WOODWORK | TURNING | TOOL TESTS | FEATURES

June 2024

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Brian Barber captures burr sycamore's beauty in his floating cabinet within a cabinet



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Devon walnut turned and adzed bowl, by Alan Peters OBE, circa 1975







Maple stool, by Alan Peters OBE, 340mm high × 225mm wide × 390mm deep, 1950s





Alan Peters OBE Arts & Crafts Cotswold School coffee table, solid yew construction, 1980s

Welcome

With the entry deadline for the 2024 Alan Peters Online Furniture Award fast approaching, this seems like a good opportunity to celebrate the life and work of the man himself. Equally, this also serves as a reminder for those readers who're either in the process of finishing entries to submit, or even those who've yet to get started – but don't hesitate as you only have until 31 July!





Elm dining table, by Alan Peters OBE, 2,130mm long × 890mm wide × 730mm high

A pivotal & influential furniture designer-maker

Shown here are various examples of the work of Alan Peters OBE, who was undeniably one of the country's most pivotal and influential furniture designer-makers. Deeply influenced by the 'Cotswold School' of furniture making, he trained as an apprentice at Edward Barnsley's workshop before going on to set up on his own and enjoy a career spanning some 50 years. As the elegant pieces included here attest to, he's renowned for his outstanding, exquisite craftsmanship and innovative designs. In fact, Alan Peters' legacy is such that he's widely considered to have inspired a whole generation of furniture designer-makers, "with the clarity of his line, his clear connection to the Arts & Crafts ethos, and a life lead in their pursuit," as Matthew Burt so accurately puts it.

Prizes, judging & entry guidelines

Over the last few years, it's been a pleasure to have worked with organiser Jeremy Broun in continuing this award and through these pages, presenting the fantastic designs of previous winners, all of whom succeeded in echoing Alan Peters' approach and creating their own work according to these furniture design principles.

Despite taking a break last year, the award now returns for 2024, adopting an online format as previously, and backed by a fantastic selection of prizes for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners, from award sponsors Workshop Heaven, Evolution Power Tools and the judges themselves. This year's panel benefits from the fantastic input of award-winning furniture maker and guest judge, Fernanda Nuñez, who'll be bringing her unique insight in helping Jeremy Broun and Andrew Lawton critique this year's entries and assess the skills and techniques on show.

Having completed your entry, the next step is to download an application form via **www.jeremybroun.co.uk/alanpetersaward** and proceed to work through it, ensuring to thoroughly read the award terms & conditions and entry requirements beforehand. Doing so will ensure that everything is supplied in the correct format, thus minimising extra work for our organiser. In short, please double check everything prior to final submission in order to make the judging process as straightforward as possible.

Jeremy has kindly put together a short, informative video which takes you through the 2024 entry guidelines and is well worth a watch. Equally, for those in need of a little inspiration, why not take a look at the 2021 and 2022 judging ceremonies and winning work. All of these videos in addition to the application form and further award information can be found on the above website.

Finally, don't miss the opportunity to be part of this fantastic award and potentially be crowned the 2024 winner. Good luck to all entrants!



Small walnut chest by David Barron – award patron and previous year's guest judge – made using wood purchased from Alan Peters' widow, Laura. Design inspired by a chest Alan had previously made



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

WIN!

COMPETITION 1

1 of 3 Robert Sorby 84HS three-piece bowl turning sets – worth over £250 each!

In conjunction with **Robert Sorby**, we're giving three lucky readers the chance to win one of these new **three-piece bowl turning sets**, which comprise of two new tools, plus the popular Fingernail Bowl Gouge

See **page 29** for further details



COMPETITION 2

We've teamed up with wood care experts Liberon for a third time, giving more readers a chance to showcase their woodworking skills and win a fantastic prize bundle worth over £300!

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1st: £200 Amazon voucher, plus a Liberon woodcare product bundle worth over £120

2nd & 3rd: A Liberon woodcare product bundle each – worth over £120

– see page 37 to find out more



Good luck!

24 ROBERT SORBY: A LEGACY OF CRAFTSMANSHIP

With a proud heritage dating back almost 200 years, Robert Sorby – the world's leading manufacturer and exporter of specialist woodworking tools and equipment – continues to design and make a wide range of award-winning products, all crafted by a highly skilled team using a unique blend of traditional techniques and modern methods

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– see page 69 for details

CHISEL RATING

PROJECT DIFFICULTY 1-5

Each project in this issue includes a difficulty rating from 1-5, so you can readily see whether or not a particular one is suited to you. While it's good to try and push yourself and develop skills, workshop safety should always be a main consideration and we urge you not to attempt a project/use specified tools or machinery, if you're unsure how to do so in a safe manner. A wide range of safety information is available online and a good place to start is **www.hse.gov.uk**

1 **Very easy**; only requires basic tools
2 **Simple to make**; only a few tools required
3 **Aimed at beginners-intermediate**; some specific equipment/tools required
4 **Aimed at intermediate-advanced**; sound woodworking knowledge required in addition to a wide range of hand/power tools
5 **Advanced skills/knowledge required**; a wide range of specialist equipment is needed to complete the project

The Woodworker & Goodwoodworking
JUNE 2024

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Bosch PST700E	500W	70/4mm	£56.99	£68.39

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* WAS £149.99 inc.VAT
# WAS £185.99 inc.VAT

Model	Motor	Speed RPM	exc.VAT	inc.VAT
CSS400D	120W	400-1600	£99.98	£119.98
CSS16VB*	90W	550-1600	£119.95	£143.94
CSS400C#	90W	550-1600	£139.95	£167.94

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CPF13



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*Black & Decker

Model	Motor	Belt Size (mm)	exc.VAT	inc.VAT
CPF13	400W/230V	13x455	£49.98	£59.98
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LASER GUIDE

Model	Blade Dia/Bore (mm)	Max Cut Depth/ Cross	exc.VAT	inc.VAT
CMS210B	210/30	60/120	£79.95	£95.94
CMS10S2B	255/30	90/340	£169.00	£202.80

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THE COMPLETE SHARPENING KIT: MPOWER TOOLS' SB2 DOUBLE DIAMOND BENCH STONE – SIDE BY SIDE



The complete sharpening package: MPower Tools' SB2 double diamond bench stone – side by side

Also known as little brother of the 'Big Dawg' – MPower Tools' Side by Side (SBS) six-stage three grade diamond sharpening station – the new SB2 ensures 'a lifetime of sharpness' with a lifelong companion.

Thanks to MPower's innovative manufacturing process, rather than having to throw a tool away due to minor wear and tear, damaged diamond surfaces can be easily replaced by the user, with any replacement plates sent free of charge within the first 10 years of purchase.

The SB2 stands as the second most comprehensive sharpening package available globally and is loaded with industry-first features. The process of properly sharpening a tool – whether a 6mm bevel-edge chisel or plane iron – entails multiple essential elements, all of which are ingeniously combined in the SB2 and stored in the incredibly durable carry case provided.

Easier operation

Unlike traditional double-sided 200mm diamond stones that require setup for each grade, the SB2 sits ready on your bench, offering two sharpening grades of diamond, side by side. Additionally, it's the first diamond stone to feature two real leather-topped magnetic protective covers with both firm and soft grades of leather. Thus, you can seamlessly transition from two-grade sharpening to two-grade strop finishing, without interruption.

Dimensions

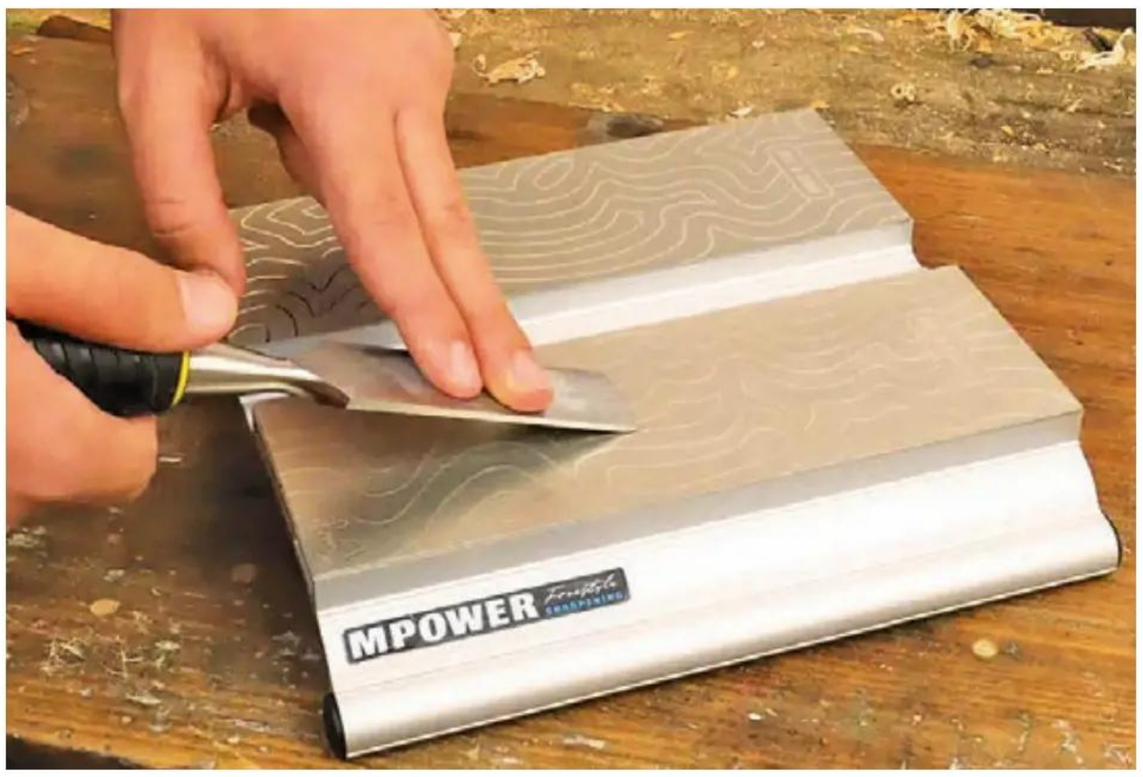
Overall size: 200 × 209mm (8 × 8¼in)
Total diamond surface: 0.03sq.m
Weight: 1.85kg

What's included

- The new SB2 is equipped with two grades of diamond surface and offered in three different models: 1) **300 > 1,200 grit**; 2) **600 > 1,200 grit**; 3) **300 > 600 grit**;
- Two magnetic leather strop covers for quick attachment and removal, featuring two different leathers – firm and soft;
- Two uniquely formulated grades of polishing wax, which correspond to the chosen grade: 1,800, 2,500 and 5,000 grit;
- 1 × 30ml fully synthetic diamond lapping fluid;
- Diamond stone cleaning block;
- 610 × 305mm plus lint free cleaning towel;
- All of the above comes neatly organised in a custom-built, incredibly durable canvas storage case.

Every SB2 is proudly crafted in MPower Tools' UK factory, in Salisbury, Wiltshire. Throughout the manufacturing process, each stone undergoes 11 rigorous quality assurance tests to ensure it meets the highest standards of excellence.

Priced at £149.95, see **www.mpower-tools.co.uk** for further information.



Sharpening a chisel using the SB2 double-sided diamond sharpening stone



Using the leather strop and polishing compound on a plane blade

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Timber Suppliers Directory – June 2024

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Web: www.adhectic.co.uk

A Harrison (Northants)
Tel: 01536 725 192
Web: www.aharrisonwoodturning.co.uk

Albion Timber (Sheffield)
Tel: 07580 627 921
Web: www.albiontimber.co.uk

Bennetts Timber (Lincolnshire)
Tel: 01472 350 151
Web: www.bennettstimber.co.uk

Black Isle Woodturning (Scotland)
Tel: 07842 189 743
Web: www.blackislewoodturning.com

Brodies Timber (Perthshire)
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Brooks Brothers Timber (Essex)
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Web: www.brookstimber.co.uk

C&G Barrett Ltd, Cilfiegan Sawmill (South Wales)
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Web: www.cilfiegansawmill.com

Clive Walker Timber Ltd (West Yorkshire)
Tel: 01132 704 928
Web: www.clivewalkertimber.co.uk

D Emmerson Timber (Lincolnshire)
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Web: www.emmersontimber.co.uk

Earlswood Interiors (West Midlands)
Tel: 01564 703 706
Web: www.earlswoodinteriors.co.uk

English Woodlands Timber (West Sussex)
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Web: www.englishwoodlandstimber.co.uk

Exotic Hardwoods (Kent)
Tel: 01732 355 626
Web: www.exotichardwoods.co.uk

EO Burton, Thorndon Sawmills (Essex)
Tel: 01277 260 810
Web: www.eoburton.com

Eynsham Park Sawmill (Oxfordshire)
Tel: 01993 881 391
Web: www.eynshamparksawmill.co.uk

FH Ives (Essex)
Tel: 01268 732 373
Web: www.fhives.com

Fulham Timber (London)
Tel: 0208 685 5340
Web: www.fulhamtimber.co.uk

G&S Specialist Timber (Cumbria)
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Web: www.toolsandtimber.co.uk

Good Timber (Northamptonshire)
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Web: www.goodtimber.com

The Hardwood off cut shop (Essex)
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Doddinghurst road, Brentwood, Essex,
CM15 OSD
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Web: www.hardwoodoffcuts.co.uk
sales@hardwoodoffcuts.co.uk

Horndon Timber Products
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Web: www.iscawoodcrafts.co.uk

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Lincolnshire Woodcraft (Lincolnshire)
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Nottage Timber (South Wales)
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Ockenden Timber (Powys)
Tel: 01588 620 884
Web: www.ockenden-timber.co.uk

Olivers Woodturning (Kent)
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Web: www.oliverswoodturning.co.uk

Oxford Wood Recycling (Oxfordshire)
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Web: www.scadding-son-ltd.co.uk

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Web: www.standrewstimbersupplies.co.uk

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

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Web: www.wenbans.com

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JOSEPH WALSH STUDIO CAREERS DAY: 31 May 2024



Joseph Walsh Studio, County Cork, Ireland will hold its first annual Careers Day on 31 May 2024. The event is aimed at anyone with an interest in joining the team at this renowned Studio, which this year celebrates its 25th anniversary. At the Careers Day, senior members of the Workshop, Design Studio and Gallery Team, as well as Joseph Walsh, will be available to discuss current vacancies, career opportunities and provide Studio tours.

Art, craft, design & technical innovation

Joseph Walsh established his Studio in 1999 on the south coast of Ireland, where he's still based today. Merging art, craft, design and technical innovation, the Studio creates monumental sculptures, one-of-a-kind site-specific commissions and collectible design editions, primarily in wood, but also incorporating other materials such as stone and bronze.

From the beginning of his career, Joseph Walsh pursued innovation in making based on traditional techniques, often from other craft forms, which enabled him to develop new ways and methods of making. From early years of experimentation and development, he began to break some of the traditional rules of making – and even some of his own – to create the bold, expressive forms for which he's known today. These reveal an intuitive relationship with making and a deep understanding of materials and process. Joseph's achievements in the design world have been widely recognised; his work has been acquired by major collections including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum and Museum of Art and Design in New York; the Centre Pompidou and Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris; the Devonshire Collections at Chatsworth House and the National Gallery of Ireland. This year, as part of the Studio's 25th anniversary celebrations, Joseph Walsh is participating in a series of museum talks, including an event at the Design Museum, London on 4 June.

A centre of excellence

Today, the Joseph Walsh Studio Workshop is one of Europe's leading studio workshops. A centre of excellence in making, it's committed to increasing the knowledge and understanding of wood as well as raising standards of craftsmanship. In 2022, the Workshop established the 'Daltae' Training Programme, which now offers a three-year full-time programme to those wishing to learn alongside the Workshop Team and eventually become a maker at Joseph Walsh Studio. Meanwhile, in the Design Studio, a team of design developers undertake the research and development of Joseph's ambitious concepts.

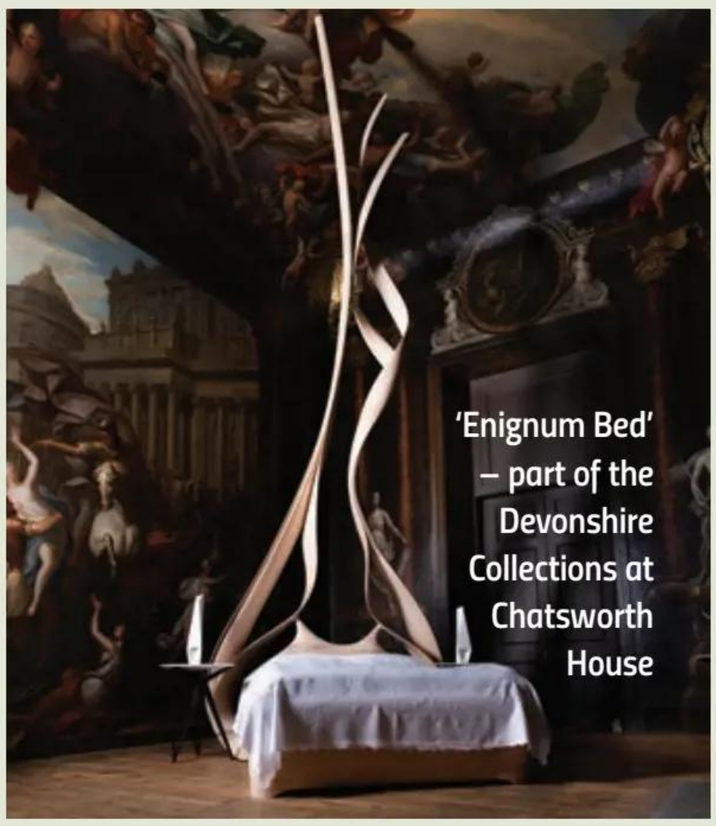
Annual 'Making In' seminar

Joseph Walsh Studio also hosts Making In – an annual seminar where international makers, architects, designers and artists gather to discuss and celebrate making across all creative disciplines – and this year's event is due to take place on 7 September.

For further information on the Careers Day, see **www.josephwalshstudio.com/careers** or email **careers@josephwalshstudio.com**. For further information on the annual Making In seminar, visit **www.makingin.org**.



The DALTAE Training Programme offers individuals the opportunity to learn alongside other makers



'Enignum Bed' – part of the Devonshire Collections at Chatsworth House

Next generation **Mirka®** tools deliver **20% more sanding power**

Mirka® is upgrading its DEROS and DEOS orbital sanders with a long-life electric motor that delivers 20% more sanding power to make light work of demanding jobs and heavy applications. The Mirka® DEROS II and DEOS II feature a new visible LED indicator, which makes it even easier for the operator to adjust the sanding speed, in addition to a new on/off button and lockable speed function.

For monitoring vibration levels, the smart, user-friendly tools are compatible with the myMirka app through Bluetooth® technology. Operator comfort continues at a high standard, as the brushless electric motor is smooth-running with a low noise level, which helps to reduce stress when sanding for longer periods. The sander's compact, ergonomic design makes it easy to use in addition to being low maintenance.

As well as ergonomics and ease of use, the hallmark of Mirka®'s range of sanders is compatibility with dust-free sanding. Combine the DEROS II or DEOS II with a Mirka® dust extractor and start sanding with dust-free abrasives for a safer and healthier working process thanks to efficient on-tool dust extraction.

Craig Daycock, Managing Director, Mirka® UK, says: "At Mirka®, we're constantly reviewing ways to continue improving our power tools and these next generation smart sanders will ensure operators can tackle a multitude of heavy tasks easily and comfortably, without putting pressure on their hands and arms."

For further information on these and other tools, see the website: **www.mirka.com/en-gb**.



Mirka® DEROS II 150mm random orbital sander



Mirka® DEOS II 353 orbital sander

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IRONMONGERYDIRECT proud of its achievement in customer service



Specialist supplier, IronmongeryDirect, has recently been awarded In-house Research's Outstanding Achievement Award for Customer Satisfaction. The award is recognition of the company's great work in providing consistently high customer service levels.

In-house Research is a specialist research and consultancy business focusing on the new build and construction industry. The award is given to companies that achieve a Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 70 or above, based on customer feedback of the previous year. With 1,200 customers surveyed in total, the supplier achieved a score of 71.1%. In fact, IronmongeryDirect has achieved an NPS score of above 70 for the last four years.

The company is continually looking at ways in which to keep its customer services levels high. With this, in the last year, several initiatives have been introduced, including training six employees with the Guild of Architectural Ironmongers (GAI). This training ensures that there are staff on hand to answer technical queries with confidence and provide customers with knowledgeable advice.

In addition, the supplier has introduced a Trade Quotes service where IronmongeryDirect creates the paperwork for larger jobs. In terms of delivery, customers now have three options: same day delivery to selected postcodes in London and the South East; next day delivery – for orders placed before 9pm; and two-working day delivery for £3.95 + VAT – or free for orders over £50 + VAT. Click & Collect is also available from 6,500 pick up points.

Keri Bryce, Head of Sales & Marketing commented, "Our business goal is to always provide the best service to our customers at every stage of their purchase. It's great to see so many of our customers happy with the service we offer. This has also been shown through the excellent Trustpilot reviews we receive. We're incredibly proud to have been awarded this recognition and look forward to continually striving to offer the best customer service in the industry."

IronmongeryDirect is a leading specialist supplier of ironmongery to the trade. With over 18,000 products in stock for next day delivery, including everything from hinges, locks and security devices to specialist fire door hardware. To find out more about IronmongeryDirect, visit the website: **www.IronmongeryDirect.co.uk.**

New CLARKE CHD900 230V hammer drill – now available from Machine Mart

The new Clarke CHD900 230V hammer drill – available from Machine Mart – represents excellent value and delivers high performance results. A 900W motor makes it ideal for fast drilling of masonry, wood and steel. The CHD900 is capable of 0-3,000rpm variable speed with reverse action and has maximum drilling capacities – diameter – of 25mm in wood, 12mm in steel and 12mm in masonry.

The CHD900 features an anti-slip grip for safe and comfortable use, as well as a lock-on switch for continuous operation. The new hammer drill also includes a side handle with depth stop gauge in addition to a chuck key. Priced at £35.98 (inc VAT), the Clarke CHD900 is available both in-store and online.

For further information, visit the Machine Mart website: **www.machinemart.co.uk**.

Technical specification

Chuck type: Keyed
Volts: 230V
Watts: 900W
Chuck size: 13mm
Hammer action: Yes
Reverse: Yes
Suitable for use with core bits: No

TREND TOOL TECHNOLOGY launches new T1 710W ¼in dual-base trim & plunge router



Trend Tool Technology – the pioneer in woodworking innovation – is proud to announce the release of its new T1 – a versatile 710W ¼in dual-base trim & plunge router for precision woodworking, which is designed to meet woodworkers' diverse needs. This flexible, light, compact router comes with both trim and plunge base options, making it the ideal choice for tasks ranging from laminate trimming to intricate timber profiling.

Key features of the Trend T1 710W ¼in dual-base trim & plunge router include:

1. Versatile dual bases

- **Trim base** – extended trim base with rack & pinion height adjustment and up to 37mm cut depth.
- **Plunge base** – 60mm plunge depth for light-duty jig, deep or long-reach cutting applications.

Trim base features:

- Precision centring system for concentricity between cutter and guide bush for pinpoint accuracy with routing jigs.
- Compatible with Trend guide bushes for jig use, templating and inlaying.
- Adjustable side fence for templating and edge rebating.



Plunge base features:

- Precision centring system for pinpoint accuracy with routing jigs.
- Fine height adjuster with an easy-to-read 0.2mm increment display for precision depth adjustments.
- Height-adjustable three-position rotating turret for fast, repeatable batch and stepped cutting.

2. Key applications:

- Edge moulding;
- Hinge fitting and grooving;
- Templating and profiling.

3. Precision & power:

- 710W motor with Soft-Start function to prevent kick-back and protect the workpiece.
- Six-level variable speed control for precise control across a wide range of cutters, materials and applications.
- Double locking collet prevents accidental cutter ejection while ensuring concentric cuttershank clamping.
- Compact inclined handles with a soft grip moulding for comfortable operation.
- Offset dust extraction spout for an unimpeded workpiece view.
- Compatible with Trend guide bushes for jig use, templating and inlaying.
- Adjustable side fence for templating and edge rebating.

4. Convenient storage:

- Tough polyester kit bag included for storage of the router and all supplied accessories.

"The Trend T1 router represents a leap forward in precision and versatility for woodworking enthusiasts. With its dual bases and a host of features designed for accuracy and convenience, the T1 is set to redefine the woodworking experience," says Andrew Trainer, Product Director at Trend Tool Technology.



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RECORD POWER SABRE 300 12IN BANDSAW

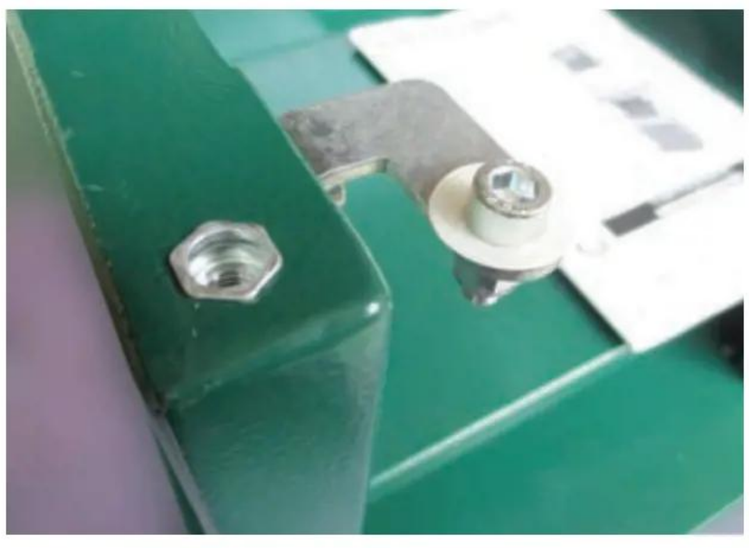
Jonathan Salisbury tests the brand-new bandsaw offering from **Record Power** – the **SABRE 300**

If you only have room for one machine saw in your workshop, the bandsaw is the most practical choice. The throat depth – distance between the blade and frame – limits the size that can be cut; but straight lines or curved, thin pieces or thick, one machine and a small collection of blades can do most jobs.

Which size you go for depends on available space, the most likely use it will be put to and your budget. I'd say that the Record SABRE 300 fits into the 'about right' category: not too big, and capable of cutting thicker pieces down to size ready for planing while also coping with more intricate curves. It is, however, a rather



curious addition to the current range, which already includes SABREs 250, 350 and 450 – is a 300 actually required?



Simple hinges

Out of the box

At 89kg, the SABRE 300 is heavy. It needs to be, if it's to stay in place during use and not bolted to the floor – although there are holes in the base if you want to do this. Removing it from the box is definitely a two-man task, but thereafter one strong person could do the rest. The upper part of the saw is pre-assembled and almost ready to go, including the blade; but there are still several parts to add or put-together.

The majority of the manual is dedicated to



Locking handle on the upper wheel cover



High quality castings for the trunnion mechanism



Everything required for assembly

initial setup. The saw comes with all the tools required for assembly, supplied in a little 'pencil case'. The base is held together with many hexagonal screws, and the door has a simple hinge bracket with set screws at the top and bottom for it to swivel on. A rotating handle locks the door shut and, with the shelf in place, the top section is attached with four long screws.

Once upright, the cast-iron table mounts to the trunnion with four screws; this is a little fiddly, but only because the table is so heavy. Once in place, the table can be adjusted to align it perfectly before the screws are fully tightened. Tilting the table is achieved through the trunnion's rack and pinion, which is very good. When moving it from horizontal, a small amount of downwards pressure is required as the gear ratio isn't sufficient to deal with the force required. But returning it to horizontal only requires the pinion to be turned in order for it to move under its own weight. The gear mechanism is sufficiently tight to prevent the table moving on its own, so it's possible to let go when setting angles, but when loose there's a small amount of table wobble and it can move slightly during tightening. There's a gauge on the trunnion with an adjustable pointer to help set up angles; the only problem is that, being underneath, it can be difficult to see if lighting conditions are unfavourable. A machine screw is used as a stop to return the table to horizontal without needing to refer to the gauge, and the lock lever can be repositioned to get it in the right place for loosening or tightening the screw.

The rip fence rail is attached to the front of the table with four nuts – two at the front and two at the back – so that it can be adjusted and made perfectly level with the table, while ensuring that the fence is perpendicular. The rail's centre has two '0' markings either side of the kerf; as long as the teeth are set to this distance – which they are on the original blade – and measurements are



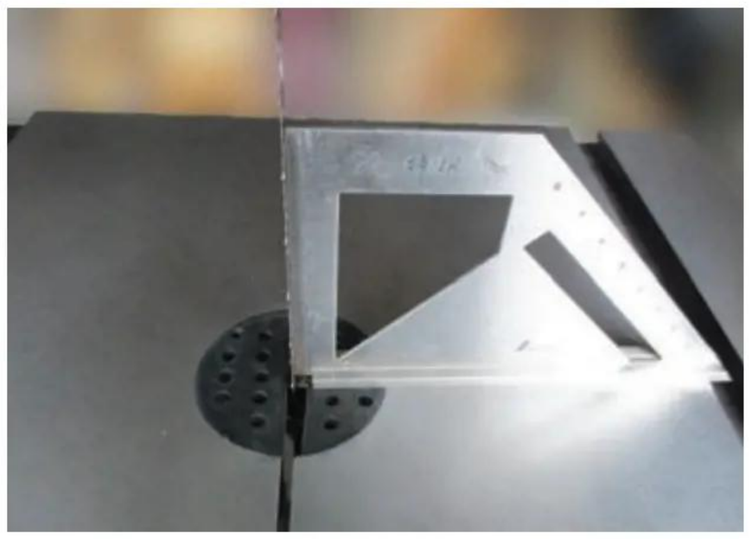
Just four screws to keep the table in place...



