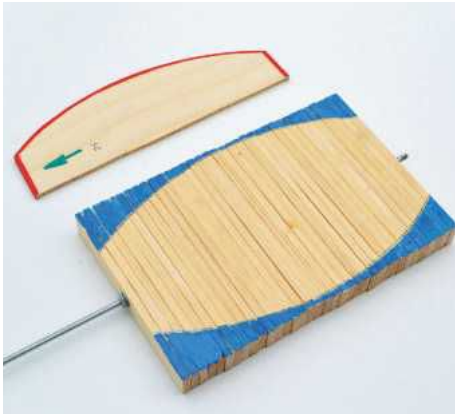
7 Accurately drill a 4mm hole through each piece



8 Screw a nut on the end of the studded rod and slip on the strips of wood



9 Secure the stack with a second nut and tighten up until the wood is held securely and feels quite stiff



10 Use the drawing and cut out a template to transfer the outline to the wood



11 You can then begin to cut round the shape



12 Use your fingers to twist the pieces round the rod so that they overlap slightly (think spiral staircase!)



13 Prime the spinner and when that is dry, paint with the colour of your choice making sure that every surface is covered. Highlight the end of each piece with another colour or a darker hue. Spray with several coats of varnish to protect the wood from the rain and sun. The spinners will probably need repainting each season – the wood will rot eventually but they should last a few years



14 Cut off the surplus rod and flatten each side with a file. Drill a small hole through the metal to fit the swivel. Although the photo shows this being made at an earlier stage, I found later that leaving the rod was useful when painting. I was most impressed with these little swivels, which I bought from Amazon. These come in a pack of eight and are priced at £5.59. My studded rod was purchased at B&Q together with the wood used for this project



15 Now all that remains is to hang the spinner from a tree and wait for a breeze to set it whirling!



16 This unpainted version is made in exactly the same way using alternating strips of dark and light wood. Although no paint was used, I applied several coats of outdoor varnish for protection. As I now gaze out of the window, the spinner is looking good hanging from the apple tree and whirling round!



17 Because the decoration spins round very fast when it catches the wind, I was reminded of the dancing 'whirling dervishes' and turned a little figure for the top. His arms fly out as it revolves and it is rather fun to watch!

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ME AND MY WORKSHOP

Situated in North Devon, **Roy Kitcher** shows us round his workshop and tells us about what he likes to make in it

1. What is it – and where is it?

A 10 x 12 shed with a Dutch Barn style roof, in my garden.

2. What's the best thing about it?

It doesn't need re-decorating every few years, and has great views across the countryside.

3. And what's the worst?

I can't fit my bed in there.

4. How important is it to you?

Very important – I'm in there as much as possible.

5. What do you make in it?

Small items of furniture for our own use, and jewellery boxes made from offcuts for family and friends.

6. What is your favourite workshop tip?

Keep it as tidy as possible, and keep the phone indoors!

7. What's your best piece of kit?

My Record Power bandsaw. It enables me to resaw stock and save on wastage, among its many other assets.

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

A set of old Marples chisels left to me by my late uncle.

9. What's your biggest workshop mistake?

I once glued and cramped a dovetailed drawer I'd eagerly assembled, only to discover I'd omitted to fit the bottom.

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

A small oak table with drawers (complete with bottoms!).

11. And what's the worst?

My first attempt at making a small dovetailed box. I think it looks awful with different sized joints and an ill-fitting lid, but my wife refuses to throw it away.

Roy Kitcher



Roy hand-cutting some dovetails in his workshop

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

Not to rush things. And don't get too despondent if things don't go to plan first time.

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

I have most things I need, but think I'd treat myself to a complete set of those very expensive Lie-Nielsen planes. **WW**

NEXT MONTH

In the next issue, we step inside the workshop of *WW* author and avid woodworker, Rick Wheaton. We'd love to hear about your workshops too, so do feel free to send in a photo of your beloved workspace, and please answer the same questions as shown here. We look forward to hearing from you

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MARC DAVIES

Having completed his City & Guilds in Furniture Craft as well as a series of apprenticeships at top cabinetry and joinery firms, Marc Davies is now an award-winning cabinetmaker based in Milton Keynes who creates bespoke joinery, mostly for domestic properties. He commented: "My love of woodworking started when my Granddad bought me a tool kit when I was aged four, and it has only grown from there."

When Marc started Marc Davies Bespoke Interiors around 10 years ago, he purchased smaller machinery before eventually working his way up to a FELDER K 500 s panel saw. Marc said: "The step up to FELDER machinery from what we had has improved the accuracy and saved time by eliminating the need for prep work on the panels before cutting them. When choosing this saw, it had to take a full sheet but still work in the compact space of my workshop. It also required a scoring unit. This saw ticks all the boxes. For a start, the scoring unit makes life so much easier: we use a lot of melamine to make our wardrobes and kitchen carcasses, and with a little adjustment you can get all of your cuts absolutely perfect, directly from the saw."

Talking about his experience with machinery from the FELDER GROUP, Marc commented:

"I came across FELDER a year or two into my career; it has always been a present name and every company I have ever worked for has always had at least one, if not two FELDERs. I spent the early days of my career using their machines; these stood out in the workshop, and if there were multiple machines, the FELDERs were the ones you wanted to use as you knew they would make the nicest of cuts." Marc then went on to say: "The reason I chose FELDER was because I knew they made quality products. I hadn't had any experience of their customer care or after sales support, however; I bought the machine purely from a user's perspective, so when it came to picking a panel saw for my workshop, that was the brand I chose."

See how a range of machines from FELDER can benefit your workshop at www.felder-group.co.uk or call **01908 635 000** for more information. You can also watch the full testimonial on YouTube – www.youtube.co.uk – by searching for 'FELDER GROUP UK TV'.

FURTHER INFO

See more of Marc's work on his website:
www.marcdavies.webs.com



Drop us a line on paper or via screen and keyboard to add your voice to the woodworking crowd; you might be one of the lucky few who will manage to get their hands on a coveted *Woodworker* badge! You can write to us at **The Woodworker, MyTimeMedia Ltd, Suite 25, Eden House, Enterprise Way, Edenbridge, Kent TN8 6HF** or send an email to **editor.ww@mytimemedia.com**

★ STAR LETTER

A POWER TOOL GEM



Is this the oldest working drill in the country?

Hello,

I am a 78-year-old retired joiner and it crossed my mind that I should write to you to establish whether or not I hold the record for having the oldest Wolf electric drill. In the mid '50s, as an apprentice joiner, I was chosen as the best apprentice in Anglesey, North Wales.

As a prize, I was presented with the Wolf drill pictured here – model EG.2CHW, serial number 531071. At the time I attended the Holyhead Technical College and my instructor was a Mr Joe Hallam, who died some years ago.

I still use the drill for odd jobs around the house, but hopefully my wife will buy me a cordless drill for my upcoming birthday. We will see! It will be interesting to know if there is a woodworker out there with an older Wolf drill. Thank you for an enjoyable magazine.

Yours sincerely, **Mel Griffiths**

Hi Mel, thanks for your letter, and if that's not a testament to top quality design and manufacture – not to mention your own careful treatment of the drill – I don't know what is. A popular drill at the time and, until the growth of Black and Decker power tools in the early '60s, probably the best seller in the UK. I think that one had the 5/8in chuck and was originally painted a light grey-green. Wolf Tools, based in West London, started making its first DIY drills in 1949, and continued manufacturing right up until 1982. There are still plenty of the early ones to be found across the country, and dating may prove harder than we might imagine.

A lot of us still prefer a mains drill for some work, and it wouldn't surprise me at all to learn that other readers – or people they might know – are still using a venerable Wolf drill to this day. If that's you, please write in with a photo and some sort of age guide (I doubt that anyone will still have the receipt) and we'll see if we can't declare the oldest – and maybe even sort out some kind of prize.

Mark

CLOG MAKING & MORRIS DANCERS

Dear Editor,

Further to your article on the 'last' clog maker in England, I'm pleased to inform you that Jeremy Atkinson is not as advertised. Two others are known to me, one operating now out of North Wales but originally from Ossett, West Yorkshire, and the other working from a home workshop on the edge of Stockport. Both earn a living from their craft and supply a lot of Morris and other country dancers in the North West who themselves are not confined to the Lancs and Cheshire borders.

There may be such a Morris side near you, dancing with made to measure clogs from any of the above makers. Regular reader **Gordon Griffin** (Still dancing) Huddersfield



Clog maker Phil Howard, based in Stockport, has been making clogs since 1982

Hello Gordon, thanks for that, and I'm very pleased to hear that there are (at least) a couple more clog makers out there. As for the claim in our article, I guess I'm as guilty as anyone in the journalism game – when you see a good headline like that you tend to go with it. Sadly our research team (i.e. yours truly) has its occasional off-days. Still, that's welcome good news and hopefully our dancing traditions will continue for a long time yet.

And if anyone else knows of any clog makers over their way, please let us know at the usual address. Mark

WOOD FOR WOODWORKING

Hi Mark,

I've only just started woodworking and am planning to make so many things. I've not done anything creative for many years and I'm really enjoying it. Can you tell me which wood to use and where I should get it?

Fumi Kokoali

Hi Fumi, glad to hear your enthusiasm; if you're anything like the rest of us woodworkers, this enthusiasm will remain undimmed and could well reach brighter lights as you progress.

As for wood, well this is a fairly large subject. Most experienced woodworkers will be prepared to use anything, but will generally prefer easy to work hardwoods like walnut, ash, cherry and oak (although this one is slightly less easy to work than the others). When you're just starting out you might be better off with prepared softwood; not only is this cheap and readily available (viz you don't have to worry so much about making mistakes), but it's fairly attractive and relatively easy to cut and plane.

As to buying, try for a proper timber merchant and leave it till the afternoon when they're not so busy and will have time to help you get what you want. Take a tape measure and have your cutting list to hand, and always get a bit extra in case. I've found it best to avoid the DIY sheds as their timber is generally poorer quality (and often not any cheaper either). Good luck, and let us know how you get on. Mark

GET IN TOUCH! Don't forget, we're always keen to see your photos, so please don't hesitate to send them in if you've snapped something of interest recently.

Email me on the usual address: **editor.ww@mytimemedia.com**

Please note that all digital photos need to be greater than **1MB** in size to guarantee sufficiently good reproduction for the printed page



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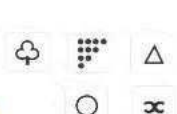
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TOGETHER WE STAND...

... divided we fall, they say, but when it comes to woodworking are you better off with separate machinery than universals? We cast our verdict

Ideally, we'd all have our own woodworking machinery. It means that you're in full control of the stock you use, able to shape and dimension to your own designs for flair and individuality, all at a fraction of the cost of prepared stock from the local timber yard.

Machines for all the major steps – sawing, planing and shaping – are commonplace in the bigger joinery and cabinet shops, but the option of combination or universal machinery is certainly worth exploring. An all-encompassing machine with all the major functions in one area frees up space, so a smaller workshop can benefit. Often referred to as five- or six-function machines, though really they're like having three machines in one, they can handle rip sawing, crosscutting, surfacing, thicknessing and spindle moulding, as well as the mortising option.

However, combis don't guarantee that you'll save space. The footprint is usually square and you often work from all four sides of them to use each respective function, so a similarly shaped workshop to allow access is really a minimum

requirement. If you go for a smaller entry-level machine without an outrigger for panel sawing, the width required is lessened, with planing, spindle work and ripping needing less room; this is better suited to UK garage-based workshops, but if you rip sheet materials you'll still need a wider space to the saw side.

Even the more compact universal machines can take up a surprising amount of space. A standard single garage will likely struggle to house one successfully because you're likely to need at least 1,700 × 1,700mm of floor area. Allowing an area to manoeuvre around it, you can add at least 600mm to that on the sides for ripping, spindle and plane work.

Weighty thoughts

A further consideration with having all functions in one area is the localised weight increase. With even the budget market now supplying machinery with cast-iron beds as standard, this factor has to be a prime consideration. While a garage will have a concrete floor, a wooden-floored workshop is

a different thing altogether and may not support any dead loading from heavy machinery.

Even if you have a floor capable of such loading, it's often the case that smaller workshops need additional space after the machining is done, or even to move a machine to a better position for certain tasks. Some machines have a built-in wheel kit to cope with this, but whether these can cope with regular moving is debatable.

Weight and floor area aside, the biggest problem you could find is actually getting the machine through the workshop door! Some machines come in two parts, the planer section bolting to the saw and spindle, allowing it to fit through a tighter opening, but it's worth checking with the manufacturer before making a potential purchase. The last thing you want to be doing is taking doors and frames out to gain an extra inch or so to get a machine in, or even having to consider major alterations.

Spatial awareness

Having considered some basics of workshop space and touched on using one successfully, you need to think about employing good methodology throughout any project. Most universals share basic components, so you'll find the rip fence for the saw often doubles up as the planer fence. Ripping work should therefore be well planned out prior to the planing stage so as to minimise the exchanging of fences for each component.

It's also the case that the spindle hood needs to be removed to allow the fences to move or be positioned correctly, as well as dropping the saw blade below the table surface, so the crown guard will need removing. The last thing you want to be doing is hunting around for specific guards or fences, so additional storage close by is essential.

Moving onto thicknessing, there are variations on standalone models; therefore you may find the old style 'over/under' configuration with the surfacing beds remaining in place, which is an advantage in tighter spots but may not be as easy to feed the timber through as you can't see the infeed on the table without stooping. Alternatives are flip-up beds, and these can be 'gullwing' where they pivot away at an angle or a straightforward lift on a hinge.

In both cases, whether it's a single bed or both that lift, ideally beds that lift inboard



I like the spindle moulder on the Axminster AW4 Universal, but would prefer wooden facings to the alloy one supplied – an easy modification





or over the main part of the machine are better in my mind as they are less restrictive when feeding timber through, giving better access to the bed for both infeed and on the out take side.

Silver lining?