... and two are easier to access at 45°



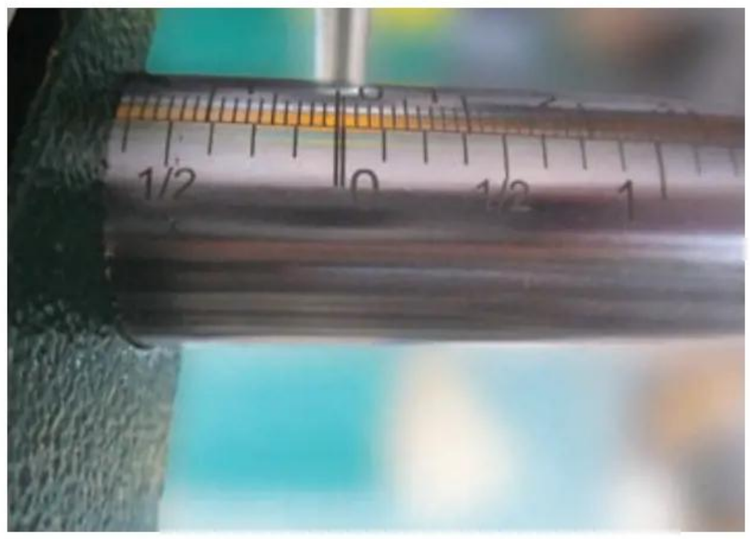
Simple stop for a level table



Setting the table perpendicular to the blade

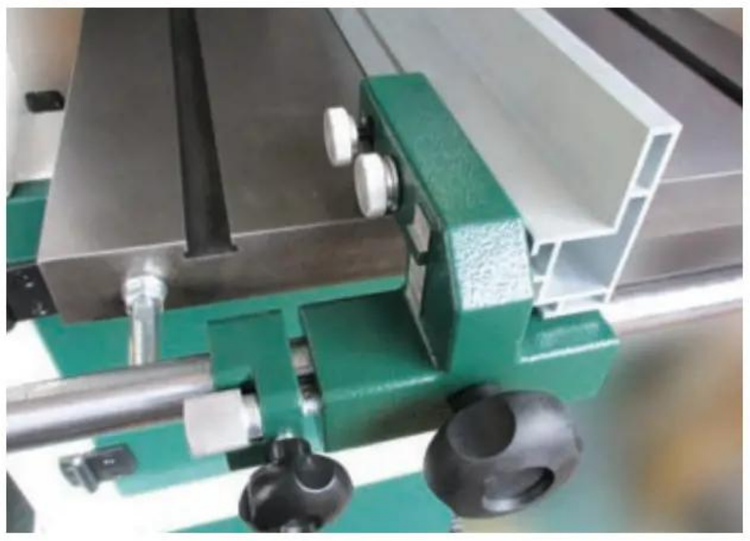


The angle pointer can be reset

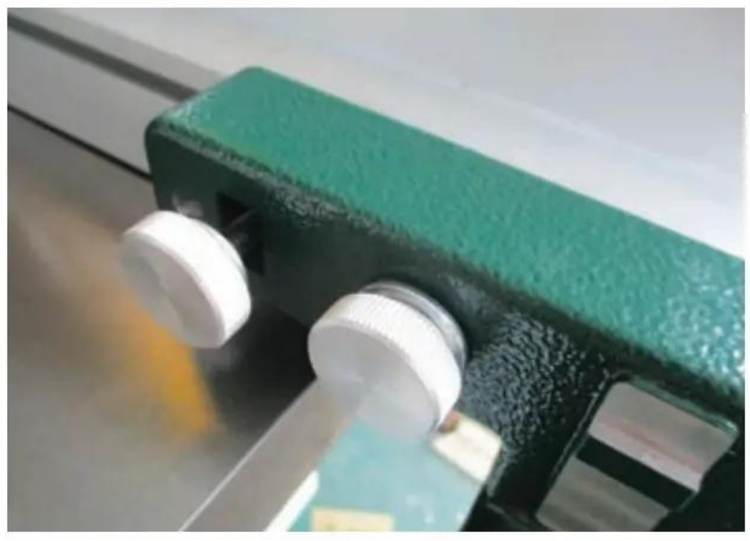


0-0 marks the kerf of a standard blade

in both inches and millimetres. The fence mount has a main fixing screw and a second to hold the fine-tuning clamp in place; small adjustments to the fence position can be made with adjuster screws. The fence can be mounted left and right, for cutting either side of the blade, and upright or flat to cope with thick or thin pieces. A small pad keeps the fence off the table, making movement much easier. After this, the only things to be fixed in place are the blade tensioning wheel, guide post cap, blade guard hand wheel, hex key holder and a screw to hang the push stick on.



The fence mount has excellent fine adjustment...



... and the fence alignment can be tweaked further

Tension mounts

When running, a window opposite the top wheel allows you to see if the blade is positioned centrally without needing to open the door. It wasn't very easy to see through, as the case interior was very dark and there were too many reflections on the outside. The blade alignment tracking knob and lock nut, with its wide handle, make adjustment very easy here, but the saw blade was already installed and running centrally on the tyres, so it just needed tensioning.

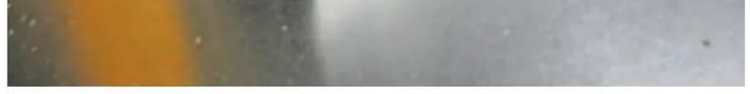
A pointer inside the case indicates the recommended setting for each blade width and another plastic window allows this to be viewed with the case closed; this was much easier to see than the tracking position. Once tracking and tension are correct, there's a lever for releasing the blade when the machine isn't in use, which prevents stretching as well as damage caused by the force on static bearings.

Guiding the blade

The blade runs through guide blocks and against thrust wheels to keep it in line, both above and below the table. Once the blade tracking and tensioning are correct, the guide blocks and thrust bearings need to be checked, and adjusted if necessary; there needs to be a very small gap so that the blade doesn't touch the blocks or bearings when no cutting is taking place. They also need to be rechecked every so often, and usually completely reset with a change of blade.

This final setting up has always provided a challenge with every bandsaw I've used, including this one. The system used isn't the problem; the blocks at the sides are adjusted by thumb screws to move them forwards and backwards, and in and out; a thrust bearing behind the blade has a similar set-up to adjust it, but only forwards and backwards. Both systems have a lock handle, so no tools are required. In theory, it ought to be possible to set them up in no time at all.

Unfortunately, despite being transparent, the blade guards prevented me from having clear sight, so that I could see what I was doing, and unrestricted access to allow me to put a thin piece of paper between block and blade –



Integral pad for smooth movement



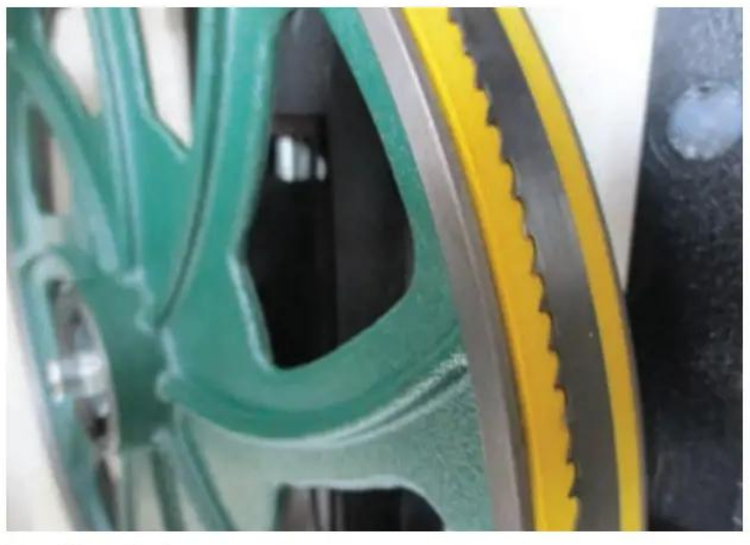
A set screw keeps the push stick to hand



The tension knob label shows tightening direction



Tension setting can be easily read through the door



Tracking is factory set...



... and is easy to adjust and lock in place



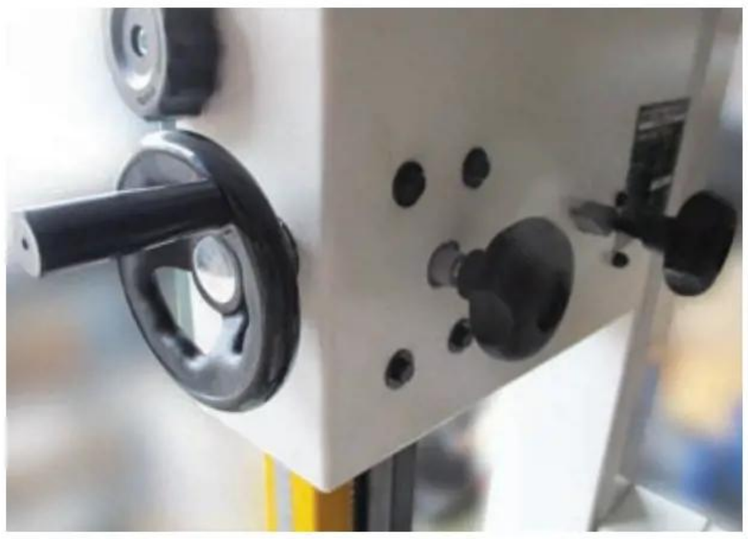
Look carefully and you can just about see the blade!



The lower wheel shaft can also be adjusted



Don't forget to release the tension when not in use



The blade guard adjustment and lock are within comfortable reach



High quality mechanisms provide smooth guard motion



The rule provides a guide for blade exposure

my preferred method of setting the smallest distance possible. Under the table is always more difficult, as this area is restricted, inaccessible and there's never enough space to manoeuvre tools or get hands in to adjustment knobs; the SABRE 300 is no different in this respect, although tilting the table over to 45° provides a partial solution.

The adjustment mechanisms are actually excellent and if the clear plastic guards could be moved temporarily, without having to take out the thrust bearing adjustment screw, this would be a perfect system. I managed, eventually, to get it close enough to where I wanted it to for testing purposes. Given more time, I may have found a better way of doing this, other than the most obvious (unacceptable) solution, which is to remove them altogether.

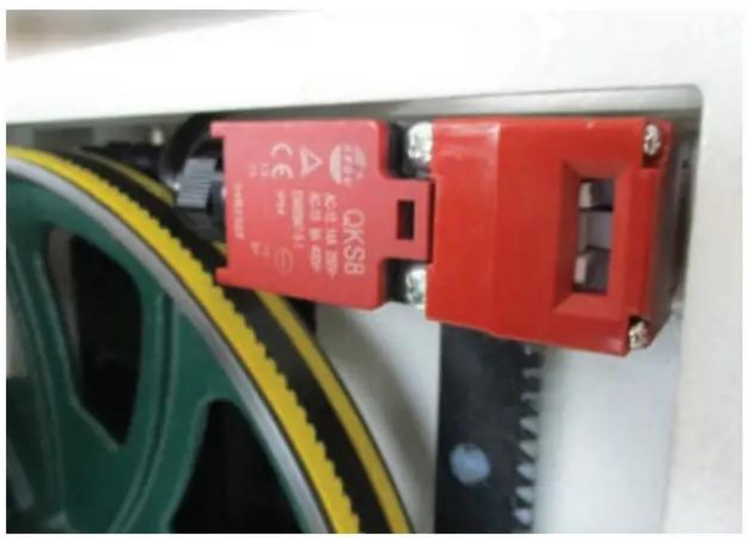
Safety first

The SABRE 300 has all the usual safety features. The blade guard features easy and smooth adjustment, and locks in place with a separate wheel; the on/off switches are well placed, have a positive feel to them and the electro-brake brings the blade to a complete stop in around four seconds; the blade and motor access doors lock with hand wheels to prevent accidental opening; and interlocks with very tight catches need a sharp pull to release them. There's no emergency foot stop switch, though; I'd like this as an option, just so that two hands are always available to control the wood. A yellow plastic push stick is included, which hangs on the side of the cabinet.

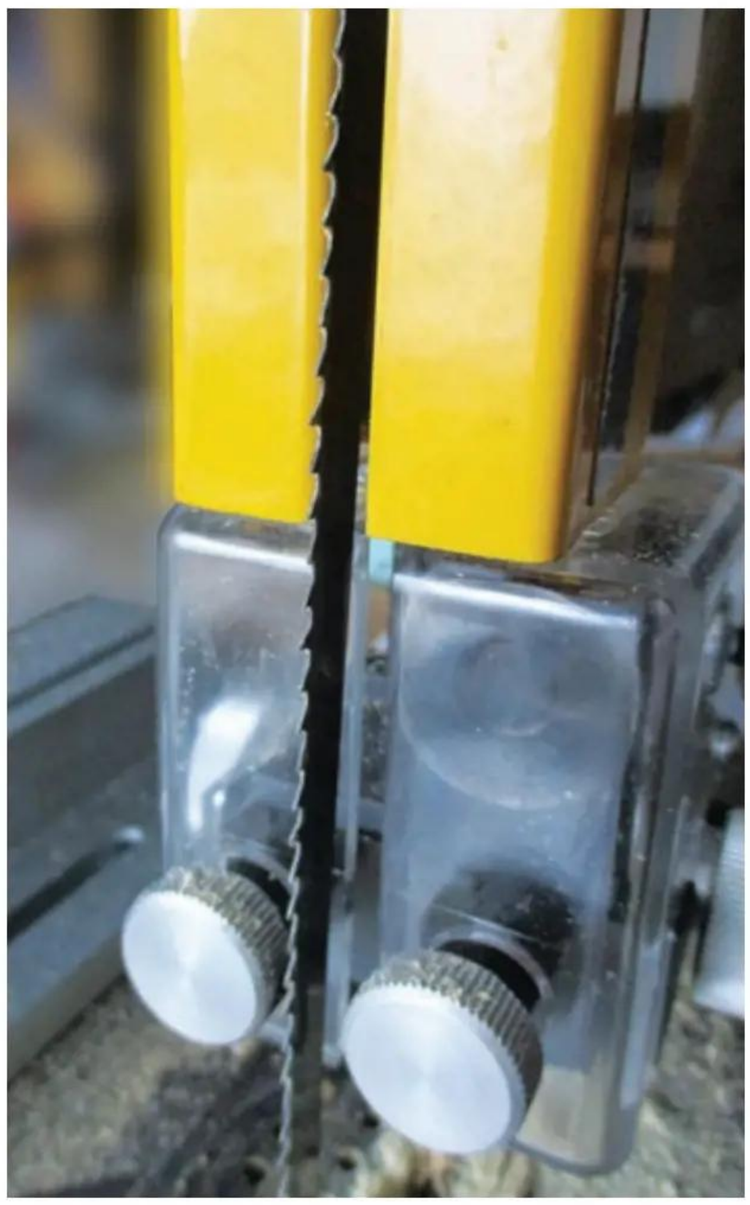
Not that long ago, bandsaws only had one dust extraction point at the back, low down, and not where dust is actually created. Nowadays, it's common for there to be one just under the table – for removing the majority of waste – and a second to clear anything heavier that falls past the lower wheel; the SABRE 300 has these. The replaceable table insert is perforated to allow dust to fall through easily, but of course you do need an extractor and two tubes that can pull a reasonable amount of air through the casing, otherwise constant vacuuming of large amounts of dust is required. Even then, and despite the plastic insert that helps divert dust towards the first extraction point, you'd also have a problem with compacted dust build-up on the tyres, which will damage them, make it more difficult to keep the blade running true, and, as such, cause premature wear. The stiff brushes don't do a good enough cleaning job, and you only have to look at the photos to see



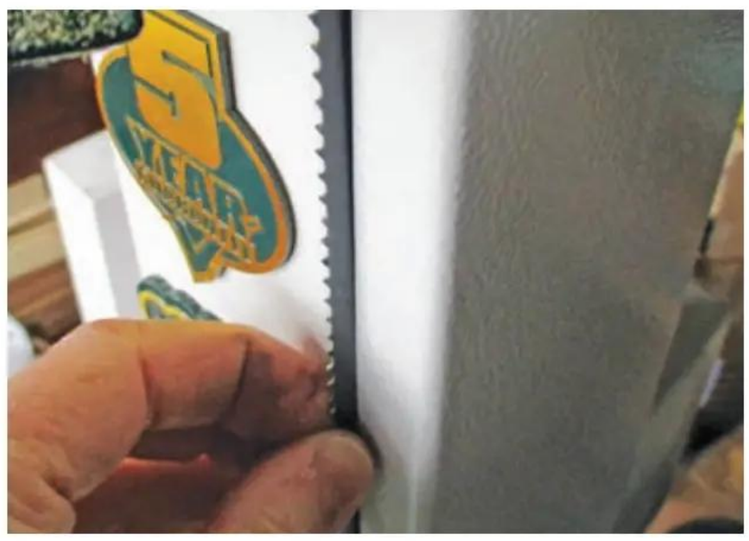
The standard connector means that cables can be replaced...



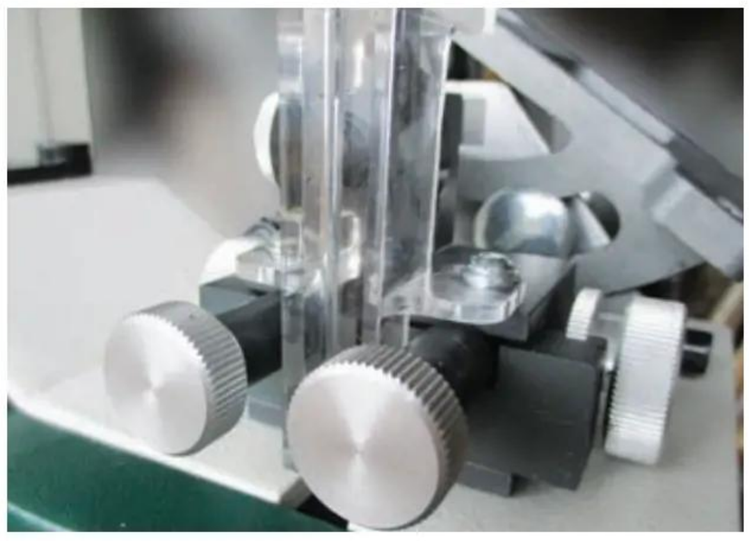
... and interlocks require a firm pull to release them



The loosened blade can be pulled through the guard without removal...



... and out past the plate on the left side, too



Adjustment method is superb, but guards prevent easy viewing



The fence is easily adjusted for thinner cuts...



... and the resulting finish is good

how much dust is created with two test cuts. Add a decent extractor to your shopping list.

In use

Of course I expected the saw to perform well, based on the machine's quality and a new blade that was properly set up. Cutting was, indeed, excellent; easy, smooth, quiet, accurate – everything about it felt right and I was hugely impressed. The manual is quite a long read, but gives very clear guidance on use, including tables of blade recommendations for various sizes and types of timber and how to adjust the speed – from 500 to 1,000m/min – for non-ferrous metal cutting.

Conclusion

What I like most about bandsaws is that, providing they're set up properly, they're easy to use; the downside being that set up and maintenance tasks are more complex than those of other sawing machines, and have to be performed more frequently. Don't be put off; it's worth developing the skills required for keeping a bandsaw in good condition and working perfectly. Six pages of the manual are dedicated to these tasks, so anything that makes them easier adds bonus points.

For its size, the SABRE 300 is closer to perfection than any other bandsaw I've used. I like its solidity and that there's quality where it really counts; some of the features, such as the fence mount and trunnion lock, are much better that those found on other SABRE models – and the 300's standard fence is available as an upgrade for other machines. It's fairly obvious that the development of Record bandsaws has been guided by those who use them, not by someone copying something that already exists, and this is worth paying for.



The fence can also be mounted on the right for angled cuts



The perforated insert allows dust to drop through

Options include a table extension for longer workpiece support, wheels to aid moving the saw around if your workshop requires it to be stored out of the way, and a heavy-duty cast mitre fence for angled and compound cutting. Blades are an uncommon 2,420mm (95¼in) long, which limits the choice of supplier somewhat. You can of course buy any type of blade made to measure, but until there's greater supply the additional cost and inconvenience may be a factor to consider if relying on a wide range for your work.

The only thing I think really needs improving is the blade guide guards. The thumb-wheel adjustment system is excellent, providing exceptionally fine control of side and back clearance, and – without the guards – it's quick and easy to set up correctly and superior to the eccentric bearings often fitted to bandsaws. If this isn't done correctly, the blade doesn't cut straight, either flexing or twisting too much or even being pushed out of line, which affects both the quality and accuracy of cut. Improved access would make this so much easier.

Despite this frustrating oversight, the Record Power SABRE 300 is excellent, from the positive click of the go button to the swish of the sharp blade as it slices almost effortlessly through wood. Comparing the superior features and performance of this particular bandsaw to similar machines from other manufacturers, I'd say that any additional cost is absolutely worth paying. This is one test machine that I'm very reluctant to repack and return.

SPECIFICATION

Maximum depth of cut: 254mm
Throat depth: 292mm
Table size: 480 × 400mm
Table height: 930mm
Motor output: 1.1kW
Motor speed: 2,800rpm
Blade length: 2,420mm
Blade width capacity: ¼-¾in (6-19mm)
Blade speed: 500m/min – 1,000m/min
Extraction port diameters (int/ext): 93/99mm & 59/63mm
Sound power level: <100dBA
Sound pressure level: <90dBA
Weight: 89kg
Dimensions (h × w × d): 1,714 × 791 × 670mm

Typical price: £999.99
Web: www.recordpower.co.uk

THE VERDICT

PROS

- Superb quality; improved features make it easier and more pleasurable to use than other machines; supplied with a five-year guarantee as standard

CONS

- Plastic guards around the guide blocks prevent easier set up

RATING – *PERFORMANCE*: 5 OUT OF 5
RATING – *VALUE*: 5 OUT OF 5



A removable panel helps divert dust to the top extraction point...



... where a duct at the bottom removes the rest, providing extraction is used

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IRONMONGERYDIRECT adds toolkit essentials to its line-up

Specialist supplier, **IronmongeryDirect**, has added over 100 new **Reisser** products to its range. New additions include **circular saw and jigsaw blades**, as well as the brand's new **R3 Cyclone** range of **countersunk wood screws**



Blades

For cutting hard and softwoods, IronmongeryDirect has added TCT circular saw blades from Reisser to its stocked collection. Available in a range of sizes and compatible with portable and stationary table saws, they're tungsten carbide tipped for high precision cutting. The retailer has also added seven Reisser jigsaw blades. Available in packs of five, these are supplied in varying lengths and thicknesses, which offer different cuts suitable for a variety of materials including wood, plastic and metal.

Wood screws

Building on the strengths of the R2 and Cutter screws, the new R3 Cyclone wood screws provide a tight fit owing to its TTX drive. With deep, wide threads for high levels of pull-out resistance, the screws are fast start with instant grab. They're also self-countersinking, leaving the board surfacesmooth with a neat finish. The Reisser R3 screw range also includes Composite Decking Screws, available in a range of finishes designed to match decking boards' popular Pantone colours.

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TREND CONCEALED SCREW DECK JIG

If you want a neat finish to your decking with screw heads barely visible along board edges, this new jig from **Trend** is just the ticket, says **Phil Davy**





Made from steel and extremely durable plastic, the jig is simply clamped to the board and allows you to drive specific screws from each side at a 50° angle

Although building timber decking may not be quite so trendy these days, it's still a popular DIY outdoor activity. You've only got to visit a DIY store to find a range of decking boards on sale. It's easy to transform a tired part of the garden into an area for seating, barbecues or create a patio alternative. If you're after a professional finish using premium timber, it's preferable not to see rows of screw heads across the completed decking. Driving screws down through the edges at an angle is the common alternative here, but results can be hit or miss as it's easy to damage an edge. Concealed fixings also mean that water won't collect around the heads as it can with conventional decking screws. Trend's new jig is designed to overcome these problems and give consistent results.

Consistent angle

Made from steel and extremely durable plastic, it's simply clamped to the board and allows you to drive specific screws from each side at an angle of 50°. By depressing a spring-loaded pin, you can slide the jig inwards or outwards to accommodate timber up to 150mm wide. Minimum board width is 90mm, with a clear graduated scale as an easy setting guide. The unit is locked in position by operating the upper clamping arm, a pair of steel L brackets underneath gripping the board securely. Once screws have been installed, you release the jig by lifting a red lever, which again, is spring-loaded.

Trend screws – 60mm length only – are inserted in hardened steel guides at either end of the jig. Unlike standard decking screws these feature small, square drive heads – Robertson No.1 – and are ceramic coated. A special tip and coarse thread means that pre-drilling isn't necessary. A hex shank driver bit is provided for your cordless drill and stored on the jig itself. Two pairs of steel spacers are included and can be added to the L brackets, which gives you the option of 3.5, 4.5 and 5.5mm board spacings. A regular gap allows for drainage as well as boards potentially swelling.



The unit is locked in position by operating the upper clamping arm, a pair of steel L brackets underneath gripping the board securely



Trend's Ceramic Coated Deck Screws – 60mm length only – are inserted in hardened steel guides at either end of the jig



A hex shank driver bit is provided for your cordless drill and stored on the jig itself



Two pairs of steel spacers are included and can be added to the L brackets, which gives you the option of 3.5, 4.5 and 5.5mm board spacings

Conclusion

If you want a neat finish to your decking with screw heads barely visible along board edges, this new jig is just the ticket. Quick to use, it's certainly sturdy and works pretty well. On the downside, only Trend's No.10 × 60mm Ceramic Coated Deck Screws will fit, which significantly adds to the initial cost. A box of 750 will set you back about £48, which actually compares well with several top brand fixings. If you only have a small area of decking to install, however, you may have to resort to conventional fixings in the surface.

SPECIFICATION

- 50° hardened screw guides
- 3.5-5.5mm built-in board spacers
- Quick-release clamping arm
- 90-150mm board width adjustment

Typical prices: DK/JIG Concealed Screw Deck Jig – £49.99; No.10 × 60mm Ceramic Coated Deck Screws – 750 Pack – £47.99

Web: www.trend-uk.com

THE VERDICT

PROS

- Almost invisible fixing of boards

CONS

- Only accepts Trend No.10 × 60mm Ceramic Coated Deck Screws

RATING – *PERFORMANCE*: 4.5 OUT OF 5
RATING – *VALUE*: 4 OUT OF 5



CHISEL SIZES & LENGTHS

Size	Overall length	Handle length	Usable blade length
6mm (¼in)	283mm (11¼in)	160mm (6¼in)	95mm (3¾in)
10mm (⅜in	286mm (11¼in)	160mm (6¼in)	97mm (3¾in)
12mm (½in)	288mm (11¼in)	160mm (6¼in)	97mm (3⅞in)
16mm (⅝in)	293mm (11½in)	160mm (6¼in)	100mm (4in)
20mm (¾in)	294mm (11½in)	160mm (6¼in)	98mm (3⅞in)
26mm (1in)	302mm (11⅞in)	160mm (6¼in)	100mm (4in)

WORKSHOP HEAVEN SIX-PIECE VICTORIAN CABINETMAKERS CHISELS SET

Guest judge of the **Alan Peters Online Furniture Award 2024** and professional furniture maker, **Andrew Lawton**, takes a closer look at this excellent set of six 'Victorian' bevel-edge chisels from first prize sponsor, **Workshop Heaven**

It's said that a poor workman always blames his tools, but the opposite is also true: a good workman will refuse to work with poor tools. While good tools in themselves won't make someone a good craftsperson, they certainly help. Cheap woodworking chisels made using poor steel – that won't take and hold a decent edge – are a source of frustration, whereas high quality items will contribute to good and accurate work. The psychological aspect is also important, as fine tools are a joy to own and use, in addition to helping engender fine craftsmanship.

Packaging & blade guards

It was a pleasure, then, to be able to try out a set of 'Victorian Cabinetmakers Chisels', which are available exclusively from Workshop Heaven. The full set of six chisels are supplied individually wrapped in brown paper tied with a piece of string, in a cardboard box lined with corrugated card troughs. Each chisel has a plastic guard to prevent damage to the cutting edge. The box is of good enough quality to store the chisels in when not in use, although purchasers may decide to buy a leather tool roll – also available from Workshop Heaven – for more permanent protection. I'm not a fan of plastic packaging if an alternative exists, and found the cardboard box rather pleasing.

High carbon steel blades & rosewood handles

The chisels feature high carbon steel blades, made especially for Workshop Heaven by Narex – a well-known and respected firm located in the Czech Republic. As these are general-purpose chisels, for robustness when being struck by a mallet, the bevels are at a steeper angle in comparison to those on dedicated paring chisels. All steel surfaces have been carefully ground and polished, and fitted with what are described as 'Best London Pattern Rosewood Octagon' handles, turned in Sheffield. I've come across this style of handle before, as seen on some Ashley Iles' tools, and am a big fan. They're easy to grip and comfortable in the hand in all situations, although some users might prefer the handles on the narrower chisels having been scaled down in proportion.

The rosewood, which is sustainably sourced – beech handles are also available as an alternative option – has a matt oil finish, which not only



The chisels tested here feature Narex high carbon steel blades and rosewood 'Best London Pattern Rosewood Octagon' handles



An interesting attention to detail is the leather washer, situated at the point where the tang enters the handle



Forged from high carbon steel, blade composition is very similar to late Victorian crucible. They're ground to the 8116 pattern, which Workshop Heaven and Narex worked on together some years ago



Each handle is finished with Peacock Oil Regal Red, from Skelton Saws, before being installed with a hand-cut leather washer, which matches Workshop Heaven's handmade leather tool rolls

looks the part but also contributes to the tool's non-slip quality. An interesting attention to detail is the leather washer where the tang enters the handle. I assume this helps to absorb impact when the chisels are struck with a mallet, though it's worth noting, of course, that bevel-edge chisels aren't intended for heavy-duty work such as the chopping of mortises.

Ready for use

The chisels are supplied ground and honed ready for use, although I decided to touch them up on a 6,000 grit Japanese waterstone, as is my usual practice. The chisel backs are ground and polished minutely hollow, which is all to the good, and makes removing the 'wire edge' a quick operation. As such, there was no need to dress the backs of these chisels on a lapping plate made for this very purpose – also available from Workshop Heaven and the subject of a future article.

Crisp cutting

I tested a selection of these chisels on an actual project that was underway in the workshop: an occasional table made from a combination of ripple sycamore bandsawn veneers laid on a plywood substrate and Australian blackbean – a tough wood with a reputation for being hard to work, which has a blunting effect on cutting edges owing to its high mineral content. These chisels cut crisply and sweetly and didn't require resharpening throughout the paring of several sets of dovetails, which is testament to the steel's high quality. The chisels' dimensions and weight made for accurate and pleasurable work, also helped by the handles' design.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Workshop Heaven has come up with an excellent range of chisels here, which will satisfy the needs of fine craftspersons – professional and amateur alike – and available at a price that won't break the bank.



Handmade suede leather tool rolls, with either six or 12 pockets, are available from Workshop Heaven

SPECIFICATION

Chisel widths: 6mm, 10mm, 12mm, 16mm, 20mm & 26mm
Overall lengths: From 280-290mm
Blade lengths: 95-96mm
Blade thickness: Tapers down from 5mm
Handmade suede leather tool rolls: Six-pocket: overall size – 420 × 420 × 2mm; 12-pocket: overall size – 780 × 420 × 2mm

Typical costs: Victorian Cabinetmakers Chisels with rosewood handles – set of six – £168; Handmade suede leather tool rolls – £42.50; (six-pocket) – £67.60 (12-pocket)
Web: www.workshopheaven.com



I tested the chisels on a project that was underway in the workshop – an occasional table with ripple sycamore bandsawn veneers laid on a plywood substrate and Australian blackbean



The chisels cut crisply and sweetly and didn't require resharpening throughout the paring of several sets of dovetails

THE VERDICT

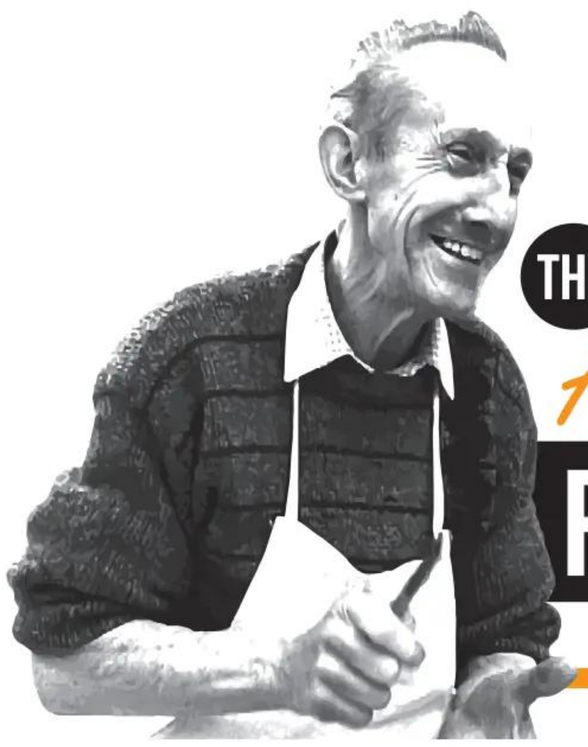
PROS

- High quality steel; capable of taking and holding a fine edge; beautifully made and finished; versatile chisels that'd suit the needs of most woodworkers

CONS

- All chisels in the set have the same size handles, which may not suit everyone's personal preferences; the bevels' steepness may limit their use in certain situations

RATING – *PERFORMANCE*: 5 OUT OF 5
RATING – *VALUE*: 5 OUT OF 5



THE Alan Peters ONLINE FURNITURE AWARD 2024



Devon walnut and rosewood desk by Alan Peters, 1989

'EXCELLENCE WITHOUT ELITISM'

Continuing to champion UK furniture design and making talent while celebrating the life and work of the late **Alan Peters OBE**, the 2024 award returns as a biennial competition and is set to adopt an online format as before

This biennial award celebrates the legacy of one of Britain's most prominent furniture designer-makers of the late 20th century while aiming to encourage all talent in the craft of furniture design and making. Any woodworker who's a resident citizen of the British Isles, aged over 18, with a passion and talent for designing and making contemporary furniture, is invited to submit up to two pieces made primarily of wood. These can also include, if applicants so wish, other complementary materials that echo Alan Peters' design philosophy. Judging is based on the appropriate use of material, quality of workmanship, functionality, as well as originality of design.

Both one-off designs and potential batch-produced designs are encouraged and the piece(s) doesn't have to be large. Applicants should be familiar with the work of Alan Peters prior to applying and are encouraged to read Jeremy Broun's 64-page online video-integrated e-book, which is offered free-of-charge here: **www.jeremybroun.co.uk/alanpetersaward**.



Alan Peters in his studio

The man behind the award

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

Award history

The original award – called 'The Alan Peters Award For Excellence' – was initiated by Jason Heap in 2010. The prize was offered to three winners, each of whom were given free exhibition space alongside professionals at this annual furniture event in Cheltenham. The award ran for eight years and the judging panel comprised of Jason Heap, Keith Newton and Jeremy Broun.

Following the success of both the 2021 and 2022 awards, this year, as with 2021, an online format will be adopted, followed by an event ceremony and virtual exhibition.

Expert judging panel

- **Jeremy Broun (Organiser)** – designer-maker and co-exhibitor with Alan Peters from 1978–2002
- **Andrew Lawton** – designer-maker who worked with Alan Peters as well as on his last commission
- **Fernanda Nuñez** – Award-winning furniture designer-maker

The Woodworker Good woodworking

JB JEREMY BROUN

WORKSHOP HEAVEN Fine Tools

eVOLUTION

PRIZES OFFERED

1ST PRIZE: £1,000 voucher, courtesy of Workshop Heaven
2ND PRIZE: £500 voucher courtesy of Evolution Power Tools
3RD PRIZE: £300 Judges' cash prize

This award is open to any resident citizen of the British Isles, aged over 18, who has an enthusiasm and flair for woodworking. A piece of furniture – indoor or outdoor – is to be made and six high resolution JPEG images submitted, together with a Word document description.

Shortlisted applicants will be asked to engage in a Zoom video call or submit a one-minute video introducing themselves and describing the piece(s).

Judging of entries will take place in August followed by an event ceremony and virtual exhibition(s) in September – exact dates TBA.

It's important to get designing and making straight away, as the submission deadline is **31 July 2024**. To download an application form and view the free 64-page e-book, visit **www.jeremybroun.co.uk/alanpetersaward**. The application form download button can be found halfway down the page. Payment for entry can also be made securely via the website. For further information, contact Organiser Jeremy Broun – **jezbroun@gmail.com** – or Group Editor, Tegan Foley – **tegan.foley@dhpub.co.uk**



Romanian chest by Alan Peters

BOSCH

CHECK OUT OUR NEW RANGE OF 18V CORDLESS NAILERS

Bosch Professional





OPPORTUNITIES AT JOSEPH WALSH STUDIO

At the internationally renowned Joseph Walsh Studio in Co. Cork, Ireland, art, craft, design and technical innovation merge to create monumental sculptures, site-specific commissions & collectible design editions.

The Studio is currently inviting applications from experienced and motivated makers wishing to join the Workshop team. Working in a vibrant and creative environment, successful candidates will have a strong appreciation of design, making and materials. They will demonstrate excellent technical ability with the potential to further develop skills and meet the challenges presented by complex projects.

For further information visit:
www.josephwalshstudio.com/careers

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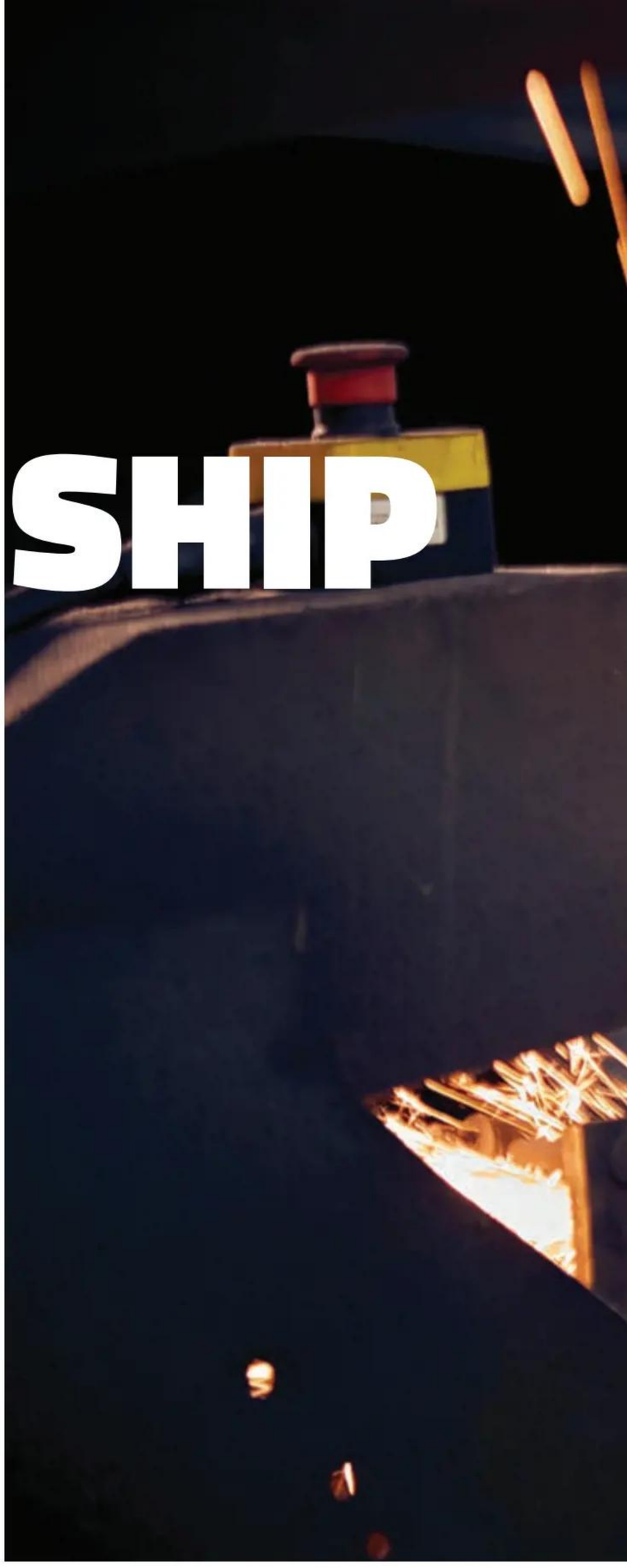




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Robert Sorby
MADE IN SHEFFIELD, ENGLAND - SINCE 1828

A LEGACY OF CRAFTSMANSHIP



With a proud heritage dating back almost 200 years, **Robert Sorby** – the world's leading manufacturer and exporter of specialist woodworking tools and equipment – continues to design and make a wide range of award-winning products, all crafted by a highly skilled team using a unique blend of traditional techniques and modern methods

In the heart of Sheffield, England, a city renowned for its steel and tool-making heritage, stands the illustrious Robert Sorby Tool Company. Established in 1828, Robert Sorby has not only survived but thrived through centuries of industrial evolution, embodying the essence of traditional craftsmanship while embracing modern innovations. From humble beginnings to its current status as global leader in woodturning and woodworking tools, Robert Sorby's journey is a testament to resilience, innovation and unwavering dedication to quality, which lies at the heart of the company's ethos.



1 Raw material, the highest-quality Sheffield steel, ready for machining into tool blades

Foundations of excellence

With a proud heritage dating back almost 200 years, the story begins in the early 19th century when Robert Sorby, a skilled blacksmith, set up his workshop in Union Street, Sheffield. Drawing upon the city's rich steelmaking heritage and individual expertise, Sorby began producing high-quality edge tools, saws, scythes and hay knives, while catering primarily to the local woodworking and metalworking industries. This commitment to excellence and craftsmanship soon earned him a reputation for reliability and precision, and in 1837, the company moved to new premises in nearby Carver Street, at which time, Robert Sorby – the great, great grandson of the very first Master Cutler – oversaw daily operations until his death in 1858.

As shown by the historical timeline below right, however, although Robert Sorby was first registered in 1828, its roots go all the way back to 1624, when The Company of Cutlers was first formed in Sheffield by an Act of Parliament. This would lead to the 'Made in Sheffield' mark enduring as a globally-recognised symbol of assured quality craftsmanship for centuries, and one which is still entirely significant to this day.

Robert Sorby's fortunes saw significant growth during the Industrial Revolution, as Sheffield emerged as a hub for manufacturing and trade. The increasing demand for precision tools propelled the business into prominence, and by the mid-19th century – from its new premises at Kangaroo Works, Trafalgar Street, Sheffield – ROBERT SORBY & SONS Ltd had established itself as a leading supplier of chisels, gouges and various other cutting tools, both domestically and internationally. Following a further relocation in 1934, business operations moved to Chesterfield Road and following World War II, the firm continued to advertise a wide range of edge, joiners' and gardening tools.

In the late 19th century, the company also pioneered the use of high-speed steel in tool manufacturing, a breakthrough that



2 Each steel tool blank is forged by hand...



3 ... then shaped and refined by means of a 100-ton single tool press





Robert Sorby

MADE IN SHEFFIELD, ENGLAND - SINCE 1828

WW PROFILE



ROBERT SORBY & SONS was first registered in Union Street, Sheffield in 1828 as a manufacturer of edge tools, saws, scythes and hay knives

1828

Industrial Revolution:
1760 - 1840

Having first been registered at Union Street, ROBERT SORBY & SONS moved in 1837 to new premises nearby at Carver Street



1837

June 20, 1837:
Queen Victoria takes the crown at the age of 18



Robert Sorby, the great, great, great, great grandson of the very first Master Cutler, ran the business until his death in 1857

1857

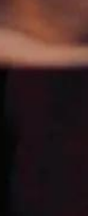
1851 - The Great Exhibition
'Works of Industry of All Nations' took place at Crystal Palace, London, England

ROBERT SORBY & SONS Ltd was formed. It was based at Kangaroo Works, Trafalgar Street, Sheffield



1923

15 April, 1912:
The RMS Titanic sank in the North Atlantic Ocean, four days into her maiden voyage from Southampton to New York



In 1934, Sorby's relocated to Chesterfield Road. After the War, the firm continued to advertise a wide range of edge, joiners', and gardening tools

1934

2 June, 1953:
Queen Elizabeth II Coronation took place at Westminster Abbey, London, England following her accession on 6 February 1952

Robert Sorby relocated to Athol Road, Sheffield in 1985, as ROBERT SORBY Ltd and focused on wood chisels and turning tools



1985

1977 - The Queen's Silver Jubilee
was marked with celebrations throughout the UK and Commonwealth

SPEAR & JACKSON GROUP

ROBERT SORBY Ltd was aquired by the Spear & Jackson Group

1990

February 4, 2004:
19-year-old Mark Zuckerberg launched Facebook

Spear & Jackson Group of Companies were acquired by SNH Global Holdings Ltd

SNH GLOBAL HOLDINGS LIMITED

2014

29 April, 2011:
The wedding of Prince William and Catherine Middleton, Westminster Abbey in London



ROBERT SORBY Ltd move into the 26,000 sq ft facility at S&J Group's site at Atlas, Sheffield

2022

Queen Elizabeth II
celebrates her Platinum Jubilee year



4 Once forged, the blades are left to cool before moving on to the next process



5 Blades are hand-ground, a process that takes many hours and uses dozens of different processes



6 Ash spindle blanks, which will go on to become tool handles

revolutionised the industry by enhancing the durability and cutting performance of cutting tools. This innovation cemented Robert Sorby's reputation for producing tools of exceptional quality and durability and one that has endured ever since.

Fast forward to 1985 and Robert Sorby Ltd relocated to Athol Road, Sheffield, where manufacturing focused on wood chisels and turning tools. Following continued success and strengthening of the brand internationally, the company was acquired by the Spear & Jackson Group in 1990 and proceeded to expand its manufacturing output and product portfolio, all the while working hard to develop its position as a supplier of the highest quality tools, made by craftsmen for craftsmen.

Innovations & expansion

As the woodworking industry further evolved in the 20th century, Robert Sorby diversified its product range to meet the changing needs of craftsmen and woodturners. As such, new designs and tool geometries were developed and introduced, tailored to specific applications, helping to further solidify its position as a trusted name in the woodworking tools sector.

In addition to product innovation, Robert Sorby also expanded its operations geographically, establishing distribution networks across Europe, North America and Asia. This global presence not only facilitated the company's growth but also allowed it to serve a diverse customer base, spanning professional woodworkers, hobbyists and educational institutions.

Inevitably, after some 32 years, the business outgrew its current factory and larger, more technologically equipped facilities were required in order to meet demand and ensure it remained at the forefront of adopting the latest manufacturing developments. So, in 2022, Robert Sorby Ltd moved into the newly-refurbished 26,000sq.ft Atlas site, as part of the Spear & Jackson Group.

An enduring heritage of craftsmanship

We were lucky enough to visit the site earlier this year and see the extensive range of tools and equipment being made first-hand. It was fascinating to be given a glimpse inside the bustling factory, which is strategically set out, and where skilled staff members work tirelessly to uphold the highest manufacturing standards, carrying out many individual processes by hand to create each of the world-renowned products. Many hours lovingly go into making each and every tool, with one person managing one process at a time, which demands an unrivalled attention to detail. In fact, Robert Sorby tools are still largely hand-crafted using techniques that have remained virtually unchanged for 200 years, and by combining these traditional processes with modern CNC equipment, the company successfully blends 21st-century manufacturing methods with centuries-old crafting techniques. This unique blend of old and new is what makes Robert Sorby tools so sought after by the discerning craftsperson.

In the case of a spindle roughing gouge, for example, this starts out with the highest quality steel, used for the blade, which is hardened and tempered by hand before being forged using a 100 ton tool press. The blade then makes its way down the production line where it's ground by hand using dozens of different processes, with many hours going into every tool, in addition to calling upon state-of-the-art CNC machining techniques. Each blade is then finished by hand, fluid polished and sharpened using customer repeatable methods – again, all carried out by skilled staff and requiring the utmost care and attention. Finally, the blade is quality tested using the Rockwell Hardness method and dedicated machinery designed for this very purpose.

In terms of the tool handles, these begin life as round blanks and using a CNC lathe to ensure consistency and repeatability, each is machined to exact shape and size, then sanded, before being



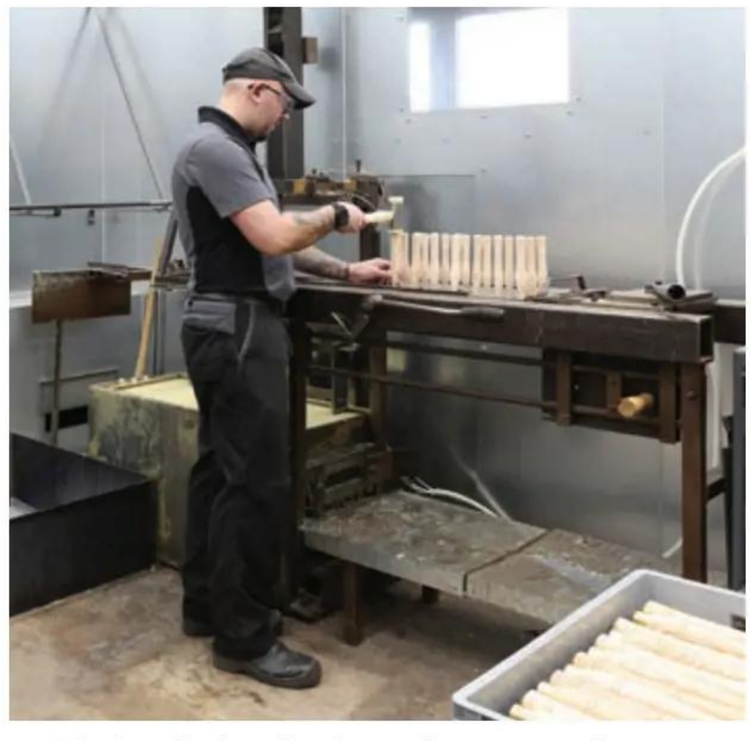
7 A CNC lathe is used to machine each handle blank to exacting specifications



8 Once machined to the correct dimensions, each handle is shaped and sanded, again by machine



9 The handles are now fitted with ferrules, which is carried out by hand



10 Dipping the handles is another process that receives individual attention



11 Each handle is individually stamped to receive the Robert Sorby logo

individually hand waxed and lacquered, then small batch lacquered. When blade and tool finally come together, each is constructed by hand, relying on personal attention to detail to ensure that every single product that leaves the factory is of the highest possible quality, which the customer has come to expect from the Robert Sorby brand.

Every tool that bears this esteemed name is a testament to centuries of expertise and meticulous attention to detail. From the selection of premium materials to final inspection, every step of the manufacturing process is guided by a commitment to quality that has been the hallmark of the company since its inception.

Keeping traditional skills alive

Robert Sorby also recognises the importance of passing on knowledge and skills to future generations, and it's vital to encourage new talent into the industry in order to keep the traditional skills involved in tool manufacture alive.

The manufacturing skills gap is well-documented, and fewer young people than ever are choosing careers in manufacturing, while experienced older workers are preparing to retire. Robert Sorby is focused on developing the skills of local youngsters and attracting new talent into the sector. The company offers a comprehensive training programme and takes on new apprentices each year, as well as working with local organisations to promote manufacturing careers in schools.

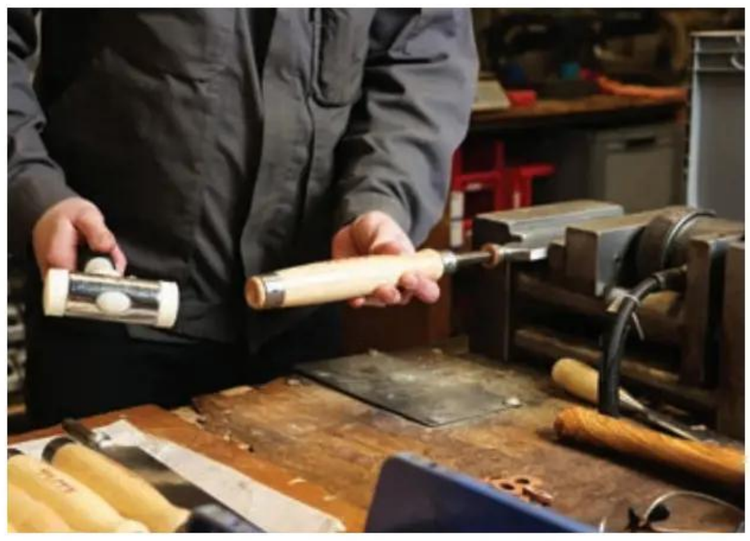
In terms of commitment to sustainability, Robert Sorby prides itself on sending very little to landfill. As we saw first-hand, all wood and steel offcuts are collected, sorted, reused and recycled. Additionally, all packaging is also recycled, and even the wood shavings from tool handle manufacture are sent to a local stable. The company's new premises are purposefully energy-efficient, well-insulated and use low-energy lighting throughout. Wherever possible, they 'buy local', working with Sheffield-based suppliers and businesses, to reduce fuel consumption and support the local economy. Robert Sorby also work hard to ensure the health and wellbeing of staff, and as such, have invested in a state-of-the-art filtration system, which extracts wood dust along with wet and dry matter from the working environment.



12 Handles are then drilled to accept the blade

The legacy continues

Today, Robert Sorby stands as a beacon of excellence in the world of woodworking tools. Its products are coveted by craftspeople and enthusiasts alike, revered for their precision, durability and timeless design. From traditional hand tools to state-of-the-art machinery, the company offers a comprehensive range to meet the diverse needs of customers on a global scale.



13 The blade is carefully held in a vice while the handle is gently hammered to fit snugly in place

THE TOOL-MAKING PROCESS: STEP-BY-STEP

RAW MATERIALS

These are carefully selected to meet Robert Sorby's specific requirements. Doing so ensures that tools are manufactured to the highest standards and made fit for purpose.



FORGING

According to time honoured methods that have remained largely unchanged, individual blades are forged using a 100 ton tool press. This is operated by hand to ensure quality and attention paid to each and every blade.



HAND GRINDING

Once forged and cooled, the blades are hand-ground by skilled staff as opposed to being carried out by machine. This step in the production cycle takes many hours and uses dozens of different processes, with each blade undergoing the exact same steps to ensure quality standards are maintained.



CNC MACHINING

Alongside the older machines, such as the 100 ton tool press, state-of-the-art machines and technology, such as the Intorex CNC lathe, are used to machine the tool handles. In addition to this, a multitude of components – i.e. those for the ProEdge sharpening system are made using 21st century technology.



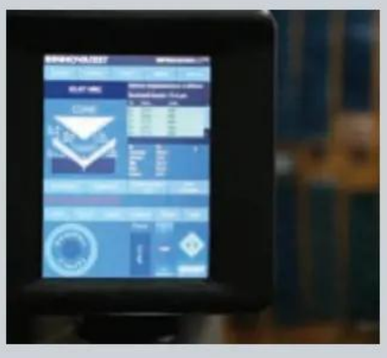
BLADE FINISHING

Each blade is finished by hand and sharpened using customer repeatable methods, which requires unrivalled attention to detail.



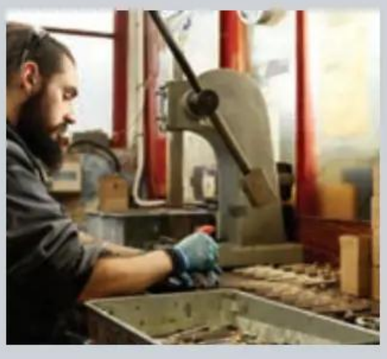
QUALITY TESTING

Each blade is tested using the Rockwell Hardness method, which ensures individual blade hardness control.



HAND ASSEMBLY

All Robert Sorby products are individually built by hand, which assures quality standards are continuously upheld.



FINISHED ITEM

This personal attention to detail ensures that every product leaving the factory is of the highest possible quality, which is what customers have come to expect from the Robert Sorby brand



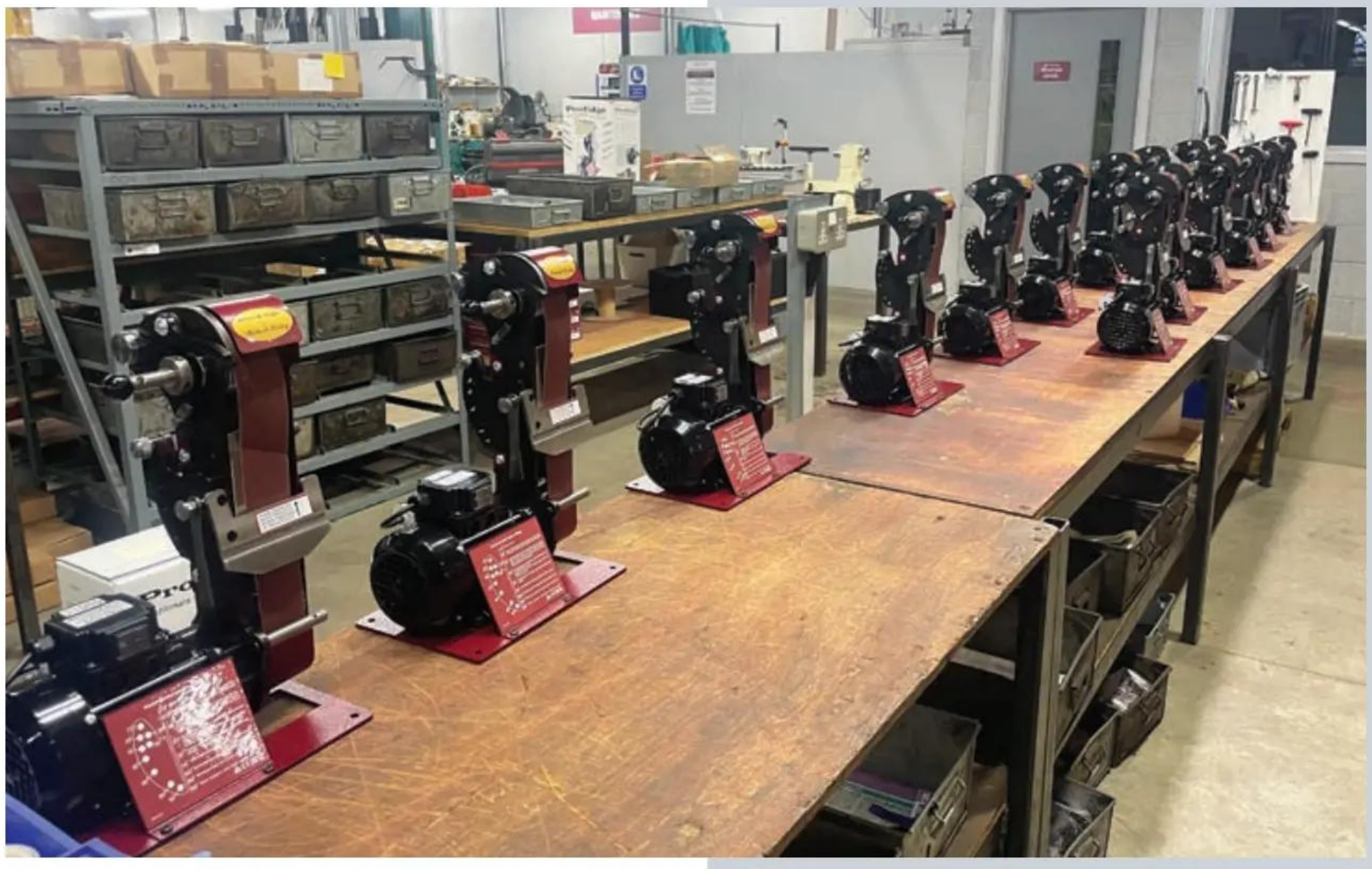
14 Every single item is hand-checked for quality before being packaged and sent out for delivery

As Robert Sorby looks to the future, it does so with the same spirit of innovation and dedication that has defined its journey thus far. With a legacy spanning nearly two centuries, the company remains steadfast in its mission to empower woodworkers with the finest tools available, carrying forward the tradition of craftsmanship for generations to come.