So far it seems all doom and gloom with universals, but there are positive aspects too. From a simple point of view, with the fences off and the cutting tools retracted, you gain a decent work area suitable for some assembly work, but of course, you wouldn't pay a few thousand pounds just for this benefit!

You can find that increased capacity on some functions is better over standalone models, although this is still dependent on budget and the manufacturer you choose, and therefore the overall quality of that particular brand. Budget and capacities are usually part and parcel of the argument of universals over separates, and you can gain in areas on them.

Individual machines allow you to mix and match to suit your needs, so you may find that while a smaller planer is suitable for your work, if you want to upgrade, only one area has to be addressed as needed. It also gives you more opportunity to build up a set of kit to suit your own personal needs, not just relying on what is within a universal and the good and bad points it may have.

You could also find that you rely on a table saw far more than a spindle, so your budget can be steered more to that area rather than be tied to the universal specification.

Individual choices

When I was being taught, the classic small joinery 'shops I was involved in both at college and later on had none of the bigger cabinetmakers' saws with outriggers and sliding carriages. They were

basic, big-motored machines, simply designed for converting sawn stock into smaller components ready for the planing and final dimensioning stage.

Panel saws were certainly not in the 'shops I was at, although the veneered and sheet stock available at that time were not as easily obtainable as now and any dimensioning of sheets was with a side table on the saw or with a radial arm saw. You could go down this more traditional route of simply having a more robust table saw for ripping to approximate sawn sizes, allowing for final finishing at the planer rather than a more refined saw.

Again, if you lack space, that might be your option anyway as a panel saw will take up about the same area as a small universal and needs to be central in the workshop to be able to use it safely when feeding wide stock through. It could also be seen as the best option if you are going to specialise in traditional joinery where sheet material isn't used extensively.

If you opt for a basic saw, you might be more reliant on the final finish from the planer, so where you save on the saw you can invest in the planer.

Options here: from a practical sense there are longer beds for easier timber handling and also ease in truing up longer stock.

Planer/thicknessers

One area I'd like to see addressed on a lot of planers is the fences. The majority seem to be based around aluminium fitted to a bracket, and while the aluminium is normally straight enough, there can be a tendency to flex, either the extrusion under load or on the bracket itself. I think that there should be a return to the cast-iron fences of the old classic Wadkins and the like, where once set they stayed put. It's the finishing stage where any inaccuracy is a problem, so a

decent fence is certainly one area that I'd look at closely.

Three-knife blocks are often seen as better than two and understandably – after all, more cuts equal better finish. In a lot of cases, there isn't a great deal of difference over a two-knife block. It's all down to feed speed and block rotation ratios, so they may actually put the same amount of cuts per millimetre. But the three-knife block allows a faster feed rate for more productivity.

The Tersa block is definitely a good option if available. It's self-set using a centrifugal wedging system, so that you can swap cutters in a matter of seconds without having to check anything, and without spanners or other tooling. Simply tap the wedge to slacken it, slide the knife out and replace. Starting the machine forces the wedges forward, trapping the knife in position. It does mean that you are reliant on disposable cutters, so there is additional cost involved, but compared to the set-up of standard knives it's a worthwhile argument, especially if you factor in regrinding costs of the standard knives and the need for a back up set while they are away.

The rise-and-fall of the thicknessing table is an area where cheaper models usually rely on a chain-driven adjustment on four threaded posts. These work well enough but can be prone to the threads getting clogged with dust and resin. It's seen as a better option to have a central column with the adjustment protected within the cabinet. Swapping between functions is a matter of choice, but for me, having to remove a bed, as is the case on the entry-level models is always a bind. I prefer a machine that has fixed beds for easy operation between modes, although micro-switching operated by dust hoods can make this more



of a faff than the older-style models. Pivoting or hinged beds are a compromise between the two, giving good access to the thickness bed and reasonably fast swaps between modes.

Spindle moulders...

... are still often seen as the most dangerous machine in the 'shop. But while that element of danger is still there, as with any machine it's the outlawing of older-style cutterblocks and cutter-holding methods that have made them safer, removing the chances of cutters being ejected. With chip limiters too, if you do come into contact with a cutter, the chances of digit removal is lessened. With standalones the entry-level stuff is still quite highly priced in comparison to other machines; it may be the danger level involved that keeps the machine out of the budget market.

While a combi makes good use of the sliding carriage for end-grain and tenoning options, the standalone models are often basic with a carriage an option. Like a planer, though, the machine can be sited against or close to a wall so takes up little room. But if you do curved work using the ring fence (again, this is often an accessory) the machine needs to be away from a wall in order to feed the work through.

Any spindle will be safer and benefit from a power feed, so it's worth checking if this option is available. Of course, a retro fit shouldn't be too

problematic as it's usually a matter of tapping holes in the table, but you have to make sure the hood will still adjust as it should.

Speed ratios are often standard on standalones where a budget combi may rely on a single speed. Having extra speed options allows better use of bigger panel cutters and blocks, with lower speeds for these cuts, and faster for the smaller moulding cuts.

Tilting spindles are an area where you can get far more from a machine, but these are again aimed at a higher level.

They do give you variations on a basic set of profiles and a standard rebating block, for example, is now capable of a full range of chamfers and also bevels for cill profiles where you would normally need extra tooling or blocks.

The higher end of the spindle market can also allow for interchangeable spindle shafts allowing not only router cutters to be fitted, but also fast swaps between the shafts so you can keep specific blocks on a spindle and change over faster than removing the blocks each time.

Additional costs are involved once again, but for anyone looking to speed up the process, the option is one to consider.

Final verdict

Much can be said in the favour of choosing to buy separates; I guess being taught woodwork

on separate machines at college has maybe made me a little biased towards individual options, but they do take up a lot of area in order to work them properly. A table saw is normally positioned centrally in the 'shop to allow both a right-hand table for wider rips on sheets or a crosscutting fence to the left to be fitted for panel or dimensioning work. That alone could cover the area of a combination machine.

Even with a spindle and planer sited against a wall, the area around them needs clearance for safe operation, and you have to make sure that whatever goes through the infeed has at least identical room on the outfeed.

Moving into an area where you start to machine your own stock needs plenty of thought, both from the initial space needed, along with your own requirements and the work you are likely to undertake. If you have the luxury of a decent-sized workshop the first problem of space may not raise its head; you simply have to choose your options.

For the rest of us, there's a little more thought involved. A garage workshop helps, the up-and-over door allows you to feed with the door up to gain the extra precious few feet needed, which goes for combis as well as separates. Of course, that's at the expense of the car, but then there's always the kerb or the driveway for that! **WW**



Craft Supplies launches with industry web first

Woodworking retailer Turners Retreat is incorporating Craft Supplies into its name to reflect its growing brand portfolio and follows its recent advancement into the art of pyrography. The move coincides with the launch of an industry ground-breaking website.

The new website promises a fresh approach to online shopping in the woodworking industry with a browsing bar enabling visitors to quickly click through related products. Only seen in some of the large high street fashion retailer sites, this feature makes website navigation similar to browsing the aisle in your favourite store.