In conclusion, Robert Sorby's history isn't just a chronicle; it's a testament to the enduring spirit of innovation. From humble beginnings in Sheffield to its global presence today, the company has exemplified the principles of quality, integrity and excellence, setting the standard for woodworking tools worldwide. As long as there are craftspeople who demand the best, Robert Sorby will continue to be the name they trust.



15 Elsewhere on the factory floor, handles and individual components for the Sovereign System are assembled by hand



16 ProEdge sharpening systems following assembly

CRAFTING EXCELLENCE: ROBERT SORBY'S PRODUCT RANGE

Woodturning tools

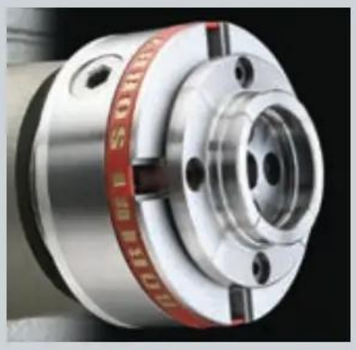


Robert Sorby is widely regarded as the finest woodturning tool manufacturer in the world, and for good reason. For generations, its wide range of ground-breaking tools have been made by craftsmen for craftsmen.

Following this simple path has ensured a dedication to quality, a desire for innovation and a reputation that demands excellence. These enduring features make Robert Sorby tools among the best in the business.

One of the company's flagship products is its range of woodturning gouges, available in a variety of profiles and sizes to suit different turning applications. Whether shaping intricate details or roughing out large blanks, Robert Sorby gouges are renowned for their razor-sharp edges and smooth cutting action, allowing woodturners to achieve flawless results with ease. There's also a diverse selection of speciality tools designed to tackle specific woodturning tasks. From skew chisels for spindle turning to bowl gouges for hollowing out bowls, each tool is expertly designed and balanced to provide optimal control and performance, enabling craftspeople to unleash their creativity with maximum confidence.

Chucks



In addition to producing a wide range of woodturning tools, Robert Sorby also manufactures a growing number of chucks and lathe accessories. The flagship Patriot Chuck System is supported by the popular Eccentric Chuck, the Steb centre range and its Interchangeable Revolving Centres.

Sharpening



Working with woodworking tools is much easier and a lot safer when your tools are sharp. Robert Sorby firmly believes that learning to sharpen is as important as learning how to use the tools in the first place. Even those that use 'throwaway' materials will always only feel half the way there when they compare themselves to those experienced in sharpening.

Robert Sorby makes a variety of platforms and jigs to help woodworkers sharpen their tools. Whether using a grinding wheel, sharpening freehand or for those preferring the speed and accuracy of the ProEdge, customers can rely on finding the solution that allows them to get the most from their tools.

Woodworking



Robert Sorby offers one of the most comprehensive chisel ranges on the market today. Designed by craftsmen for craftsmen, these tools are used by the most demanding cabinetmakers, furniture restorers and timber-framers across the world.

Whether a hobbyist or professional, the Robert Sorby brand name is one customers know they can trust. Every tool has a small indentation – its 'hallmark' and your guarantee – that each chisel has been diamond hardness tested before leaving the factory.

Woodcarving



When it comes to carving, patience is undoubtedly the key to success. Projects can be as simple or as complex as the carver's skill allows, with some taking weeks, months or even years to complete. With this in mind, Robert Sorby's range of micro and full-size carving tools are made to the same exacting standards as other tools bearing the company name, and ensures users are able to reap the craft's rewards.

Pyrography



Manufactured by Robert Sorby, the Peter Child Artist's Pyrography Machine is widely regarded as the one of choice by many professionals, with build quality and attention to detail being of the highest standard. Powerful enough to create dense textures and patterns, its slim, light and comfortable to use pen design delivers the perfect balance for the finest detail work, which also makes it an ideal choice for novices. The pyrography range also includes a selection of pens and wires in various different gauges, to suit the optimum number of possible projects

WIN! 1 OF 3 ROBERT SORBY 84HS THREE-PIECE BOWL TURNING SETS – WORTH OVER £250 EACH!

In conjunction with Robert Sorby PROUDLY MADE IN SHEFFIELD, ENGLAND we're giving three lucky readers the chance to win one of these new **three-piece bowl turning sets**, which comprise of two new tools along with the popular **Fingernail Bowl Gouge**



The three-piece set includes two new tools along with the popular Fingernail Bowl Gouge

Made in Sheffield by Robert Sorby – the world's leading manufacturer and exporter of specialist woodworking tools and equipment, with a proud heritage dating back almost 200 years – this new 84HS three-piece bowl turning set includes the Bottom Feeder Bowl Gouge, 25mm Negative Rake Curved Profile Scraper, and the popular Fingernail Bowl Gouge.

Perfect for those woodturners who enjoy making bowls and such vessels, this new set includes three of the most useful tools.

Bottom Feeder Bowl Gouge

- Features a standard profile grind for ease of use and resharpening on the Robert Sorby ProEdge or alternative grinder system;
- A polished 60° bevel allows for smooth, refined cuts in the bottom of a bowl;
- A 45° secondary bevel gives clearance during each cut, thus allowing for a smooth unblemished surface.

25mm (1in) Negative Rake Curved Profile Scraper

- 25mm (1in) wide for excellent stability and control in use;
- 60° relief angle and 60° negative rake gives a perfect cutting edge for a great surface finish and increased ease of use.

The three-piece set includes:

- Bottom Feeder Bowl Gouge – available in 10mm (⅜in) and 12mm (½in) options;
- 25mm (1in) Negative Rake Curved Profile Scraper;
- Fingernail Bowl Gouge – available in 10mm (⅜in) and 12mm (½in) options.

General care

The manufacturer recommends applying a light oil to the blades when not in use; this ensures they're kept in perfect condition.

To find out more about Robert Sorby, visit **www.robert-sorby.co.uk**.



HOW TO ENTER

To be in with a chance of winning **1** of **3 Robert Sorby 84HS three-piece bowl turning sets**, visit **www.thewoodworkermag.com/category/win** and answer the multiple choice question below:

QUESTION: What's the **relief angle** on the **25mm (1in) Negative Rake Curved Profile Scraper**?

A: 45° B: 60° C: 15°

The winners will be randomly drawn from all correct entries. The closing date for the competition is **14 June 2024**. Only one entry per person; multiple entries will be discarded. Employees of David Hall Publishing Ltd and Robert Sorby are not eligible to enter this competition

Protect and enhance the natural beauty of wood with **Treatex Hardwax Oil**



Table designed and built by Jim Sharples Furniture



treatex®
Naturally superior wood finishes

Treatex Hardwax Oil protects and enhances the appearance of all types of internal wood surfaces including floors, stairs, doors, furniture and worktops. Treatex Hardwax Oil is manufactured on a base of natural sustainable raw materials: jojoba oil, linseed oil, sunflower oil, beeswax, candelilla wax and carnauba wax.

- Brings out the timber grain
- Adds warmth to wood
- Easy to apply
- Quick drying
- No sanding required between coats
- Low odour
- Resistant to spills of water, wine, beer, coffee, tea and fizzy drinks
- Withstands high temperatures
- Very durable
- Easy to clean and maintain
- Spot repairable
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PART 2: SPINDLE TURNING & 3 OF THE 'MAGNIFICENT 7' TOOLS

In part 2 of this series, **Andrew Hall** demonstrates the first project piece a beginner would make and the practice task leading up to creating the finished item

By this point, I'm assuming you've set yourself up in the workshop and gone through part 1, looking at the lathe, chucks, tools and accessories. I've used a Record Power Coronet Herald for all projects shown in this beginners' guide, but thought you may like to see the first lathe I bought 25 years ago – a second-hand DML 24 – which is very similar to today's Herald but without the variable speed (**photo 2**).

My suggestion, as with all students I've taught who are new to woodturning, is to start by practising with and mastering the spindle roughing gouge (**photo 1**).

For the purposes of creating better images to show the tool's position while carrying out the cutting actions, I've spray painted the materials with a grey primer.



1 Three of the 'Magnificent 7' tools: 1) Spindle roughing gouge; 2) Spindle gouge; 3) Parting tool



2 My first lathe – a second-hand Record DML 24



3 Four-prong drives – the prongs bite into the timber to ensure consistent driving



4 To mark the end-grain's centre, the best method is to hammer the drive using a rubber mallet...



5 ... which creates an indentation of the drive into the centre



6 Or, you could use a pencil and ruler to mark from corner to corner...



7 ... and saw using either a tenon or hack saw across the end-grain



8 My dickie bow tie is an ideal project for demonstrating the three main cuts in spindle turning: bead, cove and 'V' cut

SPINDLE ROUGHING GOUGE – THE FIRST TOOL IN THE 'MAGNIFICENT 7'



1 Here, I'm going to show you how to make a garden dibber, like the sycamore version shown above



2 The first step is to turn the square section from square to round using a spindle roughing gouge. We discussed all aspects of health and safety in part 1, so I won't cover these again here, but please note the safety equipment worn in the photos. To begin, the material is held firmly between centres and the quill lock is on. The tool is tucked into the side of my body, resting on the toolrest at an angle of about 30°. The rest is approximately 6mm below the quill's centre, which allows the cutting edge bevel contact to cut on the material's centre. My thumb is placed over the top with my fingers wrapped underneath the tool. Start with the slowest lathe speed and accelerate up to around the 1,000rpm mark

Four-prong drives & marking the end-grain's centre

All lathes are supplied with a four-prong drive and as the name implies, this drives the material with the lathe motor, so it can be turned from square to round (**photo 3** & **inset**).

The four-prong drive has to mark the end-grain's centre and the best method here is to hammer the drive using a rubber mallet (**photo 4**); this creates an indentation of the drive into the centre (**photo 5**).

Note: Always use a rubber mallet as a steel hammer will mushroom the 2 Morse taper drive centre and won't spin in the headstock accurately. Also, to create the indentation, hammer the drive into the material either held in a vice or solid surface. Never be tempted to hammer the drive into the material on the lathe bed as you could



3 Being right-handed, I always turn from right to left, going from high – i.e. square – to low, which will eventually become the perfect cylinder



4 The same procedure is carried out, turning from left to right – high to low – then, once a cylinder is formed at each end, remove the central high point



5 I ensure the bevel is rubbing the material, then raise my back hand until a shaving or streamer of wood is being produced; this way, you'll achieve a better finish as opposed to using the tool in a horizontal orientation



6 If the tool is pointed to the wood horizontally, it'll simply scrape the material. Not only is this an unsafe practice, but will also result in a poor finish



7 Here you can see the effect of the gouge used correctly – left – and incorrectly – right

SPINDLE GOUGE – THE SECOND TOOL IN THE 'MAGNIFICENT 7'



1 With the spindle gouge, I place the tool in my hand so that my finger is in line with the tool's flute



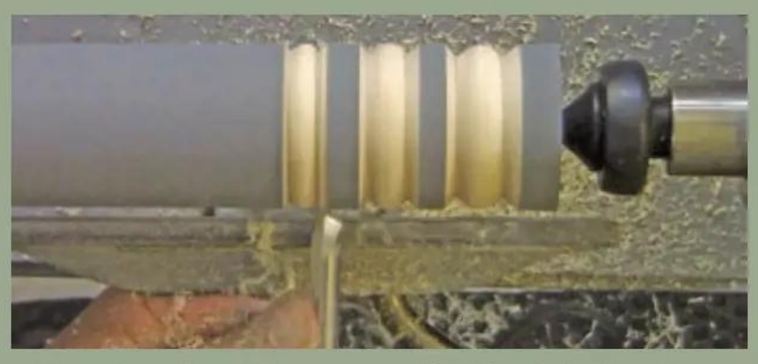
2 I removed the presentation piece from the lathe and took it outside in order to spray it grey, and as the four-prong drive and tailstock revolving centre marks had already been made, I was easily able to mount it back on the lathe so that it was running true. With both the spindle and bowl gouges, the method of holding the tool is to produce a natural extension of the arm. I always start by placing the tool in my hand so that my finger is in line with the flute. With new students, my method is to introduce the bead, 'V' cut and finally the cove, as the bead is generally the most difficult to master. Again, because I'm right handed, I position the tool on the bead's centre, the tool held open with the flute rubbing the bevel at 45° to the material and toolrest. Here, I'm not actually cutting the material, just getting a feel for the tool rubbing the bevel, and my finger is in line with the flute, positioned at 12 o'clock



3 To start the cut, I elevate my back hand and while raising my back hand, I rotate from 12 to 3 o'clock, going from 45° to horizontal



4 I then physically move my hand round 90° so that my finger is in line with the flute's right-hand side when placed back in the 12 o'clock position. The same mirror process is then repeated to create the bead's left-hand side



5 Next, I make a 'V' cut on each side of the bead. Here, my thumb is opposite to the flute, for full control and to minimise skate back, which occurs when there's no bevel support

risk breaking or damaging the cast-iron bed if its of steel construction. Alternatively, you could use a pencil and ruler to mark from corner to corner (**photo 6**), and saw using either a tenon or hack saw across the end-grain (**photo 7**). When placed between centres, the force of the revolving centre being tightened with the tailstock will drive the four-prong drive's spurs into the material's end-grain.

Dickie bow tie

I'm known for my dickie bow ties and I often turn one as a warm up exercise or as a first short demo at a woodturning club or show. It's ideal for demonstrating the three main spindle turning cuts: a bead, cove and 'V' cut. The pencil is indicating a half bead, which then flows from left to right down a half cove to a 'V' cut, followed by a full bead to another 'V' cut, and from the right to left side, again a half bead flowing to the centre with the other half of the cove (**photo 8**). **Note:** Always turn downhill from high to low – never uphill from the centre, up and over.

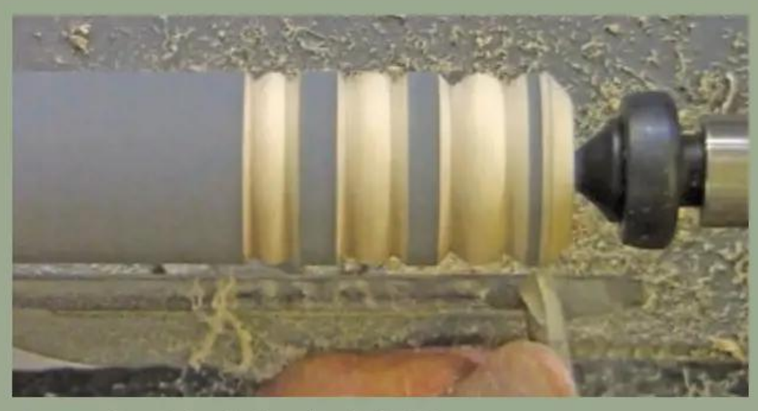




8 You can now increase lathe speed to between 1,500 and 1,800rpm. The only way to improve the material finish would be to raise the toolrest 6mm above the quill, move the tool 45° at an angle of approximately 5° presentation with the back hand risen; this creates the same planing effect going along the grain as you'd achieve with a skew. It's creating the same effect as shooting a smoothing plane along a door edge



6 The tool is in the 10 o'clock position for the right 'V' cut...



7 .. and 2 o'clock for the left 'V' cut

Continued overleaf...

MAKING A GARDEN DIBBER

Before starting the project, ensure your tools are sharp. A video covering this topic can be viewed on my YouTube channel (see link in sidebar overleaf). So with lathe maintained and tools ready for action, let's make the dibber.



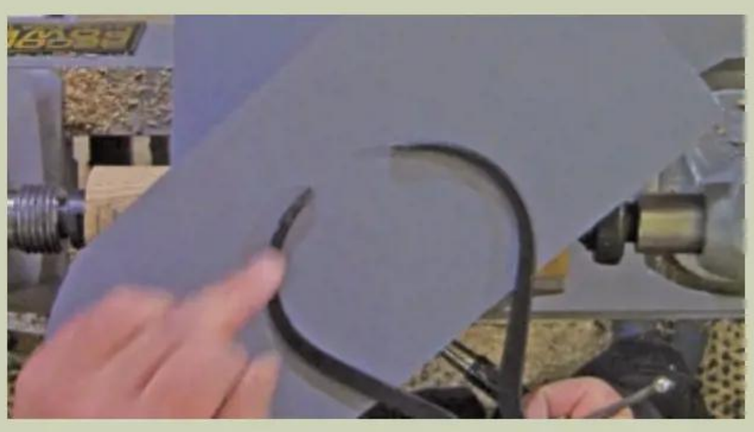
Garden dibber dimensions



1 Here, I'm using a lovely piece of oak, and while not the easiest timber to work with, it's my favourite in terms of grain and finish. The first step, using the spindle rouging gouge, is to turn the square to round, producing the largest cylinder possible...



2 ... then mark to length using the completed sycamore dibber



3 Set your callipers to 35mm and using the third tool in the 'Magnificent 7', part the material down to the correct diameter. If desired, you could practice a few more beads, coves and 'V' cuts in reducing the material to the finished diameter. **Note:** When bought new, callipers have sharp points, which need to be rounded off. This will ensure they won't stick into the wood if you decide to gauge the material while the lathe's running. However, I recommend stopping the lathe and material, then gauging the size once stationary. You'll see some woodturners gauging with callipers while the material is running on the lathe, but the points must be rounded off otherwise an accident could occur



4 Using the parting tool in an arcing cut, turn the material down to the required diameter on each of the ends



5 The tool is presented to the material on the rest, which is 6mm below the quill's centre, and moves up and into the centre, peeling off the material



6 Using callipers, keep checking the size



7 Repeat the same process, but at the headstock end



8 Then practice making both beads and 'V' cuts...



9 ... and finally, turn those down using the spindle roughing gouge to create a smaller cylinder



10 With the spindle gouge again held as if it's a natural extension of the arm, I start from the cove's outer section and place my thumb behind the flute at the clock face position of 10 o'clock and with bevel contact. Cut downhill from the right of the cove to centre, moving the flute position from 10 to 12 o'clock. Three cuts will likely be required in order to reach the required depth in the centre. Next, repeat the same process on the cove's left-hand side, this time moving the tool, placed on the clock face, from 2 to 12 o'clock, always working from high to low, from outside edge to centre

At the moment, all you should be doing is creating shavings and practising using the spindle roughing gouge, producing beads and 'V' cuts. At this point, I'd suggest doing this with 14 of the 20 pieces of wood you've already turned from square to round.

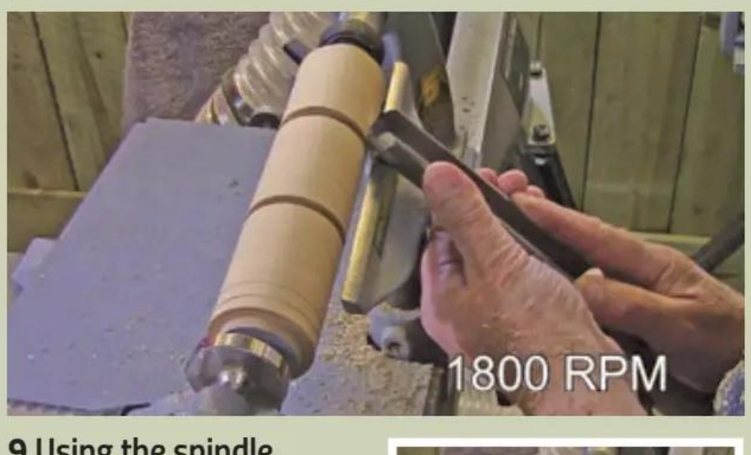
Let's get ready for the next stage: once again, safety equipment for spraying the smaller cylinder with a coat of grey should be worn and this task completed outside the workshop. I don't normally do this with students or suggest they do it; however, for demonstration purposes, it does improve the quality of images and video presentation. Next, using a pencil, mark a series of lines to produce coves.

MAKING A GARDEN DIBBER (cont.)





8 Create a series of dentils – about three in total – down to finished diameter; these will serve as a guide from which to work to



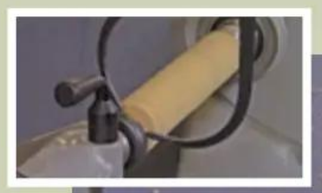
9 Using the spindle roughing gouge, remove the waste material and finish with the technique of lifting the toolrest 6mm. Here, the gouge is used in the same way as a skew





10 I make reference points from the original and mark these with a pencil







11 Set the callipers to the narrowest diameter and, using a parting tool, turn down to the size at the tailstock end



12 Using the spindle gouge, turn a 'V' cut on each end of the handle





13 Switching to the spindle roughing gouge, turn a taper on the dibber. Setting the toolset angle to that of the taper is a good method for ensuring a nice, straight result





14 Create a cove in between the two 'V' cuts



15 Using a parting tool, make a reference cut at the bead on the handle end





16 Mark four lines, 25mm apart, with a pencil, then cut a small 'V' with a parting tool



11 I then practice some more and try a couple of extra beads and 'V' cuts. A suggestion is to do this using the 14 pieces of material previously turned, working down to a smaller cylinder. By this point, your confidence will be building, you'll have good muscle memory, and be able to create some very acceptable beads, 'V' cuts and coves. The remaining six pieces of wood you've turned will be used for the main project



12 At this point, let's talk a little about lathe maintenance. I'd generally sweep up any shavings and vacuum the work area. Using a bottle cleaner, I'd clean both the tail and headstock quill and spray some silicone lubricant on the bed and banjo underside



13 I'd also clean the top of the toolrest and tool undersides with some 400 grit abrasive or a Garryson block, which is also good for cleaning both the lathe bed and banjo. Doing so will make your turning journey so much more pleasurable

YOUTUBE LINKS & PART 3

I hope you've enjoyed part two of this series and are enthused to get into the workshop and practice. As I've said in previous articles, a picture paints a thousand words and a video paints a million. The link below allows you to watch a video version of this article, which you'll hopefully be able to use in the workshop

YouTube video link to part 2:
https://tinyurl.com/yytw9mkz
YouTube video link to sharpening the 'Magnificent 7' tools:
https://tinyurl.com/47ynswds

Part 3 – which will appear in the **August issue** – will deal with faceplate turning of a small bowl and platter. Have fun making shavings!



17 Enhance the lines by burning in between the 25mm increments. This can be achieved using a stainless steel wire, secured in toggle handles, which are available to buy online. Alternatively, these can be easily made using old guitar strings placed between two wooden toggles. Ensure to keep your hands well away from the hot wire



18 Using abrasives, I start at 80 grit and work through to 240. In between each grit, brush away any sanding residue with a soft brush



19 Sand through the grits applying the abrasive underneath the material and supporting each hand



20 I then apply a coat of sanding sealer and cut back with a white Nyweb pad. When applying lacquer, less is more; it's preferable to have three mist coats – as I call them – as opposed to one thick coat



21 Apply a coat of Wood Wax 22 and polish using Chestnut Finishes' safety cloth. Never use material or cloth here as it can be dangerous. Safety cloth is paper-based and will tear easily if caught in the spinning lathe



22 Using the parting tool, turn each end down to a 6mm dowel...



23 ... and using a Japanese pull saw or small tenon saw, cut off each end using a 'V' block to support the dibber



24 I've turned a 150mm disc and drilled a 50mm hole, which will allow the piece to be held in the chuck. I sand with 240 grit abrasive, then wax each of the ends



25 25 years ago, I turned the above practice piece using the blue Record DML 24 lathe shown at the beginning of this article. It still holds my workshop keys and is used every day. Over many years of use, it's developed quite a nice patina

THE LIFE OF A TREE & THE STORY IT TELLS

ALBION TIMBER

What makes timber special, says **David Smyth**, is its ability to endure and survive through many generations. Here he talks about a tree's life cycle, from felling and beyond



Dealing in timber requires patience. It's a slow game. I'm buying logs now that won't be cut, dried and ready to sell until 2028. It's a long time to have money tied up and as a result, means you've got to have years' worth of stock in hand, going through the various drying stages.

And if you think that's slow paced, try growing the trees – even quick growing hardwoods want 80 years in the ground before they're worth sending to a sawmill!

Mighty oaks

It's said an oak tree spends 250 years growing, 250 in maturity and 250 years in decline. No wonder we're still felling oak trees that were originally planted for Britain's ship building industry. We bought an elm log a couple of years ago out of a park in Aberdeen, which was recorded as having being planted in 1760. Now wouldn't that have some stories to tell?

It's quite incredible to think of a plank of wood's life cycle, and all before reaching a maker's hands. I think that's partly why we're drawn to timber; it's history far outlives our own. These days we buy most of our timber from large country estates. Last winter we purchased a parcel of oak logs from the Powis Castle Estate – one of the oldest in the country – and some of these were over 500-years-old. These logs always produce the best timber – their growth slows as they age and this in turn produces more stable boards and fine-grained timber. We finished milling them all into 2in boards early this spring. They've now started a journey onto their next life and will mostly end up as tables and other furniture. They're sticked up in the yard and will remain here until 2026, before being kilned and stored undercover. You never seem to sell the



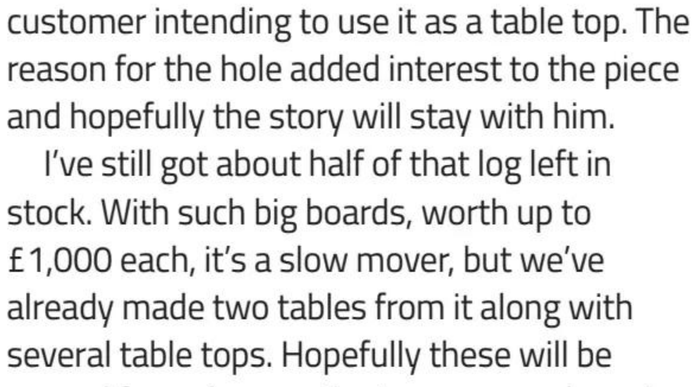
Oak logs at Powis Castle Estate, Mid Wales

entirety of a log, however; there's always offcuts that keep re-emerging for years. In fact, I sold a small piece the other day and was surprised to find that it'd been with us for over 12 years!

Nail through the heart

As you know, the thicker the boards, the slower the drying process, which brings me on to a purchase I made back in 2018. I bought a small parcel of mixed species saw logs from a tree surgeon in Holmfirth, West Yorkshire. Among them was one of the biggest logs I'd bought up to that point. It was a straight, clean ash log, 14ft long and 4ft diameter at the butt. It measured 105 hoppus feet in the round. For those who operate in new money, that's nearly 4m^3. It weighed about 3 tons before milling. We had the log milled into 3in planks, and it spent over three years drying 'in stick'.

During the milling process, we discovered that a huge nail had been driven right into its centre. This was done when the tree was still young and the grain had grown around it, thus permanently marking the surrounding timber.



The big ash log being loaded to go to the mill

Sadly, this meant that in order to remove the nail and any possibility of hitting more steel, we had to cut around it. This left a hole in the middle of the log's best board. It's always the best board! But you see, this only serves to add another story to that timber's life cycle.

I sold that very board just the other day, to a customer intending to use it as a table top. The reason for the hole added interest to the piece and hopefully the story will stay with him.

I've still got about half of that log left in stock. With such big boards, worth up to £1,000 each, it's a slow mover, but we've already made two tables from it along with several table tops. Hopefully these will be around for as long as the tree was, and maybe even longer. In my opinion, this is what makes timber special: its ability to endure and survive through many generations.

NEXT MONTH

Next month, David takes us through a year in the life of a timber merchant



Milling an elm log



Ash log featuring hole cut around steel



Ash log waiting to be sticked and dried



Logs drying in the yard

WIN! WITH LIBÉRON

There's a £200 Amazon voucher up for grabs, plus a bundle of Liberon woodcare products worth over £120!



We've teamed up with wood care experts **Liberon** for a third time to give more readers the chance to showcase their woodworking skills and win a **prize bundle worth over £300!**

Following the success of both the 2022 and 2023 competitions, held in conjunction with wood care experts Liberon, we're giving more readers the opportunity to show off their woodworking skills. As before, there's a fantastic range of prizes up for grabs, for first, second and third place winners.

So, if you've recently completed a project build or restoration – or are in the process of doing so – this is your chance to share photos of the finished piece(s) along with a brief description detailing the making process involved.

It's easy to enter, and the idea is to showcase a woodworking project you're particularly proud of – which could be a new piece, a restoration project, or similar – and anything from an item of furniture to a turned bowl, for example. Regardless of whether you've created a piece from scratch or restored an old or antique item back to its former glory, we'd love to see what you're capable of.

Showcase your skills

To enter the competition, entrants are required to share 1-3 photos of their chosen project as well as a brief description giving some details. Together with the Liberon team, we'll judge the entries, select first, second and third place winners, and showcase these in an upcoming magazine feature, which will also appear online. This is a fantastic way for readers to share their work, have it judged by Liberon experts, and be in with the chance of getting their hands on a fantastic prize bundle, including an array of specialist woodcare products.