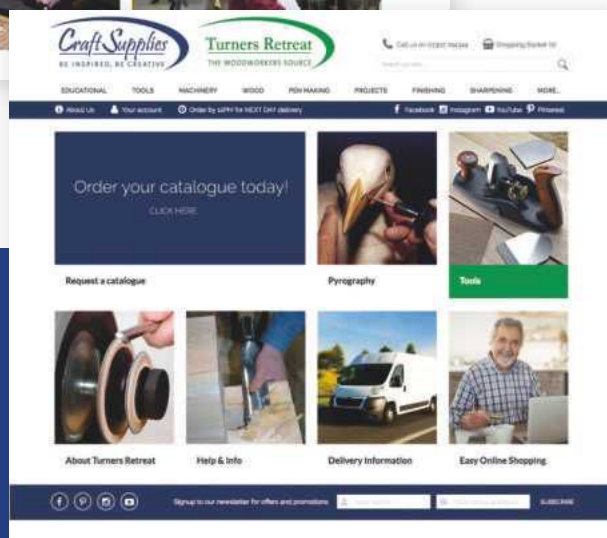
For those who know what they want, an intuitive search facility will quickly select products and direct visitors to where they want to go. Alternatively, a neatly arranged menu option will take you to tool categories and product pages.

The new website will boast more than 3,000 listed products, including over 200 exclusive items. There are new items for pyrography, branding irons and ceramic stones, along with a range of Foredom rotary power tools to celebrate the launch.

A series of unique features will provide thousands of loyal customers with an enhanced user experience. Demonstration films, 'how to' tool guides and an inspirational gallery of finished projects showing what can be achieved with a little dedication are just some of the things visitors to the new website can expect to see.

A product review and comments section will provide an opportunity for shoppers to have their say and an events page will keep users informed of upcoming shows, open days and craft workshops. Sign up online to receive the blog and newsletter and you could win over £1,000 worth of tools. Registered users will be the first to hear about the latest fantastic offers and new product releases.

The Nottinghamshire-based outlet is a favourite for woodturners, woodcarvers and pyrographers across the UK. Excited by the launch, store manager David Green, said: "The coming together of Turners Retreat and Craft Supplies gave new direction to our company. The launch of our ground-breaking website has provided us with the platform to branch out into new areas of the craft world. The browser bar makes navigating quick, simple and easy. It brings a real-life sensation to online shopping normally only found in-store. Our vision is for our customers to make this their website of choice. We want it to be the go-to place for all their woodworking needs and provide the opportunity for them to help create an environment for like-minded woodworkers." To find out more, see www.craft-supplies.co.uk



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THE WEST DEAN EXPERIENCE

Chris Tribe adds another string to his bow by going to West Dean College to learn how to make a wind instrument

I have long had an interest in musical instrument making, having made a number of stringed instruments over the years. As a woodworker, I see instrument making as a challenge: not only does the object have to look good, it also has to sound good.

A lot depends on precise work, which is another of my obsessions. Having made only stringed instruments previously, I fancied a go at making a wind instrument. I had heard about the courses held at West Dean College and the 'West Dean experience', so I was quite chuffed when, for my 60th birthday, I was enrolled for the wind instrument-making course. This is the record of my West Dean experience and how I made my folk flute and recorder.

We were a varied bunch who gathered in the workshop on Friday evening. Merv had previously made a stringed instrument at West Dean, Jem makes oboes, Jim had been to furniture-making courses at West Dean but had not yet made instruments, while Drew had little woodworking experience but was a keen musician. I'm a furniture maker but completely unmusical. Mathew Dart, the tutor, makes baroque bassoons at his workshop in London and is also a tutor and works as a technician at London Metropolitan University (London College of Furniture as was).



Drew turning his flute

Two hours' hard grind

The workshops at West Dean are very well equipped. We were working on Graduate and Vicmarc lathes, all with variable-speed; I was using a Vicmarc, a joy to work on. I have done a bit of turning as part of my furniture-making and have always sharpened freehand, which has led to progressive adjustment of my grinding angles. Mathew suggested I spend a while regrinding my collection of turning chisels; a couple of hours at the grinder made a world of difference.

We had a choice between making a folk flute or a recorder. The flute involved more complicated turning and reaming but the mouth piece on the recorder can be difficult to form. I decided to make a flute, but actually had enough time to make both.

The folk flute is in three parts or joints: the head, middle and foot. The general procedure is to rough turn all parts over-size, leaving a section square to aid holding later on; drill out the bore, step drill to approximately the right taper then ream out precisely. Following this the sockets are bored out to complete the internal work. The outside diameter and joints are then turned and sanded, and brass ferrules applied to protect the sockets. The holes for the embouchure and fingering can then be drilled. Last but by no means least, the flute is tuned by relieving the embouchure and finger holes.

Boring, reaming & sockets

We started with billets of maple supplied by Mathew. After rough turning the outside of each section, leaving a square section at one end, the centre was bored out using an 11mm auger. Firstly, a short pilot hole was drilled using an 11mm drill in the tailstock; this offered a lead-in for the auger, and a little raw linseed oil helped to lubricate it.

In most wind instruments, the bore tapers slightly from the top (blowing end) to the bottom, being wider at the blowing end. One exception to this is the recorder. We now created this taper. We started by step-drilling close to the required taper, then used reamers to create the final taper. This could be done in two ways: with the reamer turning slowly in the chuck and pushing the piece onto it – the square piece left on the outside turning helped with gripping at this point; or placing the square section vertically in the vice and turning the reamer by hand. Accuracy regarding the depth to which the reamer is





Jem augering out the bore on his flute



driven is vital, as this defines the bore.

After reaming, the sockets were created. For this we used a specially made socket borer with a pilot that located in the bore to ensure the socket was concentric with the bore. This completed the internal work on the flute.

The outside could now be turned to its final diameter. Of course the centre had been drilled away so we first turned up mandrels that fitted the bore of each piece to enable the outside turning. Again, accuracy was quite important, to plus or minus 0.5mm. The tenons to fit in the sockets were also dimensioned at this point. The walls of the sockets were very thin so we turned recesses on the outside to receive 8mm-wide brass ferrules to strengthen the joint. This required careful turning to ensure a tight joint.

Embouchure & finger holes

Accuracy is paramount here. Fortunately Mathew supplied us with Perspex templates for marking the hole positions accurately. The axis for the

finger holes is traditionally along the quartered grain of the circumference where the grain forms a 'ladder' pattern up the side of the instrument. I missed out on this and hastily placed my finger holes on the crown side; I'm not sure if this is just an aesthetic issue or whether it will have long-term consequences for the tuning of my instrument; only time will tell.

The axis was marked using an engineer's scribing block resting on the lathe bed. The pencil in the block was set to the centre of the head or tailstock and the axis marked. The Perspex templates were used to mark the hole positions. Lip-and-spur drills were used to drill the holes, the piece being held in a V-shaped jig to ensure they were centralised.

With the holes drilled, the instrument could now be finished inside and out. Some of us used a stain, but I preferred to leave the maple as it was. We used boiled linseed oil on the inside and Truoil on the outside; Truoil is a gun stock finish from the US. I was impressed with the speed with which it built up a very good finish on the maple;

two coats were sufficient. Once finished, we wound waxed flax thread around the tenons and put the instrument together.

Tuning up

I am totally unmusical and virtually tone deaf, so I was not looking forward to this bit. When we first blew our instruments it wasn't pleasant; it was difficult to get a note and the notes were not in tune. This was partly because the profile of the embouchure – the bit you blow across – had to be properly formed and then the instrument tuned by adjusting the finger holes.

The embouchure was shaped so that it was slightly oval and also undercut to form a conical shape, being narrower at the top than at the bottom. This shaping was carried out using a combination of a triangular scraper and abrasive wrapped around thin dowel.

With the embouchure treated in this way we were able to get a good tone out of the flute with all fingers down to give middle D – or so I was told!



Pilot drilled hole to start auger



Checking socket measurement



Jem's flute, once stained and oiled

So how can a tone deaf person tune a flute? This is where electronics came to my aid. We had a handy gadget that would tell us whether a note was sharper or flatter than required. By opening up the finger hole with a knife or scraper the note becomes sharper; our initial boring was slightly undersize to allow for this opening up. However, it wasn't just a case of widening the holes, they also needed to be undercut; this gave a better tonal quality and made the instrument easier to play.

This is a basic explanation of the tuning. It was complicated by the fact that each hole has to tune more than one note and each note was in two octaves. Often a tuned note would be out of tune later, after other notes had been tuned. Tuning was an iterative process, going back to adjust holes or even the embouchure in the light of

previous adjustments. In all it took about three hours to get the tuning correct. This task was obviously easier for Merv, Jem and Drew who had a more musical background than Jim and I.

Tuition style

I was very at ease with Mathew Dart's teaching style. He was easy-going and undogmatic but was also able to enforce the accurate approach that was required. His knowledge of many areas of early musical instruments meant that I learnt a lot more than just how to make a flute. This learning was enhanced by the exchange of knowledge between fellow students, as we all came with our own areas of expertise, and Mathew encouraged an exchange of ideas. I think this is important in teaching adults, and it is inherent in the West Dean ethos.



Tea and chat is a very important component of a short course at West Dean

Mathew allowed us to proceed at our own pace. Some of us made more than one instrument – I also made a recorder – while others completed just one; this meant that we were never left with nothing to do as sometimes occurs on courses.

Mathew provided most of the augers, reamers and socket borers, plus a complex gadget that Jim used to form the windway of his recorder. This would be a problem for someone wanting to pursue instrument-making further; with an engineering background and access to the equipment the tools could be made, otherwise it might be necessary to befriend the local model engineering society or such like.

Thoroughly chilled

Driving home from West Dean I had a real sense of achievement. I had made two instruments and explored new turning skills. The five days in the relaxed atmosphere at West Dean had also put me in a very chilled state of mind! If you are looking to take your craft skills to new levels, I would thoroughly recommend the West Dean experience. **WW**

LIFE AT WEST DEAN

One of the attractions of West Dean is the sense of community that builds up with those on the course. We tended to eat breakfast, lunch and dinner together, and after an evening session we would usually retire to the bar – the Otter bitter is very good. One evening Merv and his partner gave us an impromptu concert on harp, hammer dulcina and bowed psaltry, all made by Merv himself.

Situated on the South Downs, West Dean was the home of the James family until Edward James, a well-known patron of the arts, especially surrealism, formed the West Dean Trust and bequeathed the house as a centre for teaching the arts and crafts. The flint-built mansion house is set in beautiful landscaped parkland with extensive gardens. The boarding accommodation certainly gives you a taste of stately living



What a view to wake up to...

NEXT MONTH

Coming up in the next issue...

WW July on sale 1 June

BAROQUE CUPBOARD BUILD

Niall Yates introduces us to his 'elephant in the room', a Baroque cupboard that, despite many hours of work, is still only three quarters finished



HAND TOOL FAVOURITES

Robin Gates describes some favourite hand tools and shares tips on using them to advantage



A HEART-WARMING TALE

Chris Finch tells of his rocking horse, which set sail to span the generations and cross the seas

ON TEST EXCLUSIVE

Makita LS1019L mitre saw

Is this the saw that marks a sea change in design?



PLUS ■ Colin Simpson turns a 'magic' box ■ Feature: Axminster's Nuneaton store Me and my workshop – Rick Wheaton ■ Turning with carbide inserts

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Specification

- Chisel sizes: 6, 12, 19, 25 & 32mm
- Hardened chrome vanadium steel blade
- Nickel-plated steel striking cap
- Large striking cap for strength and durability
- Soft grip handles for comfort and durability
- Supplied in a durable ballistic nylon storage pouch

Typical price: £32.26**Web:** www.tritontools.com**PROS**

- Mid-range steel blades

CONS

- 'Show' storage pouch

RATING: 4 out of 5

Triton five-piece chisel set

This chisel set from Triton, comprising five of the most useful sizes, will prove handy for use on site or for general woodworking

After the saw and the plane, the next most indispensable woodworking tool must surely be the chisel. A lot of us will have inherited a chisel or two from previous generations, or sometimes just simply acquired them along the way. Purchases may have been single items, bought for a specific job or because it was a great deal at the time; however they've been accumulated, one thing's for sure – they've slowly become a set of chisels in their own right (who knows, they may even have a unifying tool roll to confirm their group status).

An impressive set

Few of us who have been woodworking for years will be in the market for a brand-new set, unless that is, we're gifting them to someone just starting up or maybe helping out a young relation who might be kitting out a new property. This kit here, from stalwart manufacturers Triton, comprises five of the most useful size chisels, and comes ready-packed in a

ballistic nylon storage pouch. Aimed primarily at the site worker, they're a fine example of getting the balance between robust and fine just right.

Anyone who has a good selection of edge tools will know that the ones which take ages to sharpen will be the higher-end models and will hold their edge for longer than those forged from lesser steels. These can be sharpened quickly and are generally kept in the site kit where the luxuries of top quality diamond and water-stones remain unknown. I was impressed with the Triton set: they seem to have



attained – in this case – the desirable 'Goldilocks' status for mid-range tools; not too hard, not too soft, but just right.

Chisel handles

With the tool steel sorted, it's time to consider the handles. Always a matter of personal user preference, it's not just the feel of them, a purchase can be affected by the colour too. These are black with an orange high-light (tolerable to the eye) and comfortable to hold, so all is fine there. The inclusion of a steel reinforcing cap underlines the working away destination; few people I know will have a mallet on site and a steel cap really increases the robustness of this kit and makes it literally hammer-proof (but whether or not the knuckles on your chisel hand are is another question entirely).

Stiffened tool pouch

Much of the design of the stiffened tool pouch has to do with presentation on the shelf of a shop rather than everyday usability; just look at the brass eyelets, which are only there to hold the temporary nylon cable clips in place. I'm used to a canvas tool roll for my chisels, and I'm not sure how much patience I'd have with the elasticated loops offered here, especially at the end of a long day.

In summary

From looking at this chisel set, I'd conclude they are a good all-round site kit, and better than a lot of it out there. **MC**



The chisels come in a tough folding pouch...