LIBERON'S WOODCARE RANGE

Ahead of the competition launch, shown below is some information regarding various core items within Liberon's top quality range. These are designed to help both professional and amateur woodworkers achieve a beautiful finish on a wide range of projects.

Wood dyes

Liberon's Spirit Wood Dye is ideal for use on dense hardwoods, and to achieve a preferred shade, any of the eight colours in which it's offered can be mixed together.

The **Palette Wood Dye**, available in a choice of 13 different shades, can also be combined in order to achieve an exact shade. This quick-drying, water-based option is suitable for both soft- and hardwoods.

Oils

Liberon's Finishing Oil blends hard-wearing oils with resins, as well as offering protection, not only against water, but also heat and alcohol.

The **Superior Danish Oil** can be used to achieve a wonderful satin gloss sheen while also feeding, protecting and adding long life to both hard- and softwoods. It protects against sunlight and is also resistant to water, alcohol, heat and food acid.

The hard-wearing **Pure Tung Oil** provides a long-lasting matt finish and is ideal for those surfaces most often in contact with food.

Wax

Liberon's Wax Polish Black Bison has a good content of Carnauba wax and, being highly lustrous, makes wood look simply beautiful. It provides good resistance to finger and water marks, and is ideal for small surfaces. It feeds, polishes and helps to prevent wood drying out.

For further information on Liberon and the company's extensive range of woodcare products, see **www.liberon.co.uk**



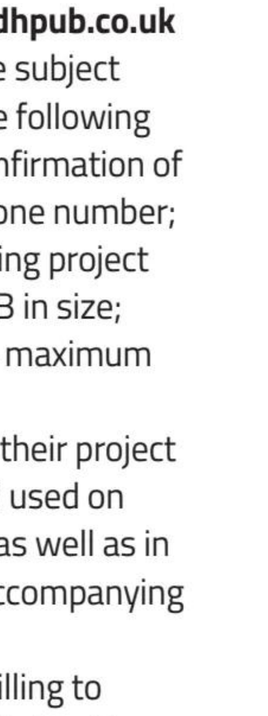
2023 WINNERS

1ST PLACE – George Davies' beautifully crafted cedar-clad Tiger's Treehouse, every inch of which is hand-crafted

2ND PLACE – Shaun Newman's concert classical guitar, the back and sides of which make use of figured European maple

3RD PLACE – Frank Ashurst's chessboard, made using various materials, also demonstrates a wide range of technical skills





HOW TO ENTER

1. Email your entry to **editor.ww@dhpub.co.uk** with '**Liberon competition**' as the subject title. Please ensure to provide the following information: **1)** Your name; **2)** Confirmation of email address; **3)** Contact telephone number; **4)** 1-3 photos of your woodworking project – in JPEG format and each 1-2MB in size; **5)** A description of your project – maximum 100 words.
2. Entrants must be willing to have their project photos and details published and used on Liberon's social media channels, as well as in *The Woodworker* magazine and accompanying website.
3. The first place winner must be willing to supply a photo of themselves with the Liberon prize bundle.
4. All entries must be received by midnight on **31 July 2024**.
5. Multiple entries are permitted – i.e. each person can submit up to three different pieces, but each must be emailed separately.
6. The first place winner will receive a £200 Amazon voucher plus a Liberon product bundle worth over £120. Second and third place winners will each receive a Liberon product bundle as above. Prizes will be sent by Liberon directly; please note that no cash alternative is offered.
7. The competition is **only open** to **mainland UK residents**.
8. Judging will take place between **16 August and 13 September 2024**, ahead of a feature showcasing the first, second and third place winners in the magazine, on our website, as well as on Liberon's social media channels.
9. Further terms and conditions can be found on our website: **www.thewoodworkermag.com/category/win**.

CHISEL RATING

A BIRD IN THE HAND



Having sourced a selection of decoy pigeons at auction, **Peter Bishop** sets about restoring and repairing them, before creating bases for each and figuring out attachment methods

As a 'country boy' – well, more of an old man now! – I appreciate anything associated with the great outdoors. I also love buying 'stuff' at auction and 'improving it' before keeping or selling on. These four rather tired, old, working decoy pigeons turned up at an auction a while ago. Now, in the past, I've made some of these as decorative pieces, so knew there was a market for them. When the auction started, I was keen to 'win' them, so my tactic was to bid quite heavily to ensure this came to pass.

These days, I mostly buy from online auctions – not eBay, but more traditional auctioneers who've embraced the internet. The downside of this is having to rely on the images supplied to determine whether what you're buying is actually what you want. Eventually these four arrived and I was able to take my first 'in hand' look at them. There was one rather chubby chap who just needed a couple of glass eyes and a paint job on its stand; another was very unusual as it represented a perched bird – which I'd not seen before – and was a wee bit crude in that it appeared to have a carbuncle on the side of its head! The other two were more standard, but both had large splits down one side where the wood had dried out.

WW PROJECT

WARNING

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





1 The first job was dealing with those splits, which were too large to simply stuff some filler in and smooth over. Rather, the best result would be achieved by filling the bulk of the splits with some gash wood pieces, then finish off with some filler





2 Next, I cut some thin strips of sycamore offcuts to fit roughly into each of the splits. These were layered with glue, knocked firmly into place, then left to cure. Later on, I trimmed the excess back below the edges of each groove so that the subsequent filler could be finished smooth with the surfaces



3 I used a two-part resin filler, mixed with some black stain, to create a near grey colour for the birds' paint job. Because it has a hardener, the filler is time limited so you need to work fairly quickly; however, as I'd introduced a third element – the stain – this worked in slowing down the hardening reaction. This extra time allowed me to finish the surface really smoothly, wiping any excess off with a damp rag







4 With two of the four sorted, I moved on to looking at the one with what appeared to be a carbuncle on its head, which also had no beak, followed by the chubby chap, who needed glass eyes. Starting with the beak, I used the lathe to turn a simply-shaped piece, which would renew the beak. With a socket hole drilled, this was glued in place and shaped by hand using a sharp knife





5 I drilled out the eye sockets on both birds and next, fixed the glass eyes into the chubby pigeon



6 For the other one, I commandeered some of my wife's yellow knitting needles, trimmed these off and fixed in place. A dot of black paint in the centre finished this one along with the beak painted in. To finish old chubby off, I mounted the original turned stand on the lathe, sanded it off and repainted this black. This one would end up as a stand-alone piece



7 I wanted to set the other pigeons up as a diorama, while also allowing them to be displayed separately. The perching bird could stand on a vertical rod set into an elliptical base. This would then be incorporated into the bases for the other two, thus forming the diorama. I set the two feeding birds out so that I could assess the base's size. The bases for all three would be made up from two layers of 18mm MDF stuck together





8 With the thicker bases prepared, I then had to create the elliptical shapes. A couple of strategically placed, central nails, a length of string and pencil sorted this after carrying out a few dummy runs



9 With the basic shapes marked out, a trip to the bandsaw was next. The simple, elliptical base for the perching bird was cut and the edges smoothed on a disc sander. Using a bit of artistic licence, I cut the larger oval into two sections, which were also cleaned up on both the disc and bobbin sanders. Next, I primed these with grey spray paint...



10 ... and finished by brushing on green Hammerite. Although this is really a metal finish, it worked well and gave me a dimpled surface that's quite pleasing. With the shapes prepared, I then had to decide where the pigeon supporting rods should be placed. Once determined, the drill press was used to ensure the vertical holes were correct positioned





11 Before finally finishing, I tried to adjust the bends to produce the desired effect. When happy with the results, I gave each one a coat of lacquer had some old metal rod, which was about 8mm in diameter, that I intended to use to connect each of the birds to their respective bases. The perching bird was a simple, straight length; the other two had a bit of a bend so that they'd swivel when mounted. The idea was to give the impression of them either feeding, facing down, or looking up, alert

CHISEL RATING

EAT YOUR HEART OUT

WW PROJECT

David Oldfield beautifies a set of Ashley Iles chisels with London Pattern boxwood handles

Whenever I hear someone utter the saying, 'Eat your heart out,' I'm reminded of an old joke about a bloke who, walking along a beach, finds a bottle washed ashore with a message in it. He hurriedly fishes it out, only to read, "I'm marooned on a desert island with only the sea, sun and surf, and five voluptuous maidens to keep me company. Eat your heart out, mate."

Seriously, though, on my last birthday I thought that I'd spoil myself with some new chisels. My preference was for the latest Ashley Iles bevel-edge cabinetmaker's versions, which I have to admit make a really stunning set.

Having purchased the chisels, I had an idea for adding extra enhancements and making them that extra bit special. I called upon a friend of mine, who happens to be a woodturner, and asked him to produce some 'London Pattern' handles from boxwood. The result is chisels to kill for; hence, 'eat your heart out'.

I soon discovered that fitting the handles wasn't as easy as I'd first hoped, and spent the best part of a day shaving in the octagons and driving the tangs accurately into the handles. I got there in the end, however, and can't help but look at them, not quite believing they're mine!

The photos below show steps for marking out and establishing the octagon. My friend drilled a 5mm pilot hole for the tangs, which was very helpful in providing straightness between the chisel and handle.



1 The first step in making the handles was marking out the octagons for the London Pattern shape I wanted



2 When planing up the facets, great care had to be taken so as not to tear up the grain



3 Progress! Seen on the right-hand side is my old C. P. Ward paring chisel circa 1914, with original London Pattern handle



4 Voila – the finished result. I've decided to call these chisels the Seven Sisters...

DAILY BREAD

This month **Michael Huntley** introduces you to timber and its properties before making a breadboard

So far in this series, we've used softwood for almost everything, but one of the questions students ask me is: "What timber should I use and where do I buy it?" So here's a little introduction to timbers.

All timber is either softwood or hardwood. This has nothing to do with how hard or soft the actual wood is; it generally refers to whether or not the tree keeps its leaves in the winter. Conifers keep their leaves and are collectively known as softwoods, and broadleaved species such as oak shed theirs and are collectively known as hardwoods.

Like any good rule, there's exceptions. Larch – a softwood – is a conifer that sheds its leaves whereas yew, which keeps its leaves, is both a conifer and a hardwood. Holly is a hardwood that doesn't shed its leaves seasonally. There's also a third class of timbers – tropical hardwoods – which include mahogany, iroko, teak and so on.

Choice influences

A number of factors influence our choice of timber. Cost and availability are pretty high on the list, but so are durability, workability and toxicity. Any good timber list will cover all of these characteristics. If steam-bending chairs, you'll want to know about elasticity; if laminating, you'll want to know about gluing characteristics.

So how do you choose which timber to use? Well, as a general rule, I now avoid tropical hardwoods unless there's a compelling reason to use them and providing they come from sustainable sources. For general workshop use and studwork structures, I use softwood.



1 Timber for my next big project is stacked in the office, ready to make a library table in a few years' time

There's one class of softwood that's very useful for structures and that's CLS – Canadian Lumber Standard – which is stocked by all builders' merchants, and is available without



2 Close-up of the board ends showing checks; these are normal and will be cut off or 'butterflied' together if I'm feeling very Japanese



3 The second from right timber shown here has bowed too much and will therefore be rejected





faults and in standard sizes. Other softwoods are supplied as sawn timber or PAR. Sawn is for rough work; PAR is planed all round. These timbers haven't been graded in the same way as CLS and may therefore have faults in them such as warping and winding.

They too come in standard sizes, so don't expect to go and buy exactly what you want unless the merchant has a machining facility, which is both rare and costly.



4 This post shows three faults: the lower of the two knots is acceptable in this case because the post is vertical but wouldn't be acceptable if the beam were being used horizontally; the upper knot – right on an edge and not opened up much – is OK if used such that it's on the top of a horizontal and thus in compression; the split is fine if used vertically, but not horizontally



5 This roughed out seat has a fault on the right-hand side so the pencil lines for final cutting are therefore shifted to the left; this ensures that any undercutting and weakness are on the seat's underside and away from the leg mortise



6 Waxing the timber's cut ends can help to reduce end checks

Timber faults

Avoid timber with splits and cracks down its length. Splits – known as checks – at the ends are normal. Don't worry about checks in the first 100mm of a piece, but long splits in the main body aren't good. Always assume that the first 100mm of a stick might be waste. Some planks are cupped; this is harder to avoid – see 'seasoning'. You may have to live with cupping or else plane it out.

The next thing to avoid is bowed wood. Look down the length and eyeball it for straightness. While looking at the straightness, also check for twisting. Twisted wood is in wind, to rhyme with kind. Timber that's in wind makes a project really difficult. You can't bend, glue or screw wood back into straightness; it'll return to its deformed shape. You must get it into the right shape before using it, so try not to buy rubbish timber in the first place.

The last issue is knots and grain. Knots are unavoidable; the poor tree has to have branches, but when buying timber for a project, try to avoid getting knots in awkward places such as in the middle of a joint or the centre of a load-bearing span. There are occasions, however, when a knot is a major decorative part of the grain and

BREADBOARD EXERCISE



1 Start with a suitable offcut



2 You can even use laminated wooden worktop

It's time for the six-monthly review! You've got your tools, you've made a toolbox and trestle, you can saw, chisel and sharpen. So what's next? In this part, I'm going to show a little marking out and planing exercise – making a hexagonal breadboard. Time to do some geometry.

Getting planing practice by constantly squaring up and thicknessing long boards is tedious and boring for the beginner, so here's a chance to do some accurate planing on a small project that you can repeat any number of times to make small domestic gifts.

Go to a timber recycling project or joinery yard and get a couple of offcuts – the wider the better. My first piece (**photo 1**) is 240mm wide. As an alternative, I could have used laminate worktop (**photo 2**). I want to make polygonal breadboards – hexagons in this instance – but almost any polygon will do. My board is long enough to yield two hexagons.

Using dividers, mark out two circles – one for each polygon (**photo 3**). In order to draw the polygon's faces, you'll need to extend one diameter beyond the circumference in the direction of point C, so you do need a bit



4 ... then follow the instructions in the text to determine the sides' length



5 Saw the polygon's edges as close to the line as possible

therefore very attractive. You'll only be able to learn how to read the grain by doing lots of hand planing and sawing in order to get used to the feel of timber. That's why good courses insist on hand tool use only for the first year.

Builders' merchants will only sell softwood unless they have a specific timber yard. Builders' merchants' timber yards will only sell occasional hardwoods. To get a good range of hardwood, you need to find a timber yard that only sells timber, so that the clientele are joiners and cabinetmakers as opposed to builders. It's not unusual to have to drive for an hour or two to find a suitable yard.

Seasoning

All softwood that you buy will be seasoned, whereas native hardwoods may not be. Living wood contains a lot of water. When the tree is felled and converted into planks, this water has to dry out. That drying process is called seasoning. Timber is planked, then left in stacks with air gaps between the boards for a number of years. The rough rule is one year for every inch of board thickness, then an extra year over.

If the wood is kiln-dried, then different rules apply. Seasoned timber then needs to be conditioned. This means cutting to rough sizes and leaving it for about 12 weeks in an environment similar to that in which the final item will be kept. Doing so allows the wood's cells to stabilise to the correct moisture content. You can imagine a dry centrally heated house will need timber of a different moisture content to that of an unheated village hall.

Timber will dry differently in width, thickness and length. Certain boards will cup – that is, their flat surfaces will become slightly hollow. The opposite surface will be slightly convex, and will therefore require planing out.



7 Even so, the timbers get used, the fresh ends are re-stacked, and more end checks appear – this is normal



of extra length in the board, as shown on the right of the photo. Next, mark a second diameter at right angles to the first.

The maths part

Now comes the geometry. Divide the radius by four giving, in my case, 30mm. Next, using a pair of compasses, step off 3 × 30mm from the circumference along the extended diameter. This will give the location of point C.

Divide the other diameter – starting at point A – by the number of sides required – in this case six for a hexagon – and step off the divisions with a pair of compasses. Join point C to the second division in from A and extend the dotted line until it meets the circumference at point D. The line from D to A gives you the length of the hexagon side (**photo 4**). Measure this with a pair of compasses as before and step off around the circle. These lines will form a regular hexagonal polygon.



3 The circle set out with one normal diameter and one extended to point C...

Time to saw

Saw along the lines to give the outline of a hexagon (**photo 5**), then tidy up all surfaces with a freshly sharpened bench plane (**photos 6** & **7**). Make several boards with different sets of marking out and different timbers, perhaps cherry, sycamore, beech, or whatever offcuts you can find. They'll become multi-use kitchen boards for cutting, chopping, serving or as trivets to protect table surfaces from hot dishes and teapots.

This may seem like a very simple exercise, but practise until you can get clean square edges that bisect the pencil lines every time.



6 Using a good sharp No.5½, you can achieve full-width cross-grain shavings and no breakout; try to plane half the pencil line away



7 A saw, plane, ruler and a set of compasses are all that's required to get started on your first domestic project

SLEEP STEALER

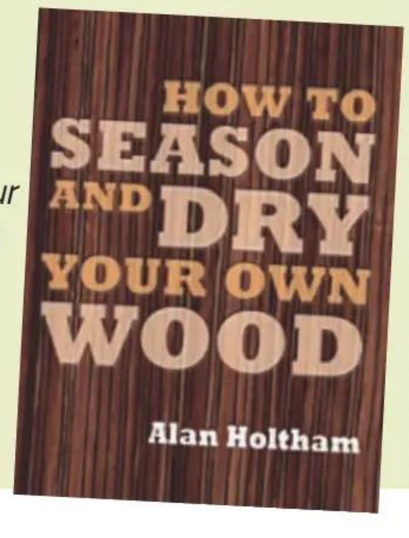
Once I'd finished my training, I set up my bench and started taking in jobs. One of the first was a beech plate rack. It was commissioned by a kitchen designer who sent over the drawing; we agreed a price and I got on with it. I was so glad to get work that I didn't actually count up the number of joints, and in total, there were about 140 mortise & tenons! The delivery date was fixed and I stayed up until 3am cleaning the joints, then had two hours' sleep before oiling it, then finally delivered the finished piece at 10am the next day – a bit of a steep learning curve. My wife has now decided that she'd also like one!



My first commission – a plate rack with 140 joints in it!

FURTHER INFORMATION

To find out more about timber, read Alan Holtham's *How to Season and Dry your own Wood*, published by GMC Publications – **www.gmcbooks.com** – and available to purchase online



CHISEL RATING

EASY-TO-MAKE WORKBENCH GRIPPERS

These workbench grippers might not look as good as **Rockler's Bench Cookies**, but they do the same job

While Rockler's Bench Cookies look nice, in truth they're little more than flat, hard discs with soft rubber facings, which stop them slipping on the bench and grip the workpiece.

Most of us have plenty of offcuts from previous projects, which can happily be reused, and these handy workshop aids are the perfect example. For those of you who begrudge throwing away even small pieces of MDF, this is a good way of putting them to use!

Lathe practice

Using a pair of dividers, scribe 75mm diameter circles on some 19mm MDF and bandsaw out the circles roughly to size (**photo 1**). For those readers looking to gain more lathe experience, something as simple as truing up these discs is all good practice. Fit a four-prong centre in the headstock and a live centre in the tailstock, then align the prong of the headstock drive into the centre hole marked with the scribe, bringing the tailstock up and advancing the quill to apply enough pressure to grip. As the discs are already scratched to the correct diameter, it should simply be a matter of turning them to the marks (**photo 2**).

Edge, sand & seal

The Rockler Bench Cookies have a barrelled edge, which can be replicated by rolling the edges slightly. The next job is to sand the edges before sealing everything up with Speed 'n' Eez sanding sealer.

Router mats are easy to get hold of, and cheap enough to buy, so using a disc as a template, cut out eight discs for each of the bases (**photo 4**). It's then simply a matter of using spray mount adhesive on the discs' faces as well as on the rubber, then sticking the rubber in place.

These homemade versions may not look as classy and 'bling' as the Rockler ones, but they do an identical job for pennies rather than pounds (**photo 5**). What's not to like?



1 Scribe 75mm diameter circles on the MDF and bandsaw roughly to size



2 Turn the blanks to the circles previously scratched out, rolling the edges slightly



3 Router mats for the bases are easy to get hold of...



4 ... and easy to cut. You need to cut out a total of eight discs, one for each of the bases



5 These homemade bench cookies do pretty much the same job as those supplied by Rockler, but they're not as pretty!



6 Top: Rockler Bench Cookie Plus Work Grippers Master Kit; **bottom:** regular versions

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CHISEL RATING

INNER BEAUTY

Brian Barber takes inspiration from some burr sycamore to create his floating cabinet within a cabinet

CABINET PLANS

I don't produce comprehensive plans prior to starting a project, but if you prefer to avoid the potential frights involved with 'organic' working-as-you go, and want to have a go at my cabinet, see plans on **page 53**





1 & 2 The pieces of burr determined the door's design, in terms of both overall size and thinness

I like to be adventurous in my woodwork, allowing a project to develop organically without adhering to a strict set of plans. This usually means having an idea and just diving in and seeing what comes of it. Although an exciting approach, it can also be frustrating when things don't go right, which then requires putting on the old thinking cap.

Woodworking, and particularly furniture making, seem to have burrowed deep into my soul, and I'm always searching for ideas that might turn into interesting projects. This cabinet is one such example. In my opinion, it has the look of Krenov about it, which wasn't intentional; it just evolved that way. However, I do like his work, and no doubt this influence crept into my design.

The door

The original aim of said design was for a cabinet that appears to float within the frame of another cabinet. I had some burr sycamore that, when resawn, would give a striking bookmatched door for the inner cabinet. And this, together with a rough sketch, was all that I needed to get started. At this stage, I had no idea of sizes; these would be determined by the amount of burr sycamore available for the door. The rest of the cabinet was made from sycamore and designed in three parts for ease of construction: inner cabinet, outer supporting framework, and the top.

After resawing the burr sycamore for book-matching, I found that it was quite thin – about 11mm. As such, I glued the two resulting pieces to equal size pieces of sycamore as substrates, then after hand planing, jointed them up to form a door, which was 22mm thick. **Photo 1** shows the basic idea: the burr is essentially framed in plain sycamore, assembled with biscuit joints. Careful hand planing was required here to ensure that all joints were tight – there was no room for error. **Photo 2** shows the completed door prior to trimming to a final size of 354 × 292mm.

The inner cabinet

As shown by the rough sketch (**Fig.1**), I wanted the inner cabinet to be as simple as possible – basically a box structure. I decided to use lapped dovetail joints for the carcass, mainly because these will be seen and always look good, but also owing to their strength. My work normally involves hand-cut dovetails, but this time, I opted to use my DeWalt dovetail jig. Lapped dovetails aren't a major feature in this project, and cutting all those joints by hand would've taken a considerable and unnecessary amount of time and effort. **Photo 3** shows the dovetails once cut and ready for assembly.

Each of the inner cabinet's boards was finished to 20mm thick. The inner cabinet's resulting outer size is 395mm high × 335mm wide × 208mm deep (**photo 4**). Prior to glue-up, I cut a small rebate around the cabinet's reverse to accept the rear panel. For this, I simply used some veneered plywood that was available, which matched the sycamore well. At this stage, I also decided to fit the door using simple brass butt hinges (**photo 5**).

Next, I added supports for the inner cabinet, which would allow it to 'float' inside the main structure. These strips are simply 262 ×32 × 24mm pieces of sycamore – including the end lipping – which are screwed near the top's edges and cabinet bottom, with plugs to hide the screw heads. A piece of burr sycamore was attached to the ends of each support rail to conceal the end-grain, while also contributing an interesting detail and matching the door's burr (**photo 6**). Next, I finished the inner cabinet and door with Rustins Plastic coating, but more on this later.

All that now remained was to fashion a suitable door handle. In terms of cabinets, handles can often pose a problem – the wrong choice can spoil the overall look. I decided that brass just



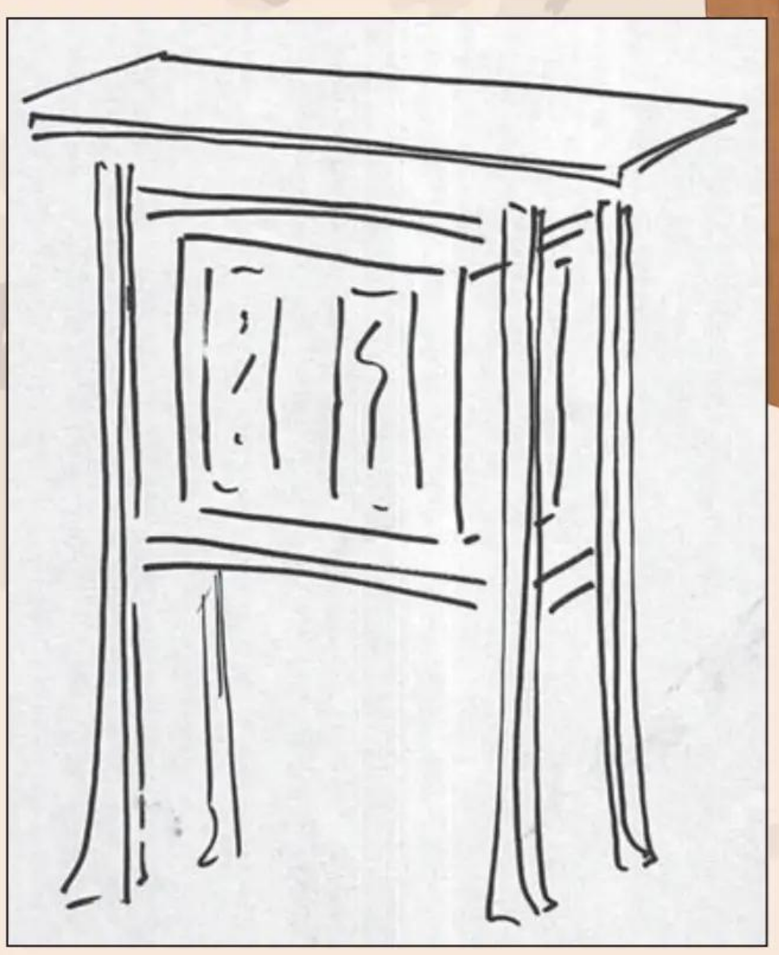
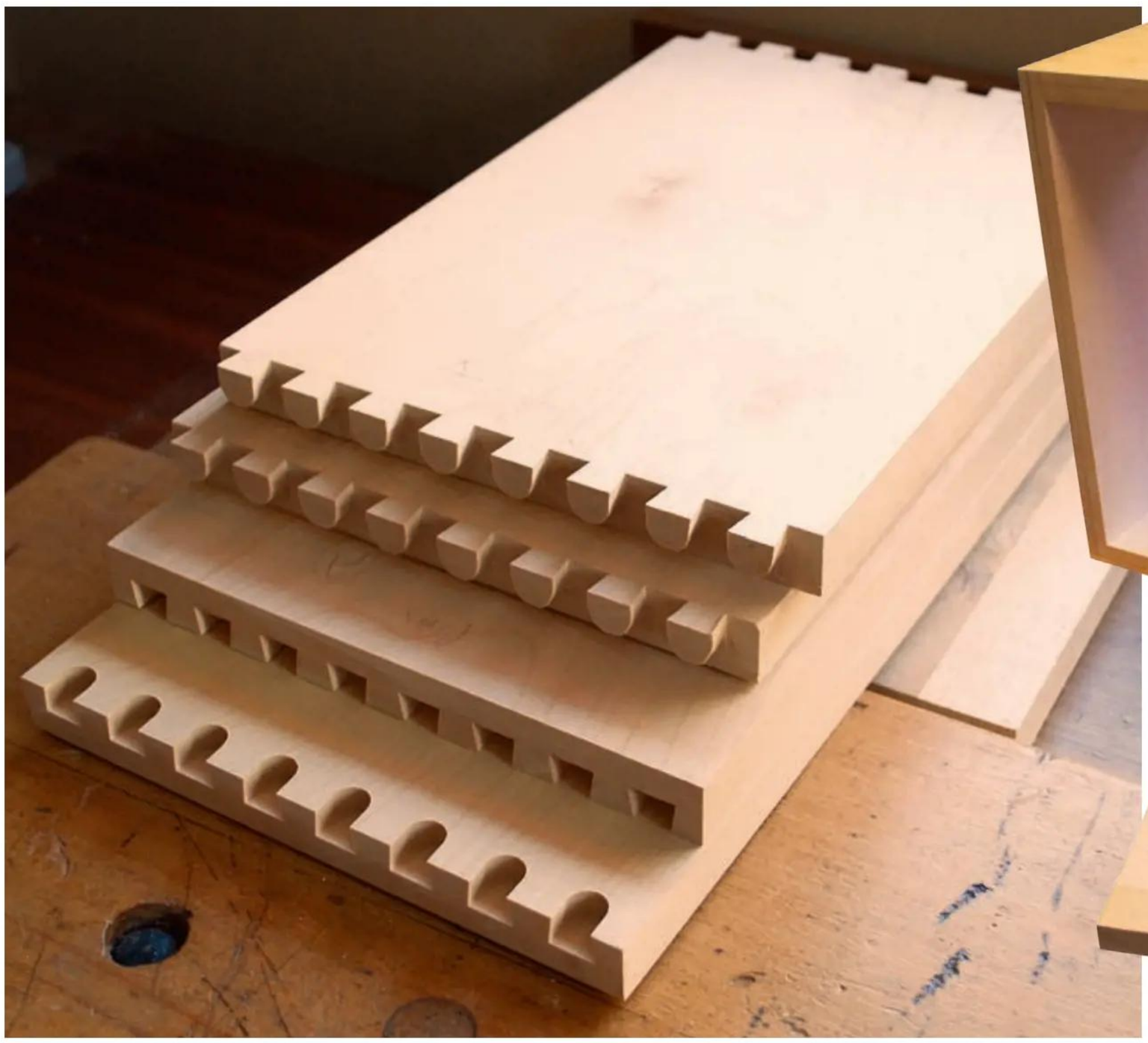
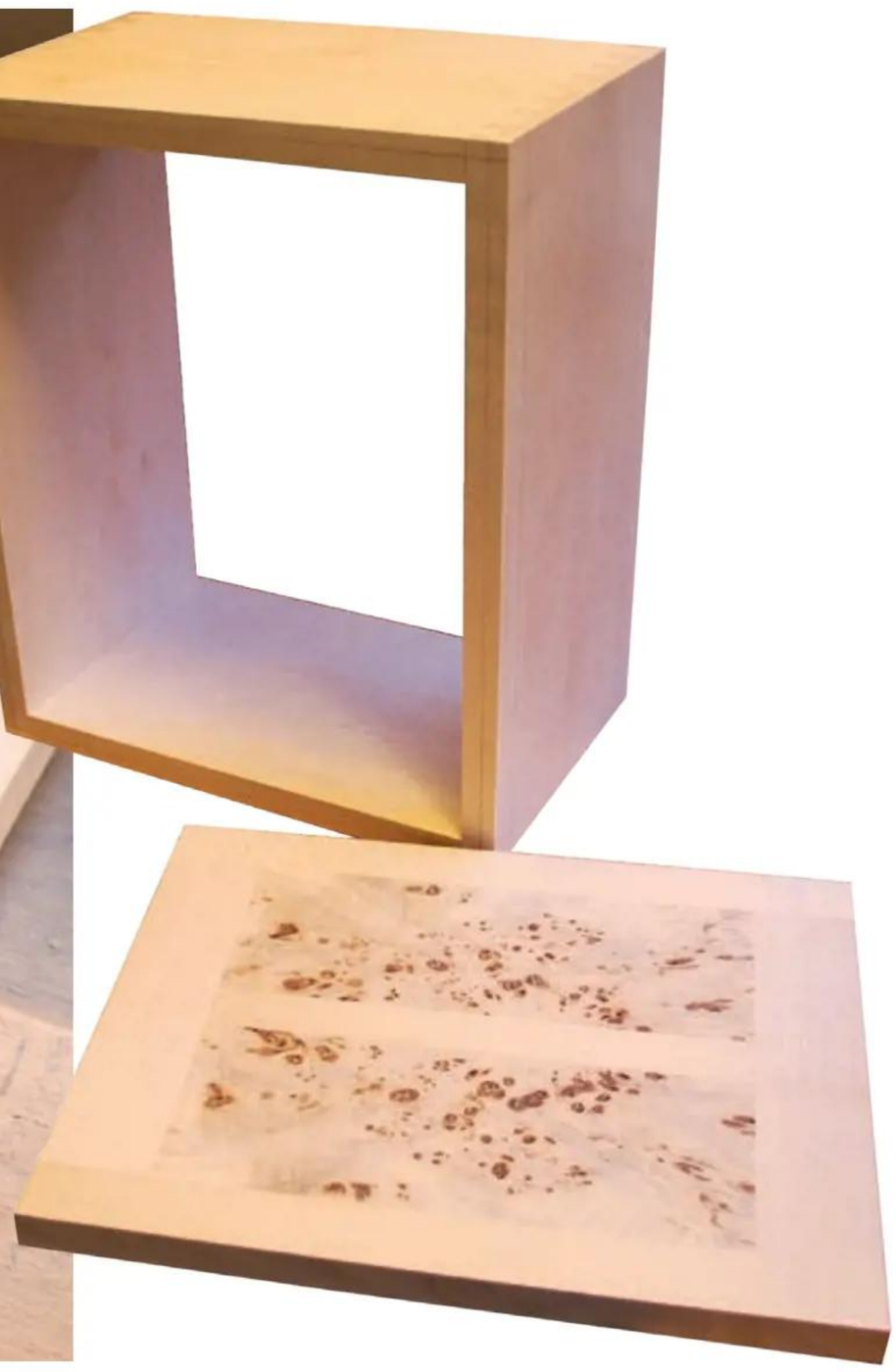


Fig.1 The 'inner space' cabinet started with a simple sketch on paper – my equivalent to a set of plans!

My 'on the hoof' designing process reveals the unintentional influence of Krenov



3 I employed lapped dovetails for strength and attractiveness, opting to use a jig due to the quantity required



4 The inner cabinet was kept as simple as possible

wouldn't work, and instead constructed a simple handle using burr sycamore housed in sycamore (**photo 7**); this was attached by simply gluing the handle dowels into the door frame along with the completed inner cabinet (**photo 8**).

Legs & framework

I constructed the legs and framework in parallel to making the inner cabinet. These are simply made from lengths of sycamore with suitable mortise & tenon joints (**photo 9**). Details of sizes are given in the drawings, which can be found on page 53; note that the top and bottom rails are identical in size. The legs have a gentle curve, which gradually increases from 45mm at the bottom to 35mm at mid height; I felt that the cabinet needed this touch, otherwise it might look unbalanced. Like the inner cabinet's support rails, the top of each leg is capped with burr sycamore.

Care must be taken to ensure that the inner cabinet is a perfect fit between the framework's upper and lower rails. If too tight, the inner cabinet's support rails can be planed a little to fit, but if too slack, the only available option is to make new supports.

Notice that the top and bottom rails have gentle curves on the upper and lower edges respectively (**photo 10**), which reduces the look of rigidity about the structure; they were also designed to blend with some



5 The door was fitted using simple butt hinges



6 The supports, which allow the inner cabinet to float, were screwed in place, with pieces of burr at the end to add interest

7 I fashioned handles from sycamore, adding burr as before



gentle curves on top of the cabinet. Finally, I fastened the inner cabinet to the top and bottom rails using screws and as before, hid the screw heads with plugs.

The top

The cabinet's top is simply a piece of sycamore measuring 655mm long and 244mm wide, planed to 24mm final thickness. I constructed it from two boards, which were jointed together with biscuits. It was deliberately made much wider than the cabinet's width, again to give an overall sense of balance (**photo 11**). When creating a new piece, it can sometimes be difficult to get a sense of proportions. The problem is eliminated, of course, when producing a project from a plan, or when copying another project; but for me, working it out as I go along all adds to the sense of enjoyment.

Eventually, after some trial and error, I resolved on the final sizes. Gentle curves were added to the top's edges using a spokeshave (**photos 12** & **13**), giving an elegant look, while recalling the curve



8 The handle was glued in place, thus completing the inner cabinet

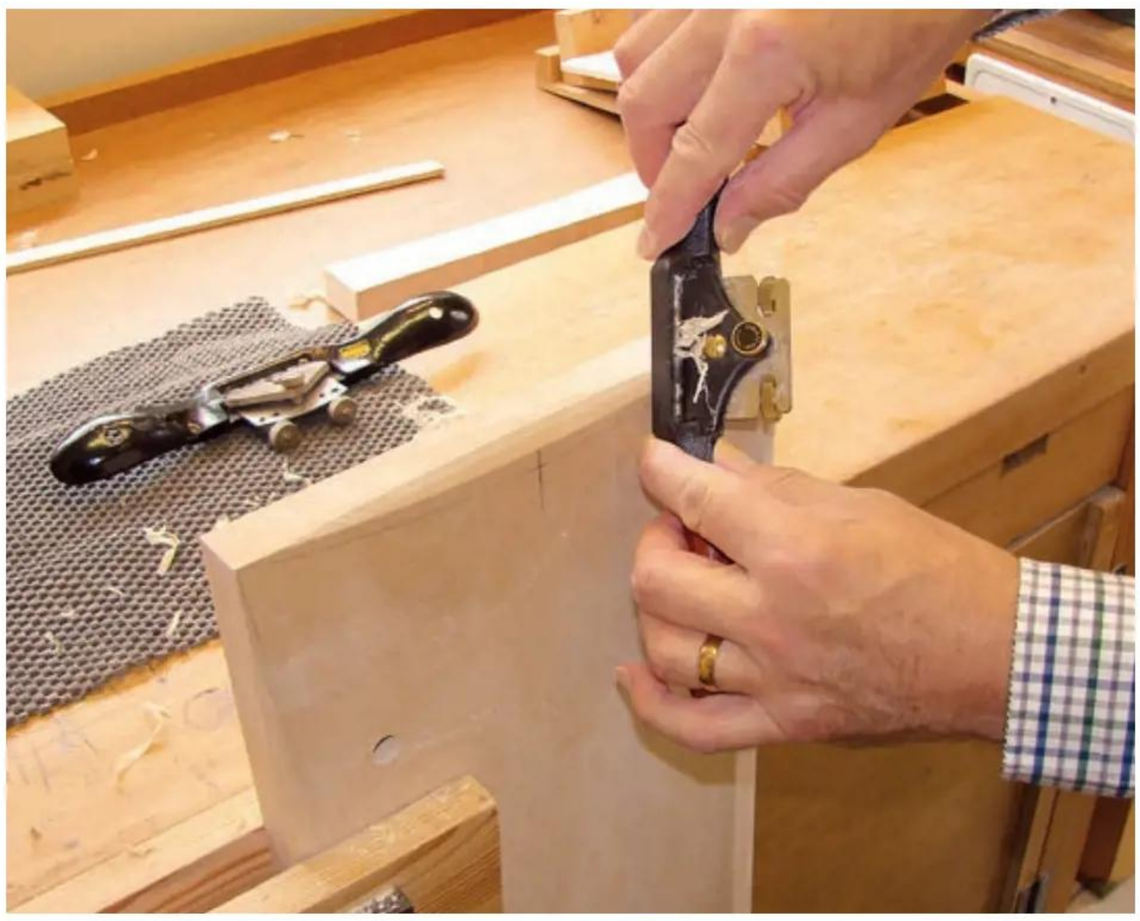


9 The framework employs simple mortise & tenon joints





10 & 11 In order to lend the piece balance, the rails were given a gentle curve and the top made much wider than the inner cabinet



12 Gentle spokeshave curves...



13 ... give the top an understated elegance

on the outer framework's top rail. Next, the top was fastened to the cabinet using steel pins set in an epoxy resin. This adds to the sense of a top that's floating slightly above the cabinet (**photo 14**).

Finishing

The cabinet was finished in stages as the project progressed, beginning with the inner cabinet, then proceeding to the outer framework, and finally the top. I always use 320 grit abrasive for final finishing (**photo 15**), calling upon old worn pieces of abrasive whenever possible. Having said that, I also endeavour to minimise sanding as much as possible by using really sharp hand planes.

The cabinet was finished entirely in Rustins Plastic coating followed by a final wax polish. As usual, I applied the plastic coating very dilute and by means of a rag. Three to four coats were applied to everything apart from the door, which required about six to seven coats on the burr due to its high absorbency. This took quite some time since I usually leave about a day between coats; this allows them to dry and thoroughly harden before rubbing down in between each coat. Beware, this stuff is quite powerful, especially when used with thinners, and is best applied outside, or at the very least, in a well-ventilated room.

Spark of inspiration

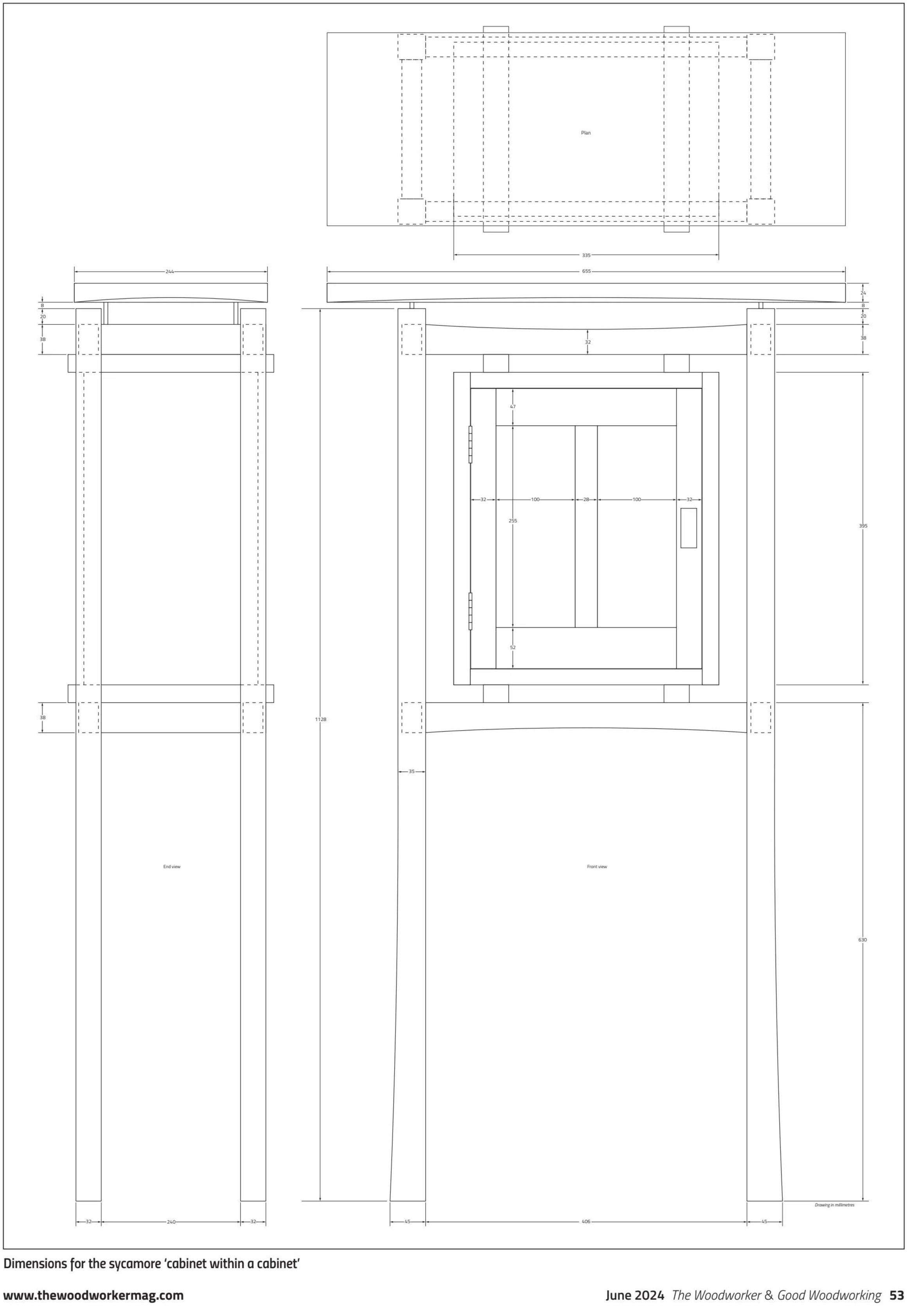
And with that, the cabinet was complete. I realise that my approach to design and making won't suit everyone, but I hope, at the very least, you can take something new from this project to use in your own work – whether it's drawing inspiration from a beautiful burr or trying something as novel as a cabinet within a cabinet. As for me, I'll be continuing the ongoing search for an idea inspiring enough to attempt...



14 The top is fastened to the cabinet using steel pins set in an epoxy resin



15 320 grit abrasive was used to finish things off, followed by my favoured Rustins Plastic coating



Dimensions for the sycamore 'cabinet within a cabinet'

CARVING WITHOUT BOUNDS

WW PROFILE

Using minuscule tools called ulis, the **Jangid family** from Rajasthan carve incredibly intricate miniatures that celebrate deities and animals



Mohit Jangid with one of his super-miniatures

In the beautiful city of Jaipur, the capital of India's Rajasthan state, a father and his two sons are carving a living for themselves in walnut, rosewood, ebony, teak and sandalwood, working these woods into miniatures drawn from history, religion, wildlife and day-to-day living, using a selection of traditional craft techniques.

For Mahesh Jangid and his sons Mohit and Rohit, following the family's woodcarving heritage is what they were born to do. Mahesh was learning to carve at his grandfather's side aged just seven-years-old and by the time he'd turned 24, had been awarded a national carving prize for a hand fan. He also created what's claimed to be the smallest jointless chain from a solid piece of sandalwood, which is 10ft long, has 496 links and weighs 12g.

Mahesh's work is celebrated throughout India and has also been seen at exhibitions in Europe, the Middle East and the Far East.

Family tradition

Now Mahesh's sons – both in their 20s – are following in the family tradition. Mohit says: "I prefer miniature work because I've seen this since my childhood. Achieving intricate detail on such a small scale is the most important thing on the pieces we produce as it makes them more attractive. We can make all kinds of carvings, but miniature work is my favourite."

Although he's a graduate, Mohit chose to leave his studies in favour of pursuing woodcarving: "I'm so passionate about it and this is also where my skills lie. If I went on to do any other job, then it'll have limits – limited salary, time and work – and I won't have the opportunity for variety on a daily basis. I'd like to continue woodcarving for as long as possible. There's no limits on the work available to us, and we can choose to do as much as we like – there's always opportunities for new designs, projects and other miniature work, etc."

Rohit adds: "I like miniature work in my art, and we're the only people who make these kinds of carvings with scenes depicted in flipped lids. All scenes have their own story. I like it when people are surprised when they see my work, opening the lids and discovering the hidden scenes that lie beneath, because they don't expect this."

The family work from home, which allows other family members to watch the craftsmen at work, learning and hopefully picking up these skills along the way. However, Mohit explains that, for him, it's important to pass on these important skills to ensure that future generations can carry it on. He understands that miniature carving may



Deities carved from Kadam wood, this tree featuring in Indian mythology and religion

Mahesh Jangid working on one of his intricate carvings

not be for everyone, though and is eager to point out that if future family members wish to pursue another profession, he'll support them.

Despite also having the choice to follow whichever path he wanted, Mohit gravitated towards woodcarving and soon discovered his natural aptitude for it. He also recognises that being forced to do such work and not having true passion for it will result in poor quality results, and the person producing it will also likely not be completely fulfilled.

And what does Mahesh say? "I always enjoy all the carving work, but the detail on the Rajasthani doll is my most favourite. As a family, we're Rajasthani and this piece shows the story of the Rajasthani freedom fighters, as well as depicting the beauty of the Rajasthani lady with our traditional jewellery.

"I feel so proud of both my sons; they're so dedicated to this work and are always thinking about new ideas and how they can ultimately make the pieces they produce more attractive and beautiful. I think they both have bright futures ahead of them and will be very successful. The carving they produce is already more detailed and miniature in size."

Miniature carving process

In terms of the process for this, Rohit explains how it's done: "First of all, wood is cut into the desired shape, then very fine tools are used to carve out the small design facets, giving greatest attention to the minutest of details. Sandalwood is very fragrant and profusely carved with scenes from epics, nature and the craftsman's own creative imagination.

"Woodcarving in Rajasthan is not only an ancient craft but also world renowned. Different kinds of wood are used for carving depending on the size and shape of the final product. To start, the wood is cut into regular sizes and, with a pencil, a freehand drawing made on the wood's surface. Next, the design's outline is created using a chisel and fine carving is completed with miniature tools, called ulis. This small-scale work involves engraving the design contours on the wood's surface with the utmost care.

If the trio find that these tools aren't suitable for a particular task, however, then they set about making their own versions by fashioning small iron sticks. It's ingenious solutions like this that not only keep ancient crafts alive but also build upon them.



Rohit Jangid needs a keen eye for the ultra-fine work he produces

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information on the Jangids, see **www.maljiarts.com**

ARTHUR'S ABOMINATION



WW TECHNIQUE

Stephen Simmons explodes the myths surrounding that most traditional of finishes – French polishing

French polish rarely rouses strong passions these days, but it wasn't always so. The delightfully entitled book *Chats on Old Furniture*, which concentrates on English furniture up to and including the work of Adam, Hepplewhite and Sheraton at the end of the 18th century, was published in 1905 and included the following invective in its glossary: 'A cheap and nasty method used since 1851 to varnish poor-looking wood to disguise its inferiority. It is quicker than the old method of rubbing in oil and turpentine and beeswax. It's composed of shellac dissolved in methylated spirits with colouring matter added.'



This 18th century bureau was never French polished but has still acquired a high gloss and deep lustre over time by Arthur's 'old method'

The author, Arthur Hayden, was clearly a man of robust opinion. The only other reference to French polish in the book continues in the same vein: 'Highly polished surfaces and veneers, and that abomination "French polishing"…[appeared during]…the early nineteenth-century… when a wave of Philistine banalities swept over Europe'.

Was old Arthur right? Yes and no.

Despite his contempt, he unwittingly makes several points about French polishing that are worth exploring because they give understanding of a technique that's still shrouded in unnecessary mystique.

Gimcrack finishes

By the beginning of the 20th century, French polishing had certainly gained a dubious reputation largely due to the amount of cheap, mass-produced furniture with gimcrack finishes to match. Corners were cut and industrial French polishing did become cheap and nasty.

Its reputation was to decline further with the advent of spray French polishing and its toffee apple-like results. However, Arthur fails to mention two things. When first introduced at the beginning of the 19th century, it was neither cheap nor nasty and actually the finish of choice on all top-class furniture and expensive timbers. In his day, there was still a lot of high-quality hand polishing being done, not least in John Brown's shipyards on Clydeside. His date of 1851 probably relates to the Great Exhibition, symbol of the Satanic machine age and perceived demise of the individual craftsman.

Varnish of course has long had a bad press; however, a varnish is any hard transparent finish: the 18th century French vernis Martin was a much sought and much imitated high-quality example. There are three different types of varnish: water-, oil- and spirit-based:



French polishing a table

French polish is the last named. He was also right about the shellac and meths, although other alcohols have been used.

When it comes to disguising inferior wood, Arthur had a foot in each camp. French polish is translucent and will automatically enhance rather than disguise a surface's characteristics, hence its early use on exotic satin-, rose- and burr-woods. It can only disguise poor-looking wood with the addition of opaque earth pigment, as used on much mass-produced furniture in the later 19th century. It was a practice that helped give varnish in general and French polish in particular a bad name and which is what Arthur saw as the norm with 'the colouring matter added'.



Star quality: although French polish is susceptible to damage from alcohol as well as heat and moisture, it can have an almost 3D effect on the surface

Application speed

He was right too on the speed. It's a common misconception that French polishing takes an eternity. It's true that French polishing can't be hurried, but if you have a warm workshop and plan the various stages carefully, it's possible to build up the full-gloss finish in as little as three days, plus a further four for curing. Compared with linseed oil finishes, which could – and still can – take months to build up, this is speed indeed. If oil polishing is a process, then French polishing is an event.

Not all antique furniture was French polished, however. It's just one in a long line of finishes, from Arthur's favourites to 20th century cellulose and beyond. Although linseed oil was popular in the 18th century, its use wasn't universal. A good deal of quality furniture was left in its raw state and only developed a 'finish' at random over the subsequent 200 years. The gloss you see on pieces from this epoch in historic houses wasn't part of the original design; however, with the advent of French polish, the finish of everyday furniture could become an integral part of its design and could be glossy from the day it was made.

Subtle effects

And so to that abomination: Arthur helped perpetuate the notion that French polish is always a high gloss, but it doesn't have to be a mirror finish. You can produce a range of far more subtle effects to complement and enhance the wood: by using just a few thin sealing coats to bring out the figuring; by leaving the grain slightly open so that reflected light is diffused; or by dulling a high gloss with pumice powder, then waxing it, for example. His snobbish attitude blinded him to the better qualities of French polish. I suspect that he'd never seen a quality polisher at work and had no appreciation of these other finishes.

But if Arthur disliked French polish 100 years ago through ignorance, many people now revere it too much for the same reason. Despite an increase in the number of full-time furniture restoration courses, which include French polishing, the number of professional French polishers has declined massively since 1905 and the nostalgia surrounding it as a dying craft has increased to a point where it's now more part of the heritage industry than a living skill.

Arthur would no doubt have been happy to know that it may be doomed to be little more than a curiosity.

TIP

To test whether a gloss finish is French polish, work a bit of meths onto an unobtrusive part of the surface – inside the top of a leg is a good place. If it goes sticky after about 30 seconds, then it's French polish



The huge Great Bed of Ware, born on a wave of Romanesque trends sweeping through Europe, supposedly slept 15...

Photograph ©**V&A Images/Victoria and Albert Museum, London**

CABINET FEVER

All hail the coming of the cabinetmaker, says **Phil Whitfeld**, who helped to usher in the age of fine furniture making



Henry VIII was a big contributing factor to artistic development in England, allowing the Renaissance to influence furniture

I would have to disagree with John Gloag's quotation, shown above right, taken from *English Furniture*, which was first published in 1934. In my humble opinion, this book is very much of its time. While making some valid points, the excessive decorative elements Gloag condemns were brought about by enthusiasm for new materials and techniques, along with a desire to explore the possibilities of what the craft could achieve. They weren't the result of a tasteless lust for decoration, but rather a celebration of the craftsman's skill.

The author suggests a lack of restraint, but we shouldn't judge such things by 20/21st century standards. Instead, we should consider them in the context of their own time and place. Gloag's middle class, middle England of 1934 was a very different country to the one ruled over by the Tudors and Stuarts. This was a glorious time for English furniture; such an ostentatious profusion of decoration wouldn't be seen again until the industrialised era of the Victorians.

Old Coppernose

Separate woodworking trades during this very period, taking the reign of Henry VIII as a starting point, continued to become increasingly distinct. Demarcation lines had been drawn up, defining what could be undertaken by carpenters and joiners. The latter began to specialise among themselves, and it's around this period that the cabinetmaker began to emerge – a craftsman who specialised in making furniture.

Although there was an overlap, especially in more rural areas, carpenters mainly concentrated on the structural elements of buildings, and joiners on the internal fittings of those structures; cabinetmakers worked on the movables. Again, these craftsmen were supported by the carvers and turners who continued to play an important role in a piece of furniture's overall aesthetic.

I use the term movables here as a generic one for furniture, not to describe the nature of individual items. The political and social landscape at this time was more settled, with a growing middle class building their country houses and aristocratic landowners settling in one place rather than traversing the countryside. Furniture no longer needed to be transported as before, so forms therefore developed to address these new living arrangements.

Again, it must be stressed that here we're talking about furniture of the ecclesiastical class, the aristocracy and landed gentry. Your average peasant or yeoman stock still owned few possessions and those that did were basic,



... and shown here as it would have looked made up

Photograph ©V&A Images/ Victoria and Albert Museum, London

"In architecture and in furniture design, the opening years of the 16th century had promised a vigorous national style... It was lost in an age of confusion that for nearly 100 years loaded furniture design with vulgar and coarse decoration destroyed the simplicity of form and dignity that were beginning to emerge from the strength and solidity of medieval woodworking"

John Gloag, English Furniture (London: A&C Black, 1934)

WW PROFILE

their form dictated purely by function – decoration wasn't a consideration.

Henry VIII, an intelligent and creative man himself, made a profound contribution to artistic development in England. His encouragement of trade led to an engagement with mainland Europe. This allowed the Renaissance ideals sweeping through Europe to take hold in England, with German thought proving particularly influential. This resulted in the dominant and long established Gothic style dying away, soon to be replaced with a style influenced by Ancient Greece and Rome. The linen-fold panel gave way to the Romayne, and the Gothic arch was superseded by the rounded Roman arch supported by pillars. Architecture had long influenced furniture decoration, and it was certainly true of this period; furniture makers would grasp these developments with relish.

Stylistic nightmare?

According to John Gloag, "There were beds like nightmare Roman temples, with posts supporting the tester consisting of columns broken by melon bulbs, hideously proportioned, in every way as vulgar as the worst efforts of mid Victorian furniture makers." Clearly, the furniture of this period wasn't his cup of tea, but you can't deny that the makers were highly skilled. The materials used played their part, but it's the quality of work that ensured so much of it would survive to this day.

An excellent example is The Great Bed of Ware – today found in the Victoria and Albert Museum – built in 1590 by Jonas Fasbrooke for the White Hart Inn at Ware. It measures 10 × 11ft, and supposedly slept 15 people. The bed features explicitly Romanesque elements, and the marquetry panels are suggestive of a Dutch influence, which indicates the journey that this style took from Italy through Europe, coming to England via the Low Countries.

The Renaissance's influence was in evidence throughout the Tudor period and well into the Stuart era. Craftsmen consolidated their skills, but the aesthetic remained fairly stable and unchanging. There were, however, great advances in upholstery, especially during James I's reign, when it reached a level of sumptuousness not to be seen again until the Victorian era. At the time, this was referred to as 'Turkey work', because the style, fabrics and embroidery reflected the style of carpets and decorations from Turkey.