... and are nicely secured in place with straps and ties



Elasticated loops hold chisels securely in place, note plastic end protectors



The nickel-plated cap increases the durability of these chisels



Just the right amount of initial sharpening soon gets things on the road



Makita CLX205AJ 10.8V 2.0Ah CXT combi drill & impact driver

Although small in stature, this 10.8V combi drill and impact driver duo from Makita are powerful and capable of completing a variety of tasks

With the current trend towards smaller and more compact power tools showing no signs of abating, Makita have recently tweaked their popular pairing of 10.8V drill and impact driver, and have managed to engineer them to even more advanced levels of technology. The most obvious improvement in the drill is the inclusion of a hammer setting, making this one of the smallest combis on the market. The impact driver features a choice of torque settings and both tools employ the latest in Makita brushless motors for extra savings in size. For today's urban flat dweller – or indeed anyone with a dire shortage of storage space – this compact case of essential power tools could be just the ticket.

Big vs little

I'm glad to say the drill is entirely standard in its layout, the only noticeable difference from all other drills I've used lately is the size. Very comfortable to hold, at first it seems almost too small, but then not everyone has hands like shovels. It certainly functions very satisfactorily as a regular drill, but how does it fare in its hammer mode? It was with some relief that I found it capable of drilling holes in a tough block wall, but it was harder work for this operator than he would have liked. They say that a good big 'un will always beat a good little 'un, and that was my underlying feeling here; the small one is fine, but if an 18V or a mains drill were to hand, then you'd go for that.

Extra control

It's taken a few years, but impact drivers have finally settled into the general consciousness, and most tradies now have one in their kit. With its increased levels of impact and torque available, an impact driver gives you the ability to drive larger screws more easily; these days the pilot hole is becoming

something of a rarity on site. I like the extra control an impact driver affords the user; putting in screws is less of an effort now and removing stubborn and rusted fixings is much easier than it ever was.

Great for cramped conditions

This diminutive driver will do all that you would hope, and now, with a torque selection button you can select one of two working speeds as well as a slow-start option (the A-mode) to help combat screw-head slippage (aka cam-out). And its small size – headlength – means it's great for use in cramped conditions too. Both tools have the now customary LED worklamps; as usual, the Makita versions always stay on for a few seconds after releasing the trigger. Oh, and let's not forget the battery charge level indicators as well!

In summary

If you're of the 'small is beautiful' persuasion you will absolutely love these. I'm slowly warming to them. **MC**

Specification

Voltage: 10.8V
Drive shank Hex: 1/2in
Standard bolt: M5-M14
High tensile bolt: M5-M12
Coarse thread (length): 22-90mm
Max torque: 135Nm
Battery type: Li-ion
Blows per minute (Hi): 0-3,900ipm
Blows per minute (Lo): 0-1,600ipm
No load speed (Hi): 0-3,000rpm
No load speed (Lo): 0-1,300rpm
Weight: 1.1kg

Typical price: **£236**

Web: www.makita.uk.com

PROS

- Small but powerful

CONS

- They have to work harder to keep up with the bigger drills

RATING: 4 out of 5



The combi drill, standard layout; note ultra slim body



The slide-in batteries feature accurate level indicators



The impact driver is light in the hand



The pull-down collar releases the driver bit; note effectiveness of onboard LED worklamp



Torque is adjustable on the driver

Specification

Distance between centres: 250mm
 Max diameter over bed: 150mm
 Weight: 22kg
 Motor: 375W
 Rating: Trade
 Speeds: 400-3,600rpm
 Spindle taper: ER20 collet
 Spindle thread: M24 × 1.0mm
 Toolrest stem diameter: 12.5mm
 Tailstock taper: 1MT

Typical price: **£391.46**

Web: www.axminster.co.uk

PROS

- Full range of speeds without belt swaps
- High quality accessories
- Very smooth running
- Especially great for turning kits

CONS

- No jawed chuck option
- Sticky tailstock advance
- Requires additional collets to match the accessory drive centres

RATING: 4 out of 5

Axminster Trade Series Precision Pro lathe

Ideal for serious pen turning and small project making, this Trade Series lathe features a cast-iron construction and high quality components, although the lack of a chuck could put some turners off



Owning or looking to buy a lathe can be like opening a can of worms as they are pretty diverse in terms of what can be achieved using them, especially if you go for one of the more adaptable types that feature rotating headstocks, bed extensions and so forth.

From my own point of view I much prefer to tinker around on small kits and trinkets rather than trying to turn a set of stair spindles and newels or big platters, and I certainly wouldn't even think of attempting anything close to the scale of the sort of columns that you often see supporting the portico of a stylish Georgian town house.

Lack of chuck

The Nova lathe I reviewed a while back still remains a firm favourite; in fact, I was so impressed with the test machine that I actually ended up buying it, but Axminster have now come up with their own small woodturning lathe, and it's a little bit different to any I've seen before for this purpose.

At the headstock end, instead of the usual Morse taper and threaded spindle to take drives, faceplates, chucks and other accessories, the lathe relies on a collet system to retain any accessories; the exception being a small threaded faceplate and a screw chuck.

The collets work in exactly the same way as a router and indeed, these collets are much the same as the higher-end router ones with a multi-slit design, which ensures superior retention and concentricity.

To some degree, this does limit the number of things you can do at the headstock end and a quick check online shows

that the M24 × 1mm thread has no compatible chuck for other work, so it has to be either the faceplate or screw chuck designed for the lathe, or the collet retention for drive centres and pen mandrel that you use to achieve your goals.

Ideal for small projects

Despite the lack of chuck, the available accessories are of a very high quality and with the lathe of equal stature, it will especially appeal to the turners who like to work kits and other small projects. And that's where this lathe will find its real purpose in life: dealing with the smaller and more intricate pieces, and to get the most from it, there's a variable-speed dial on top of the NVR that allows speeds from 400-3,600rpm to be set. There's no indication as to what speed you are actually at but you soon get the feel for it as you work. It runs smoothly through its range, and of most benefit, unlike some smaller machines with variable-speeds, it doesn't require the belt to be moved in order to access the full range; it runs all of these in just one belt position.

In use

Moving to the lathe itself, the basics are much the same as any other similar machine on the market: the toolrest sits into the banjo and is held by a locking lever, which travels smoothly across the cast bed when slack and tightens securely; it's a nice inclusion to have both a long and short toolrest supplied in the kit and although these are small in size when compared to a standard lathe, I found the short one especially useful for turning a variety of pen kits, particularly those where short



The lathe uses high quality collets to hold the various drive centres



You screw the chuck directly to the headstock; there is no Morse taper at this end



The tailstock has a standard Morse taper fit for live centres and such like



The lathe is driven by a single belt, which is accessed via a hinged flap



A range of drive centres are also available but require different collets to use them



The tailstock features a graduated scale, which is particularly useful for blind drilling jobs

tubes are used. The quill has a similar lever lock to move it along the bed with a Bristol lever to secure its position. If the lathe has a failing in its construction, at least on my demo model, it's in the travel of the quill. Where most I've tried are fluid and smooth in their travel, this one is quite sticky so that as you rotate the handwheel to advance it, it runs smoothly then binds slightly, almost as if the shaft is fractionally bent or perhaps a small piece of swarf is trapped in the casting, although this doesn't affect the actual concentricity of the lathe as it runs.