There were also advances in form, which led to the emergence of new variations of furniture during James' reign. The space-saving gateleg

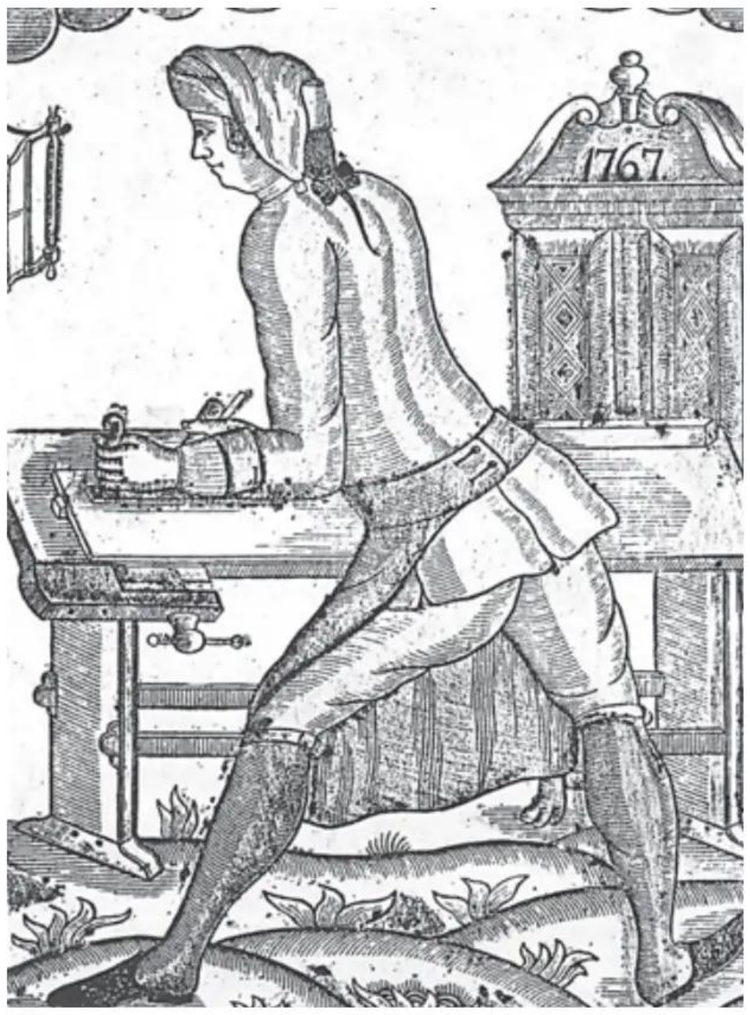


This farthingale chair, first appearing in the late 16th century, boasts magnificent upholstery

Photograph courtesy of Richard Bebb; www.WelshAntiques.com



In the 19th century, farthingales grew popular with ladies for their wide-hooped skirts



By Queen Anne's reign, the cabinetmaker was really coming into his own



Cane chairs became very popular for refurnishing after the Great Fire of London. These date from around 1690

table first made its appearance around this time, as did the farthingale. This was an armless chair with a wide seat covered in high-quality fabric and fitted with a cushion; the backrest was an upholstered panel. It was introduced as a chair for ladies in the late 16th century, but only became known as the farthingale in the 19th century, probably for its ability to accommodate the wide-hooped skirts of the same name – see Diego Velázquez's painting above. Contemporaneously it was known as the 'imbrauderer's or 'upholsterer's' chair.

We also start to see the old 'cup-boards' and buffets develop into what are now considered to be Welsh dressers. The origin of the name's Welsh part is as clouded in obscurity as that of the Windsor in Windsor chair; both are generic terms of style, rather than a suggestion of place of origin.

Upheaval & upholstery

Through James' reign and into that of Charles I, craftsmen continued to consolidate their skills, although we begin to see a tempering of the exuberance of decoration that John Gloag found so objectionable.

The ornamentation remained, however, and despite becoming less flamboyant and more subtle, it was in no way less skilfully executed. It would take a major political upheaval to have the next profound effect on the development of the English furniture maker's craft.

The execution of Charles I on 30 December 1649 produced just such an effect. The establishment of a new order under the command of protestant Oliver Cromwell and his Puritan followers stopped the frivolities of detail and decoration in their tracks, heralding a new aesthetic driven simply by function and utility. They were a dour lot and along with repressing decoration and comfort, also banned football on Sundays – and Christmas!

The 'Turkey work' upholstery gave way to leather, often without padding. Anything that hinted at the Europeans' pattern books was banned. Out went any reference to the architectural detailing that'd been dominant. The Ionic and Doric no longer provided the model for pilasters or table and chair legs. In their place came a revival of ornament that grew naturally of the craftsmen's skills. The turner certainly began to play a more dominant role in the aesthetic of balusters, chair and table legs, with forms developing out of the craftsman's engagement with his tools and materials. The barley-sugar twist can be considered a culmination of this.

Although discouraged, sometimes forcibly, the woodworker's desire for detail and ornament was hard to suppress completely, and while the carver's work took a downturn, decorative ideas developed out of the turner's skills. Ingenious as it was, whether good for English furniture design in the long-run remains open to debate. One result was the technique of splitting balusters and lengths of bobbin along the middle, creating a flat surface, which could then be applied to the framework or a piece's panel. This was a relatively cheap way of adding detail, and replaced the previous method of carving from a solid member. The technique was used to great effect during the Industrial Revolution, although it's been argued that this was in fact detrimental.

Another decorative element that makes an appearance for the first time during the Commonwealth was marquetry, but at this point in its development, was crude and marred by poor standards of workmanship.



The Cromwell era allowed English furniture's identity to flourish, resulting in pieces such as the monk's seat



After the Great Fire of London, houses were rebuilt with a lighter, airier look – see cane chairs

It'd take some time to reach the level of skill seen 100 years or so later.

An English style

A release from the forms of Continental Europe under Cromwell's rule meant that the English craftsman was free to concentrate on utility, and developing a true English style. This led to further development of forms originating during the reign of Charles I. The gateleg table continued to evolve and the use of space by furniture came to the fore, resulting in the dual function piece coming to prominence. Another example is the chest, developing into a forerunner of what we'd now describe as the tallboy, providing more storage while taking up no more floor space.

One development we're familiar with would be the table chair – a simple armchair with circular back – which could be folded down to create a table. Often referred to as a monk's seat although, again, there's no discernible connection. Several varieties and variations would follow.

Pre-Renaissance woodworking traditions re-established themselves, and as ever, architecture's influence remained dominant, especially through the work of architects such as Inigo Jones. His interpretation of Vitruvian architectural principals took a long time to filter into the mainstream, but their eventual dissemination was indicative of an increased understanding of proportion. This concern with proportion in form allowed woodworkers of the day to concentrate on an object's structure, resulting in an aesthetic that was dignified and, above all, English.

So it can be argued that the strict edicts of the Puritan regime enabled the English craftsmen to define and establish practical and functional, if austere, furniture forms. In the 30 years prior to the restoration, variety and inventiveness in form succeeded over ostentation and decoration, providing a firm basis on which the craft could be grounded.

With the English woodworker now confident in his control over the craft, he was ready to embrace the fresh, new continental ideals that swept into the country on Charles II's return from exile.

Out with the old...

Charles had been exposed to the developments in art and design that were flourishing in Europe during his long stay – as the guest of various monarchs to whom he was related. His restoration to the throne saw a celebration in design of all that he'd seen. Charles brought with him a retinue that included some of the finest European craftsmen, many of those from Spain – indeed, his wife was the Spanish Catherine of Braganza. Within 20 years or so of Charles' return, the Puritan years' severity and austerity had all but disappeared, leading to the style that's referred to as Carolean. However, while furniture was embellished with an elaborate take on European decoration, the lessons of proportion and utility remained firmly embedded.

As with many design eras, the chair became the form that exemplified the age. In this case, it was a whole new discipline of chairmaking that'd come to the fore. Originating in either China or India, where the raw material was available, the use of cane for seating came to prominence in the second half of the 17th century in Portugal and Spain. It was introduced into England by Charles' Consort, Catherine. With such royal patronage, they soon became a fashionable item and were also exported in large numbers to the colonies.

They were so popular that cane chairmakers set up their own 'shops, much to the chagrin of upholsterers and textile manufacturers. Houses were rebuilt with a lighter, airier look following the Great Fire of London, and the cane chair provided a perfect refurnishing solution. The French and Dutch weavers that established themselves here were soon overtaken in number by local craftsmen who quickly learned the skills to cash in on this new material's potential.

They enjoyed so much success that the Company of Upholsters petitioned Parliament in a bid to have them banned.

... in with the new

This wasn't the only new material to emerge during the period, however; an unknown timber – believed to have come to these shores as ballast in ships from the New World – began its reign as the principle material for quality furniture. It was stable, easily workable, took a finish well and the fine grain made it perfect for carving. As walnut replaced oak, mahogany came to replace walnut as the wood of choice, heralding the dawn of a golden age of English furniture in which the cabinetmaker would flourish.

Further techniques from the Far East appeared and the art of japanning also emerged. Initial attempts were rather crude; it'd take several decades for the skill to be refined. Marquetry also continued to improve and the rather coarse decoration, that we encounter from as far back as the time of Elizabeth I, was replaced by the elegant and refined art of veneer.

From Charles II's reign and through that of his successor, James II, the English craftsman refined all the new skills, which would develop even further under William and Mary and Queen Anne. It's at this point that we see the arrival of the elegant cabriole leg, so integral to fine English furniture, and French polish replacing oils and waxes, the French polisher thus becoming a craftsman in his own right.

All this development would reach a zenith of quality never before seen, culminating in the Georgian era, a period in English furniture history that set the standard for all that was to follow, and which still resonates with us today.

Consummate with this period is the emergence of the designer; the publishing of their work again had a big effect on the craftsman. No longer master of his own destiny, he'd now interpret the work of three men whose genius straddled the landscape: Chippendale, Sheraton and Hepplewhite.



French polish came to replace oils and waxes, with the French polisher thus becoming a craftsman in his own right



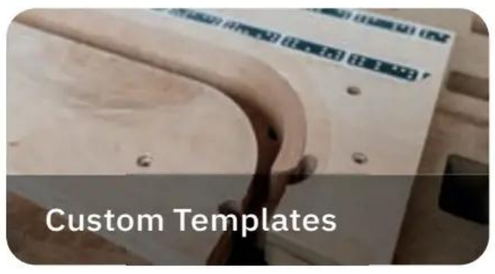
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AROUND THE HOUSE WITH PHIL DAVY



Several years ago we discussed favourite hand tools, but I wonder if there's a power tool that you could never be parted from? The most obvious contender is the router, an incredibly versatile addition to any workshop, but I'd probably vote the humble belt sander as runner up. Although not exactly known for precision work, it's a surprisingly capable tool for certain tasks, especially if you don't have a thicknesser to get boards down to size. Indispensable when working with recycled timber, clamped upside down in a vice it's handy for shaping smaller timber items, too.

Restoring my old workbench recently entailed sanding the top, before truing it up with hand planes. It'd sadly succumbed to water staining from a leaky roof years ago and looked a mess, although fortunately there was no other damage. The stains were deep, but I removed most of these with the sander, starting with an 80 grit belt. Far more effective than any other power tool!

QUICK-FIX FURNITURE RESCUE

Takes: *Two hours*

Here's an easy way to score a few brownie points this summer. If your significant other has been dropping hints about buying a nice new set of garden furniture, there's a greener alternative that will cost far less. That's assuming you own some already, of course.

Unless you're pedantic about taking garden furniture under cover in bad weather, it could be looking rather tired. If it's hardwood there's probably sound timber underneath that grey, weathered exterior. Hardwoods such as teak, iroko or afrormosia are best oiled, but ideally this should be done twice a year to keep it looking good. Unless you follow a fairly regular maintenance programme, you'll need to give the surfaces a bit more than just a clean.

I tried a couple of products from Cuprinol, which are designed to make the restoration process that much easier.

Cuprinol Garden Furniture Restorer

With an old oak chair consigned to the garden to experiment on, I started with their Garden Furniture Restorer. This is a gel, rather like paint stripper, but less nasty. You need to wear gloves to be on the safe side, even though it's a water-based product. It pays to work on an area at a time rather than the complete piece of furniture, as you need to work the gel into the grain and wash it off within 15 minutes. With no prior preparation it was surprising how well the gel actually revived the surface, though don't miss out the agitation part, then wash off the gel thoroughly with water and allow to dry completely. Next, you'll need to go over the surface with medium abrasive paper as the water will have swollen the grain. With that done, you're ready to oil.

Cuprinol Ultimate Furniture Oil

This contains waxes for water repellency as well as oils and fungicides, but what exactly amounts to chemical guesswork. It comes in Light Oak, Mahogany or Clear, and also as a convenient aerosol. A couple of coats, allowing the first one to dry, and you're finished.

Typical prices: Cuprinol Clear Decking & furniture Restorer – 1l – £19; Cuprinol Ultimate Clear Furniture Wood oil – 1l – £27
Web: www.diy.com





1 Brush on the Restorer gel straight from the tin. Make sure you're wearing protective gloves



2 Using an old nail brush or nylon scourer, work the gel into the grain before it dries



3 Wash off the gel with plenty of water, but don't worry about the timber getting soaked



4 The water will have raised the grain, so sand lightly once the wood has dried out



5 Apply two coats of Ultimate Furniture Oil, either by brush or with a clean rag



6 Allow 24 hours for the finish to dry before using any oiled furniture

CHISEL RATING

SUMMER PROJECT: PLANTER

PRACTICAL PLANTER

The horizontal slats on **Phil Davy**'s planter can be placed at two different heights depending on the height of the shrubs

No matter where you live, a planter will brighten up any outdoor area even if you're no gardener. This slatted version will look good in either a traditional or more contemporary setting and can be used for plants or shrubs. The horizontal slats aren't fixed in placed and can be positioned at two different heights to suit that of the plant you wish to display. Made from PAR softwood, it's dead easy to build and relies mostly on nails. A mitre saw will speed up cutting timber to length, though this isn't essential equipment.

Although straightforward to construct, this project is easy to get wrong as the legs consist of two timber sizes. Build the side panels in matching pairs and ensure to check the drawing. The first pair has 45mm-wide legs, with inner horizontal battens that run flush to the outside edges. The second pair of panels has 70mm wide legs, with shorter battens. Once glued and nailed together, they form a rigid structure.

When marking out batten lengths for building the second pair of panels, make sure there's a slight overlap where the legs meet at the corners. This will give just enough – less than 1mm – to plane the edges flush. Doing this ensures that when the planter's painted, these butt joints won't be visible.

Pocket screws

The top frame is mitred at the corners, though don't rely just on butt joints here; exposed to the elements, the mitres will open up. I fixed the rails together with pocket screws, though an alternative would be to cut halving or even bridle joints. Reduce the top rails' width to about 55mm.

On any project that features rows of regular rails, assembly is far simpler if you use spacers between them. I used 12mm plywood strips for this, but use thicker material if you want wider gaps between the rails. Wider gaps make for easier painting with a brush.

I made a couple of planters for family, which explains why one is painted cream, and the other sage green. Two coats of Cuprinol Shades were applied by brush, painting all inside surfaces first. Punch nail heads below the surface and use an exterior filler before sanding.



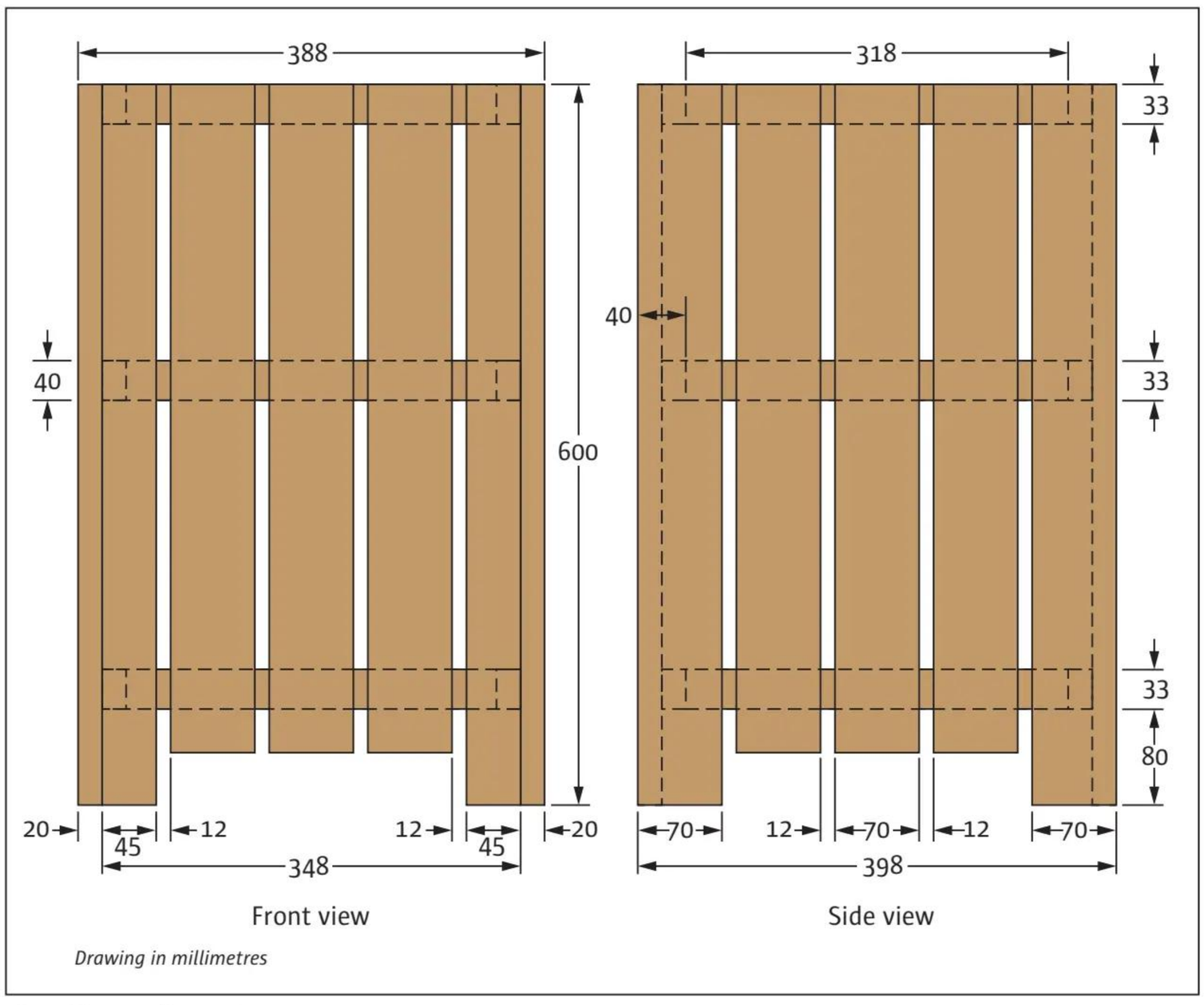


Fig.1 Planter dimensions

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Takes:
One weekend

Tools you'll need:
Mitre saw, sander, bench plane, pocket-hole jig



1 Cut softwood to length, checking that all 12 inner rails are 40mm shorter than the legs



2 Butt ends of two narrow legs and three rails against the timber and mark lines across for the horizontal battens



3 With 12mm plywood spacers between them, cramp together the legs and rails. Any defects should be facing upwards



4 Lay the middle batten across the rails and mark to length. You need to cut six pieces at this length



5 Keeping the timber cramped, spread exterior PVA glue between those pencil lines previously marked



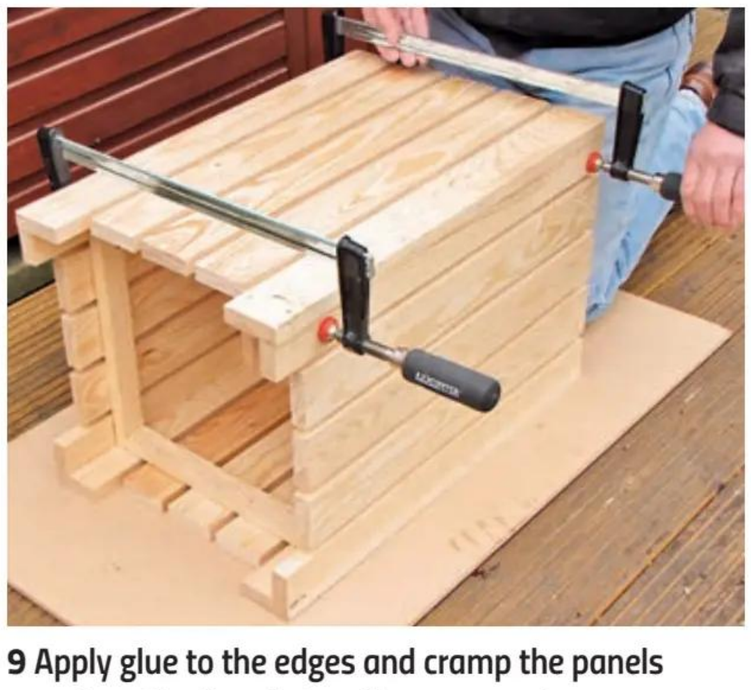
6 Fix battens to the rails using 30mm oval or lost-head nails. Pre-drill ends to prevent splitting



7 With the first pair of side panels made, mark against adjoining legs. Cut six more battens to length



8 Build the remaining two side panels with shorter battens; ensure adjoining sections fit together snugly



9 Apply glue to the edges and cramp the panels together. Check ends for alignment and square



10 Wider legs should slightly overlap the narrow legs. Drive in nails and ensure to punch heads below the surface



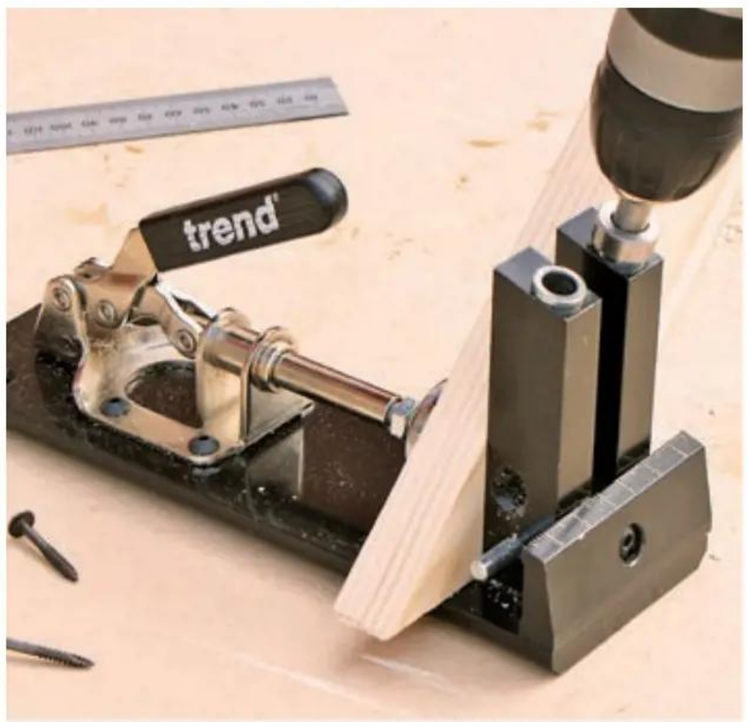
11 When the glue has dried, trim edges of legs flush with a bench plane. Lightly chamfer both the corners and remove arrises



12 The top frame is mitred together at the corners. Cut the first mitre, check timber on the planter, then cut the other end



13 Cramp timber in position and cut the remaining pieces to size. If preferred, you could simply cut halving joints



14 Use a pocket-hole jig for the mitre joints. Before committing to the final piece, start by experimenting with drill depth and angle on the offcuts



15 Screw the frame together, cramping the joints together as you insert screws. Nail the frame to the planter's top edges



16 Fill nail holes, then sand the planter. Brush on a couple of coats of suitable outdoor paint, such as Cuprinol Shades, for example



17 Cut slats to support the plant holder; these simply sit loosely on the middle or lower battens





18 The finished planter – shown above in both cream and sage green colour variants, available as part of the Cuprinol Shades range – will fit in with contemporary gardens while also looking at home in more traditional areas

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LETTERS

★LETTER OF THE MONTH

HANDY WORKSHOP SPACE SAVER

Dear Editor,
What has the space under the overhang of your bench in common with all of those little things that you know are located somewhere in the workshop or shed, but you just can't think where you left them? These slide-out storage towers were originally designed to fit under a kitchen worktop between the washing machine and kitchen cupboards. I purchased one a couple of years ago and have never regretted it. It's only 125mm wide × 550mm deep × 760mm high and is made of wipe-clean plastic. While I do have other storage areas, this is one of the first places I look when I can't remember where I stored some small item for future use.

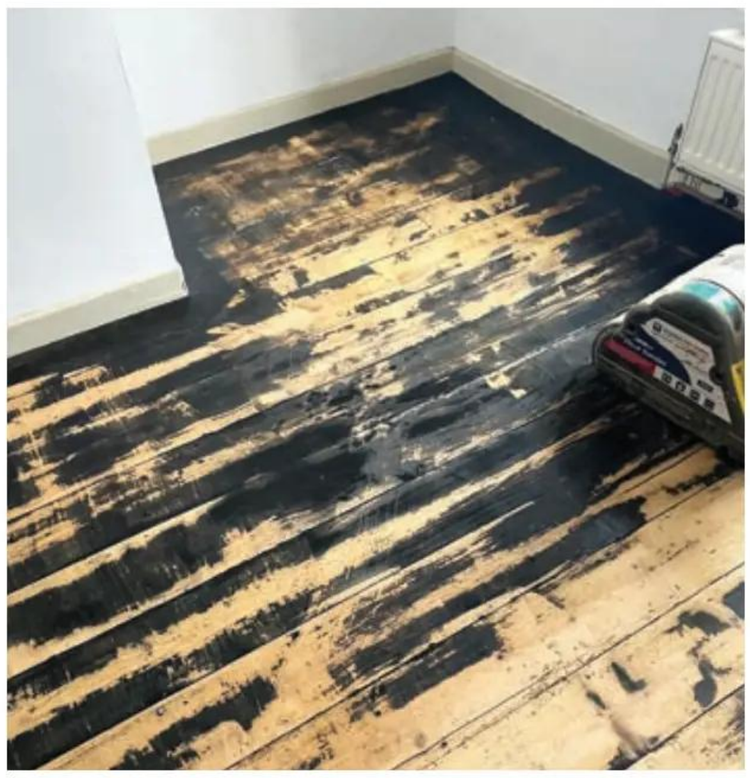
Of course – being woodworkers all – you could always make one of your own, changing the size to match individual requirements. Now there's a little project for somebody...

Storage towers very similar to the one shown here can be purchased online from places such as B&Q, eBay, Amazon, etc. and if you search for 'slide-out kitchen storage tower', many different results will appear, typically priced below £20.
Regards, **Frank Everett**

Hi Frank, many thanks for sharing this practical idea with us, and if anyone decides to have a go at making their own, please get in touch and let us see the results.
Best wishes, **Tegan**



Frank's slide-out storage tower is ideal for workshop sundries, but why not have a go at making your own version?



The black bitumen paint was eventually removed with a 24 grit paper...



... while gaps between floor boards were filled with an acrylic sealant

FLOORBOARD PREP PRIOR TO SANDING – PROJECT UPDATE & FINISHED RESULTS

After Phil's excellent advice last month, I thought other readers would like an update on how the floor sanding progressed. We decided to tackle two floors over the Easter bank holiday weekend with one proving more troublesome than the other. The first room went well, using a 40 grit paper; the large floor sander took up the old varnish without a problem and we were able to clean up the sides with an edge sander.



Varnish was laid down using a sponge mop in order to avoid brush marks

However, the second floor was more difficult as back in the '50s, it'd been coated in a black bitumen paint. It's stood up to wear very well but taking this off was no mean feat. After several mediocre 40 grit passes with the floor sander, we contacted the hire station who were able to supply us with a 24 grit paper. This fortunately worked but, if trying this yourself, be aware that it's very rough and did manage to eat into the floorboards in a few places.

Once the dust had settled, the floor was then resanded with an 80 grit paper, which ironed out any roughness created by the previous two grades. Holes were levelled with wood filler and taking Phil's advice, gaps between boards filled with an acrylic sealant. Finally, one last pass with 120 grit and the floor was smooth enough to varnish; this was laid down using a sponge mop in order to avoid brush marks. Three coats later and it's looking brand-new; not bad for floors that are two centuries' old!
Nick Smith

Hi Nick, thank you for sharing your floor sanding project results with us, and what a fantastic job. Undoubtedly much hard work and effort went into achieving this but well worth the blood, sweat and tears, and how wonderful to have uncovered such beautiful floors beneath! You can now sit back and enjoy the well-earned fruits of your labour.
Best wishes, **Tegan**



After three coats of varnish, the floor looks brand-new

FRAMING & GLIDING QUANDARY

Dear Tegan,
I wonder if any of your readers could help solve a puzzle? Many years ago I read that a famous Victorian, possibly a poet, had lost a lot of money investing in a woodcarving machine. Well, I don't think that any such machine ever existed, but I have got this mirror frame which, to the uninitiated, might look like carving; however, it is, I fancy, some kind of moulding on a pine base.

The question is, how would it be made and gilded? The label on the back says 'F. Leserve, picture frame maker, 13 Clapham Park Road'. The two most obvious elements are the very smooth and shiny convex strip near the glass and the entwined foliage with berries.

The watercolour, in a somewhat similar frame, was given to my mother in the 1920s when she was living in Putney. It's surely the same method of making, but in this one there's a concave element with shallow grooves across it.



How might this mirror frame be made and gilded?