In summary

Having had a chance to experiment with a few different types of turning on the lathe, the one thing I really miss is the ability to use a chuck; it's surprising just how quickly you come to rely on this once you're used to having one. That for me is the only real downside to this lathe; a 'real' woodturner will quickly work to a different methodology in order to achieve the desired result, but I'm all about quick and easy solutions and without a chuck option, life gets a tad more difficult. However, it's still a cracking little lathe, especially if you stick to turning projects that don't require a chuck. **AK**



The tailstock locks off with a good quality large lever at the rear side



The variable-speed runs from 400-3,600rpm and works very smoothly throughout



A tommy bar and pin spanner are used to tighten the collets to the drives



There is a small faceplate and a screw chuck that fit to the threaded spindle



There are two toolrests supplied, both of which lock firmly into the banjo



Small bowl-type jobs can be carried out using the screw chuck and faceplate



Again, the lathe runs very sweetly, making it easy to achieve fine controlled cuts

Specification

Max combined
wattage: 2,900W
Max vac wattage:
1,500W

Typical price: **£61.14**

Web: www.toolovation.co.uk

PROS

- Turns an ordinary vacuum into a slave unit
- Auto power up

CONS

- Not suitable for very high wattage tools

RATING: 4.5 out of 5

iVAC 13A Switch Box

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While some extractors come with a dedicated on board socket to act as a slave to any power tool that is plugged into it, some older models don't have this facility and if you want to make use of an old domestic vacuum cleaner, these definitely won't. The iVAC fills this void perfectly, acting as the slave unit to control the vacuum and the power tool you're using.

I particularly like the fact the unit can be sited in an easily accessible position; at the back of the bench or somewhere close to hand, allowing the extractor or vacuum to be put out of the way in a corner with the iVAC controlling everything.

Three-position switch

The box has a three-position switch, which allows you to either have the vacuum permanently off for tools that don't feature any vacuum support, thus allowing the box to be used as a standard power socket; permanently on, which is ideal for general cleaning up; or in the auto

position, which powers the vacuum once the tool is switched on. This Auto mode is where it does its job and there is a fractional delay of around a second in this mode before the vacuum starts, which allows for any tools that have a start-up surge that initially draws more power than the unit can manage if the vacuum powers up at the same time. You still have a maximum combined capacity of 2,900W, which should be enough for most tools; only the bigger routers are likely to exceed this rating. The maximum wattage vacuum or extractor that can be used with the iVAC is 1,500W, so anything under this should allow a higher wattage power tool to be used up to its maximum combined wattage rating.

In summary

With the iVAC set up to work in the Auto mode there's also a built-in run on function that keeps the vacuum on for an additional seven seconds to pull any residual waste away from the vacuum hose. Trying the iVAC with a router and sander it worked like a charm, powering up and switching off as it should and being able to position it close to hand, even the smallest of jobs will now stand more chance of getting hooked up to extraction, and most importantly, your lungs will benefit as a result of the dust-free atmosphere. **AK**



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... such as routers, benefit from the iVAC



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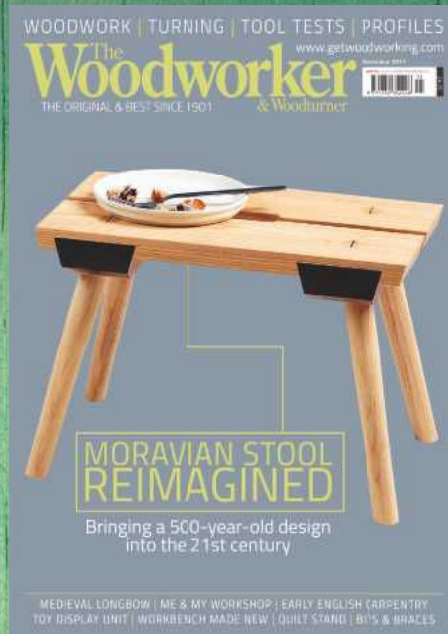
... or sited permanently to keep it close to hand as needed

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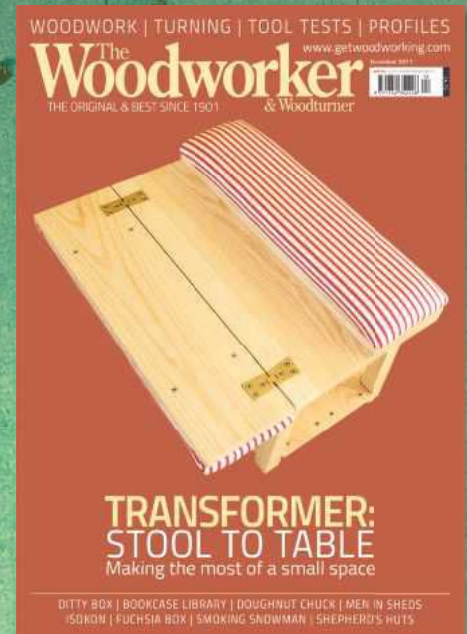
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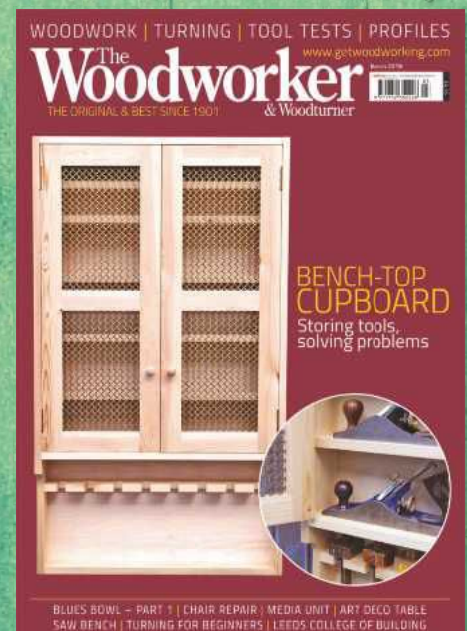
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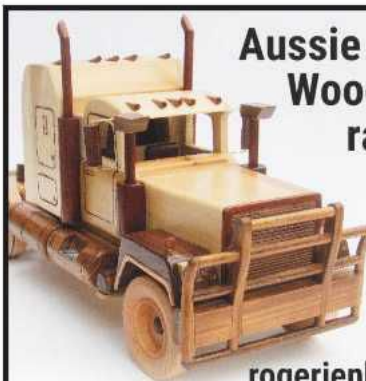
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AN AXE TO GRIND

Robin Gates sees green woodwork as the antidote to the electronic age

I'm convinced our previous abode on the Isle of Wight was an official waypoint on the training route of door-to-door advocates for home improvements, political parties and religious groups. Barely a day went by without some smartly turned-out individual with a Colgate smile wedging a foot inside our front door and thrusting a leaflet in my hand offering to fix the guttering, the country, or me.

But the doorbell saw much reduced activity after I took up green woodwork, and I can trace the drop-off in visitor numbers to a particular afternoon in early summer when I'd been roughing out a sycamore bowl. Absorbed by the gradual transformation of the solid into the hollow form, then irritated by the untimely ding-dong resounding through to the workshop, I answered the door with a somewhat gruff greeting and, absentmindedly, with the axe still tightly gripped in my fist, and making those little chopping movements typical of working across the grain.

"Oh, I'm sorry," they said, spotting one of Gransfors' finest where they'd hoped to place their dubious literature, and retreating down the garden path. "You're busy," they added, just in case I hadn't noticed. So word must have got around, there was a nutcase living at No.6, and it would be better to leave his windows to rot, and his soul to the devil. There were fewer interruptions after that.

Splitting wood

Having grown up with coal fires, I've always felt at home with an axe around the house. 50 years ago, the first thing you saw on opening our back door was the firewood basket with a scruffy Kent pattern axe nestling among the kindling. The edge was well chipped from my off-target hits on a concrete floor, and the head itself was slightly loose, but a swift knock on the floor, handle first, sorted that. Functionally, it was more of a splitter than a cutter, planted in the end-grain before whacking the wood on the floor until it was wedged apart.

Being the first home, on a school day, I'd often amuse myself by splitting wood ready for Mum to light the fire. I got to know the splintery awkwardness of softwood knots and the surge of satisfaction that comes from a piece parting like two fingers of a Kit-Kat. By the time Dad got home from work on a winter's evening, the living room hearth would be ablaze. There's a lot to be said for central heating, I know, but little joy to be had with a radiator and a toasting fork.

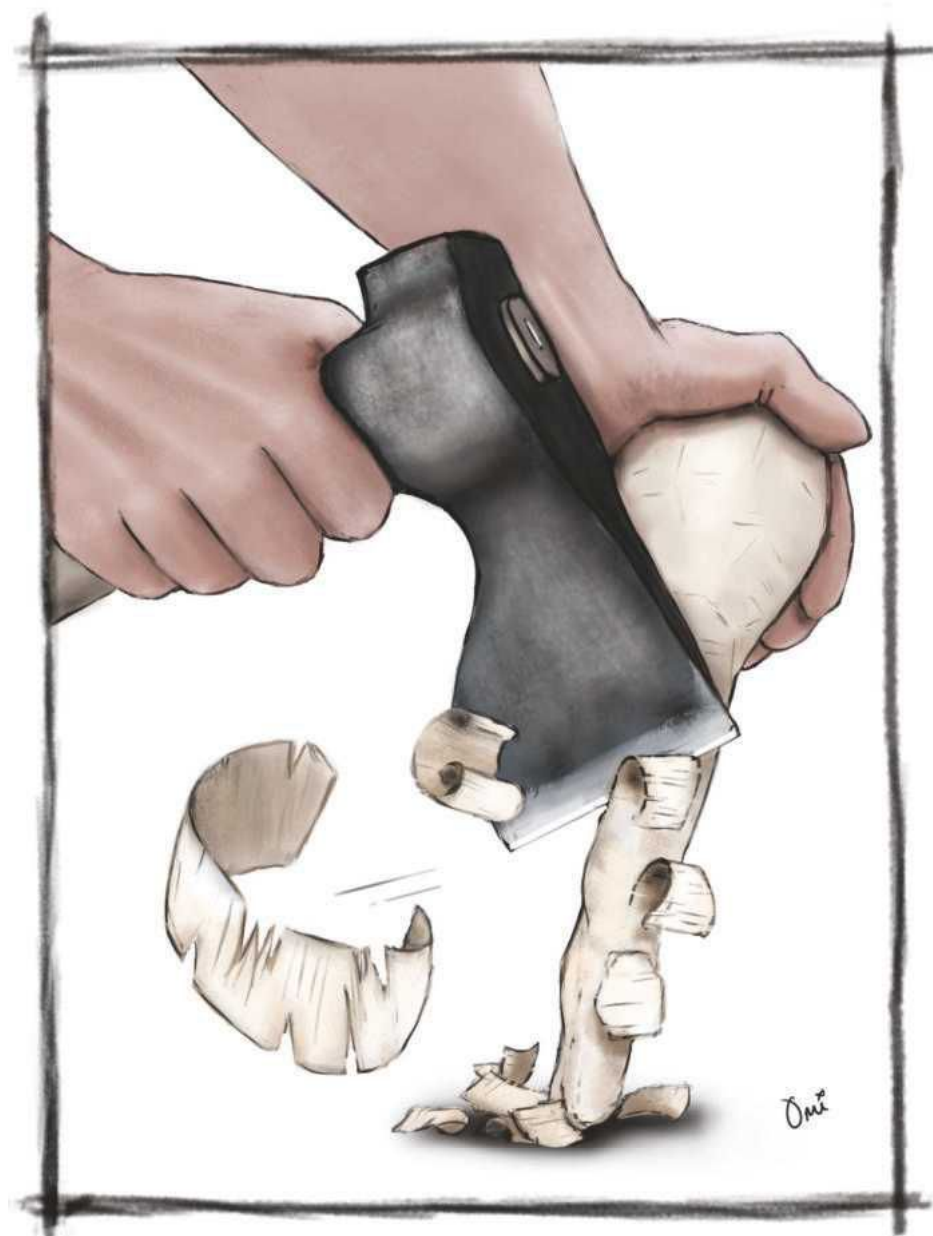


Illustration by Omi

Spoon carving

Given the creeping domination of our lives by various electronic devices, making us ever more dependent on its push-button, touch-screen, artificially intelligent ways, our need to use an axe is greater than it's been since the Stone Age. Back then, when the axe was born from a fractured flint, it killed our food and built our shelters. Now it simply reminds us that we are human. Heft an axe, close your eyes, and in its weight you can sense the effort and the sweat of civilisation being shaped through countless generations. In the axe, in the hand, lies the power to change and to create – to create what?

Well, spoons of course. Me, I'm way too squeamish to go axing bunny rabbits for dinner, and too plain lazy to build my own house out of logs, but even I can make a wooden spoon of sorts, for which the first step is roughing out the blank with an axe.

Back before the internet (a time which seems as remote as the Stone Age), I carved out a spoon more or less by accident, and felt daft for having

done so when a far better spoon could be had for next-to-nothing in the home wares aisle of the local supermarket. Now, dip at random into the theatre of online woodwork, and if it isn't someone showing how to cut a dovetail joint, there'll be a latter-day Norse god chip-carving a ladle as shapely and decorative as a turtle dove. Spread by video and the full monty of social media, spoon carving has become the woodworker's equivalent of kittens. Everyone is looking at spoons and going, "Aww."

And not just looking. If the wares in the market stalls and galleries of my neck of the woods are any guide, a goodly number of refugees from our over-automated society have been toning up their long-dormant makers' muscles to become axe- and knife-wielding green woodworkers, turning out spoons, spatulas, and spurtles sufficient to feed the world. And why not? In the most practical of its meanings 'having an axe to grind' goes back thousands of years – it's as good as in our DNA. **WW**



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Online Review



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Online Review



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