Clapham and Putney are both areas of London south of the Thames and only a few miles apart, if that's a clue. Many thanks for a great magazine and very best wishes.
Max Byford

Hi Max, hopefully we can help you solve this puzzle and get to the bottom of it. If anyone has any knowledge or insight into the picture framer mentioned above, do let us know, or perhaps someone has a similar frame and can help to identify its provenance and techniques used in its making. Do get in touch if so!
Best wishes, **Tegan**





The watercolour painting shown opposite boasts a similar frame, but this time with a concave element



READERS' HINTS & TIPS

In conjunction with Veritas and Axminster Tools, we're giving one lucky reader per month the chance to get their hands on a fantastic Veritas apron plane with PM-V11 blade. Ideal for trim carpentry and featuring a ductile cast-iron body, its unique side wings allow for a comfortable, firm grip. To be in with a chance of winning this great piece of kit, just send your top workshop hints, tips or pointers – indeed anything that other readers may find useful in their woodworking journeys – to **tegan.foley@dhpub.co.uk**, along with a photo(s) illustrating your tip in action. To find out more about Veritas tools, see **www.axminstertools.com**

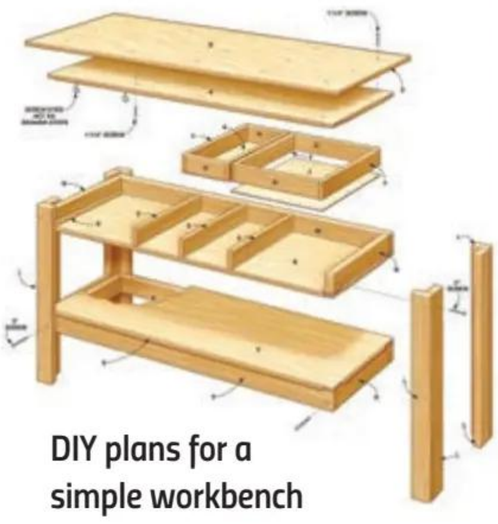


HANDY HINT: WORKBENCH DESIGNS ON PINTEREST

Personally, I've not been woodworking for long – only the last couple of years. In terms of tips for newcomers like myself, I do recommend, at the beginning, to design and build your own workbench. In this day and age, it's easy enough to acquire what you believe you require. Second-hand is indeed a decent way to go. The point I'm making is that building your own or acquiring second-hand gives you the confidence and ability to modify and adapt the bench to your needs as skills grow, without guilt. There's no more frustrating nor rewarding moment than when you get your bench assembled only to realise the legs aren't even, or more bracing is required for stability. I digress; my tip is that when requiring a new bench, look at the designs on Pinterest – **www.pinterest.co.uk** – to see what you like, and do it yourself! **Aaron Wiggan**



'Little John' hand tool workbench



DIY plans for a simple workbench



Mini workbench with vice, featuring wenge and ebony inlays



WRITE & WIN!

trend tool technology

We always love hearing about your projects, ideas, hints and tips, and/or like to receive feedback about the magazine's features, so do drop us a line – you never know, you might win our great new 'Letter of the Month' prize – a Trend T8EK 240V 2,200W ½in dual-mode plunge router, worth £349.99! Engineered for both hand-held and router table use, it comes with a host of accessories, all supplied in a moulded carry case to ensure safe storage. Simply email **tegan.foley@dhpub.co.uk** for a chance to get your hands on this fantastic prize



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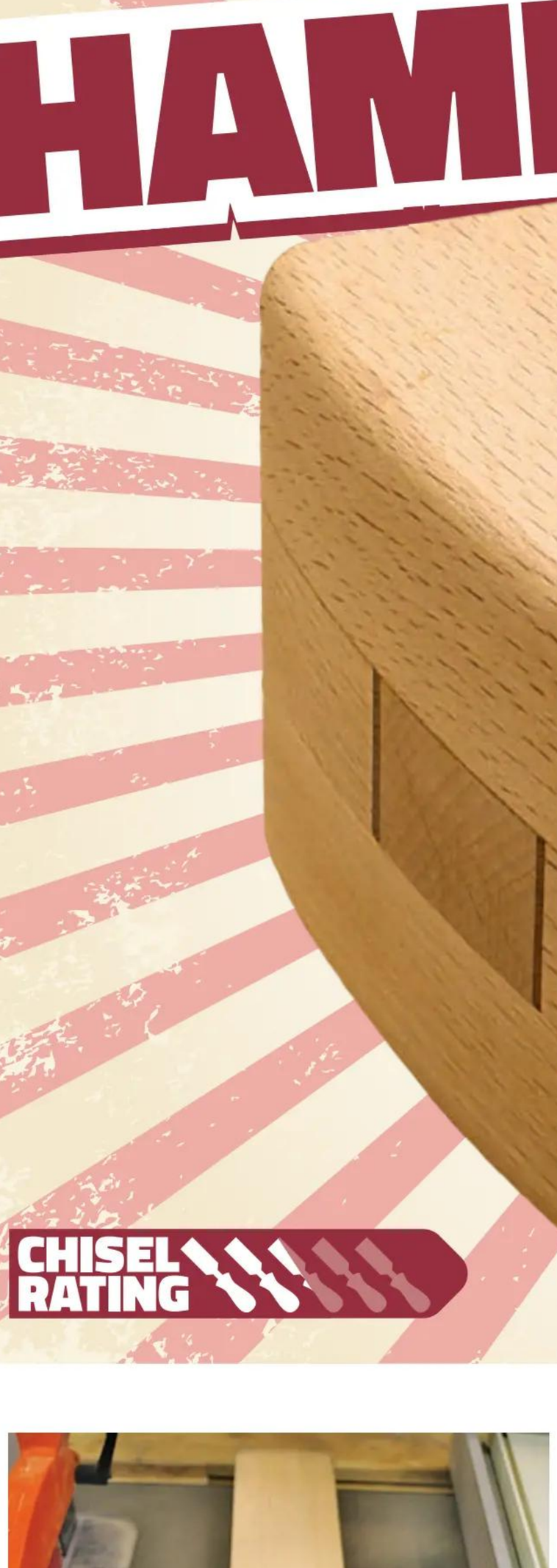
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HAMMERTIME!

CHISEL RATING



1 I had a spare beech board that was crying out to be put into service

So here's how the story goes. I was out in the garden, making the most of the good weather, by installing a wooden surround within which to lay some decorative gravel and plants; this basically involves hammering stakes into the ground – hundreds of them. Not wanting to damage the top of this border, I'd decided to use my trusty mallet. No problem, you might think, but after four hits, I was left with a handle, and the opposing fence, now some 40ft away, sported a nice dent where the mallet head had made contact. In hindsight, I was probably going at it a bit hard...

Following a visit to my local tool shop, I tried several mallets but none of them felt right – too long, too short, not heavy enough... That's when I remembered that back in the workshop, high up on a shelf, there was a nice beech board. Too good to throw out but not long enough to make something substantial out of, this had sat up there for the best part of a year just crying out for an opportunity to be used. Hand tools, like chisels and hammers, can be very personal things. Everyone's different with longer or shorter arms, bigger or small hands, so it can be ideal to make these sorts of tools bespoke wherever possible.

Getting a handle

Back at the bench, I started by examining the available stock. There were a few cracks at both ends of the beech, so the first step was to cut this bad material away using the table saw, then I'd know exactly what I had to work with. Taking my favourite small dead-blow, soft-headed hammer – because it boasts the most comfortable handle of my toolkit – I simply drew around it. The only modification was to make the mallet handle about 5mm thicker as the dead-blow hammer's handle was a little dainty for my clumsy hands.

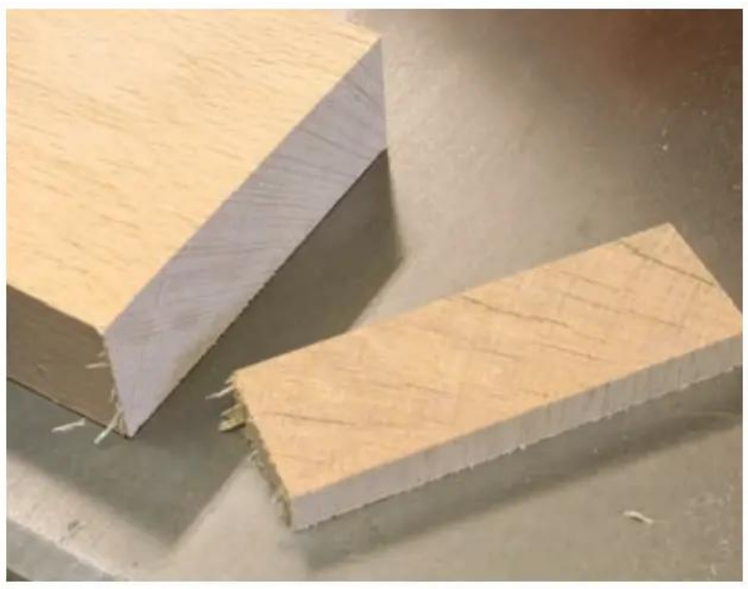
For the mallet head, I was limited by the stock width of 100mm, which was fine as this would've pretty much been the size of head I'd have chosen even without material restriction. So once happy with the handle's shape, I added an oversized 120mm tall extension, which tapered outwards like a dovetail to lock handle to head.

After rough cutting the handle on my bandsaw,

Mallets are very personal tools, says **Dominic Collings**, so why not have a go at making them yourself?



I sanded the convex sections on a stationary belt sander and the concave parts on a drill press fitted with a bobbin sander attachment. Stock thickness was about 35mm, which I immediately realised was going to be too thick to be comfortable, so hoping for the best, I ran the handle through a thicknesser until the tape measure read 25mm. Now feeling much better in my hand, I used a ¼in rounding-over bit installed in my router table to remove sharp edges, leaving only the dovetailed section square. After a little sanding and fettling, I was left with a handle the perfect length and more importantly, the perfect shape for my hand.



2 Using a table saw, hairline cracks were removed from the block to leave solid stock



3 I used one of my favourite hammers as a template, adding an extra 5mm to the width



4 Initial cutting was carried out on a table saw; the head was cut in the same way



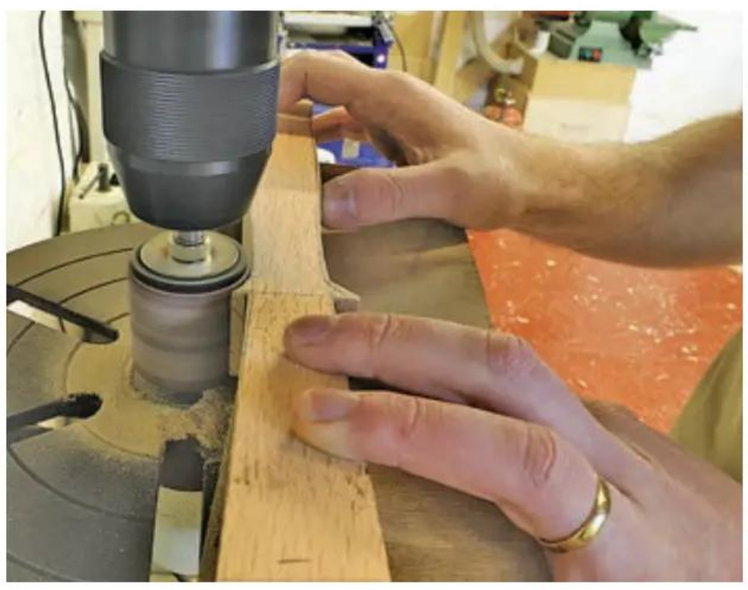
5 The profile was cut out on a bandsaw, which isn't really the best tool for cutting straights

Heads-up

Deciding on the head size was more a decision of visual proportion as opposed to working out the timber's weight. Perhaps there's a more scientific approach to this sort of thing, but being of the opinion that there's nothing that can't be fixed or modified, I decided to make the head over-sized, so that, if required, its weight could be later reduced. The four pieces were simply



6 Convex sanding was carried out using my belt sander, which happens to be one of the best purchases I've made...



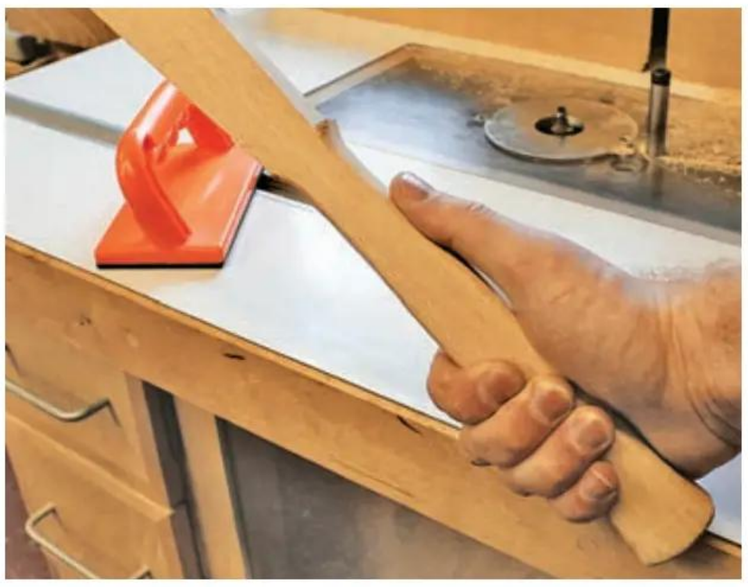
7 ... and concave parts sanded using my drill press with cheap bobbins – incidentally, one of the worst purchases I've made!



8 It's not usually wise to thickness once the profile is cut. Fortunately there wasn't any breakout



9 I used a rounding-over bit installed in my router to remove the sharp edges. Always use push blocks for this sort of task



10 Following some fettling, the handle felt very comfortable, and fitted my hand nicely



11 The component parts, ready for glue-up

cut using a mitre guide fitted to my table saw.

At this stage, I realised that I'd made a slight error with the handle's dovetail, in that when making it, I machined in a flange to stop the head dropping down the handle. This wasn't a problem, but meant that I had to finish the dovetail's sides by hand with a chisel, forgetting to check that I'd done this exactly straight. Unfortunately this wasn't the case and the result was a slight gap – only about 1mm – either side at the handle's top, but the last thing I wanted was for the handle to be loose in the head. Having already cut the head sections on either side, any remedy to the handle would lead to producing a smaller head.

With this in mind, using a sharp chisel, I decided to recover the situation by purposely increasing the gaps at the top to about 3mm, then proceeded to fill these with contrasting wedges, which would lock everything together. With all glue applied, it was difficult to get clamps around to give adequate pressure, but I managed it – just. Next, I cut walnut wedges on the bandsaw and once the initial glue-up had dried, tapped these into place.

Shaping & finishing

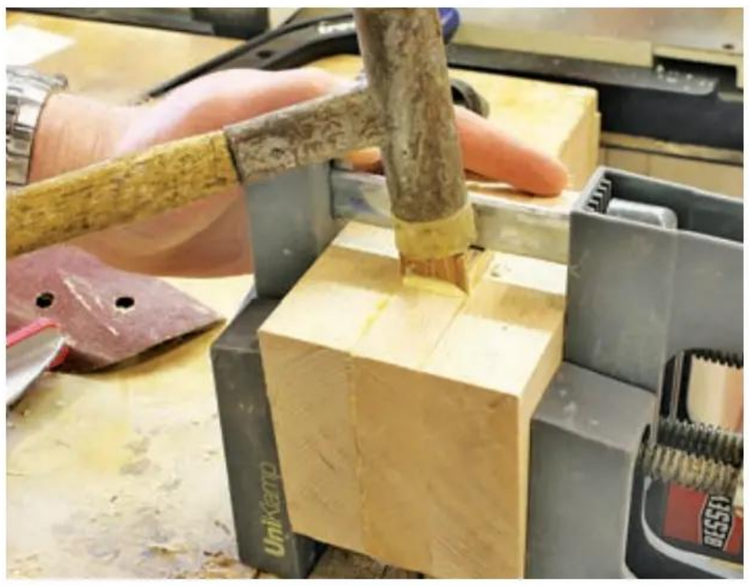
With the mallet out of the clamps, my initial thoughts were that it was too big and unwieldy. To rectify this, using a bandsaw, the first step required was trimming off the excess handle and wedges at the top, before sanding the entire top to a gentle arc on a belt sander. The result was better but still too big, so I decided to taper the sides to a similar angle as that of the striking faces in relation to the handle. Again, this was carried out using a belt sander.

Finally, with the mallet feeling just right in the hand, the head's upper and lower edges were rounded over on a router table and the striking face edges chamfered using a block plane. After a final sand, a wipe-on coat of Osmo Polyx oil was applied, which I hope will be sufficiently tough, but if not, I can always give it a light sand once a year or so and reapply or change to some polyurethane varnish should it require something extra.

All in all, I'm very happy with the finished mallet, which is well balanced, comfortable and a real joy to use. In total, the project took just four hours to make. I recommend any woodworker has a go at making their own bespoke tools – sometimes all that's required is a slight mishap to give us the nudge to make something unique and special.



12 People say you can never have too many clamps, but surface area is required in order to use them



13 Walnut wedges were used to fill gaps and lock everything in place



14 Shaping the head takes seconds, but ensure not to press too hard as beech burns easily



15 With all sanding completed, it was time to make like Thor and give my new mallet a swing – just not in the garden!

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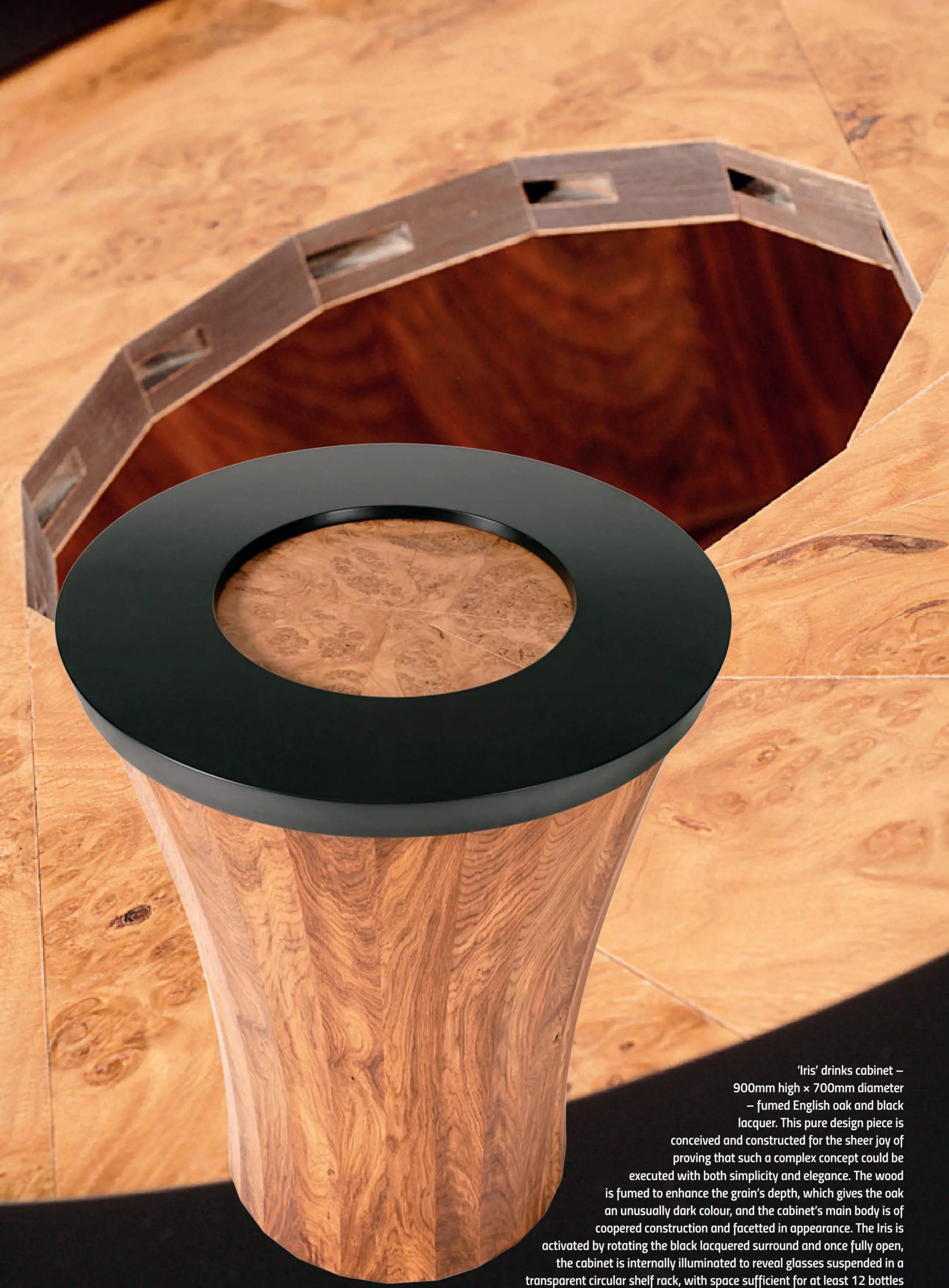
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'Iris' drinks cabinet – 900mm high × 700mm diameter – fumed English oak and black lacquer. This pure design piece is conceived and constructed for the sheer joy of proving that such a complex concept could be executed with both simplicity and elegance. The wood is fumed to enhance the grain's depth, which gives the oak an unusually dark colour, and the cabinet's main body is of coopered construction and facetted in appearance. The Iris is activated by rotating the black lacquered surround and once fully open, the cabinet is internally illuminated to reveal glasses suspended in a transparent circular shelf rack, with space sufficient for at least 12 bottles

THE MAKER'S EYE

Toby Howes has a talent for seeing both striking shapes and design solutions, as revealed by his intriguingly complex 'Iris' drinks cabinet

Toby Howes – the erstwhile ecologist turned award-winning designer-maker – works from an old school house in Dyrham, South Gloucestershire. Toby's portfolio reveals no shortage of the 'wow factor' that he seeks to build into his designs, which combine the natural variety of timber's patterns with some striking symmetries: "I like proportion and geometry," he explains. "I think my brain is wired up for shapes." His work also reveals a fascination with what he calls, "the intrigue of hidden things," as well as a knack for problem-solving.

And you couldn't really ask for a better example of the way in which geometry, intrigue and problem-solving all come together than his 'Iris' drinks cabinet, which was an exercise in optimism, imagination and sheer bloody-mindedness.

The challenge of curves

Bloody-mindedness? Well, yes, because in building 'Iris', Toby set out to teach himself not only to work with curves, but also to use methods with which he hadn't yet experimented. In answering this brief, Toby drew inspiration from two very different sources: the first was coopering – a traditional skill for creating curved shapes that's not often found in modern furniture; and the second being Robert Jupe's fiendishly clever 19th-century design for an articulated extending table – see ***'By Jupe, that's clever!'*** sidebar.

To an eye like Toby's, the two were simply begging to be reimagined and the result of his reworking was a design that incorporates coopered construction in the lines of the cabinet's barrel-like body, and something of Jupe's ingenuity in the piece's articulated iris, which opens and closes like the leaf shutter in a camera.

The road to the cabinet's realisation, however, was nothing like as smooth. Intended as his final year project while at college, the design was met with more than a little resistance: "It can't be done," he was told, while others warned that, "the trouble with mechanisms is that they always break." Or, "if you want to be a mechanic," some said, "be a mechanic; if you want to be a sculptor, be a sculptor." Toby, however, has a fair streak of stubbornness, and was undeterred.

Proportions & prototypes

Conceiving a design is all very well, of course, but in order to help him visualise all components and their proportions, Toby drew a rod from which he proceeded to make a full-size cabinet prototype in softwood. Not only did this mock-up serve to prove Toby's construction methods, it also helped him to refine the design.

Originally, the barrel had been orientated with the wide end at the bottom, but when confronted by the prototype, Toby realised it looked like a mushroom! Not being a fungi fan, he decided that the proportions would be more pleasing if the piece was flipped on its end; no less importantly, this also made it easier to reach inside the cabinet for the glasses and drinks.



1 Toby took the unusual step of forming the cabinet's curve by employing the old barrel-making technique of coopering – a traditional skill that's not often found in modern furniture

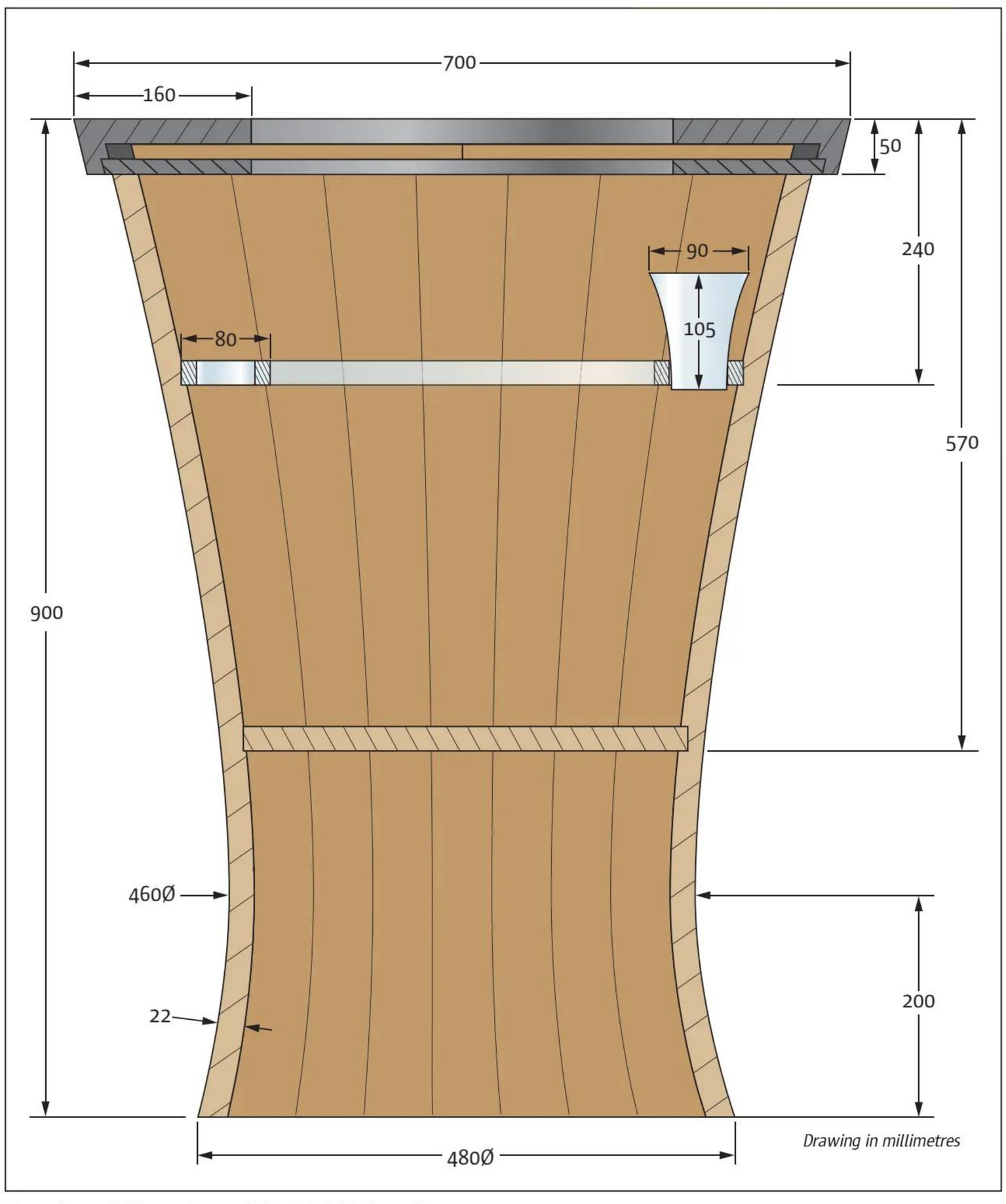
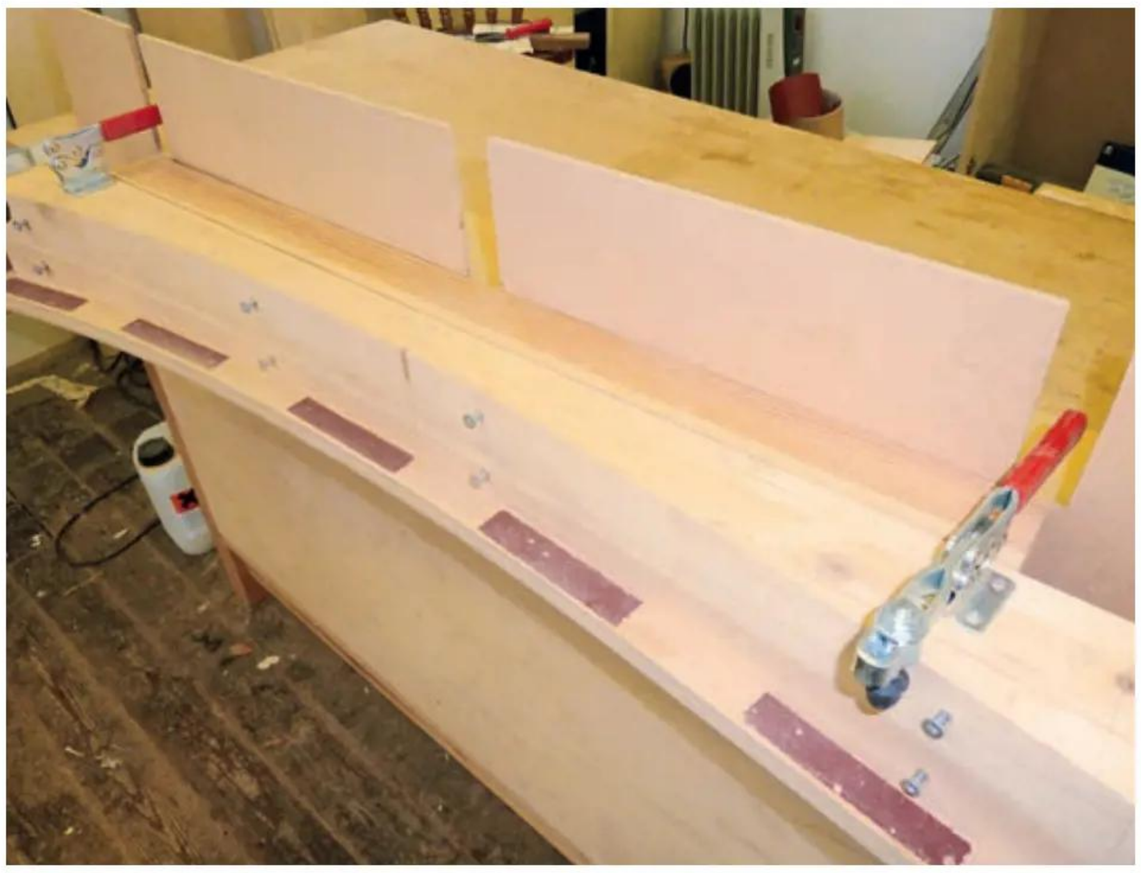
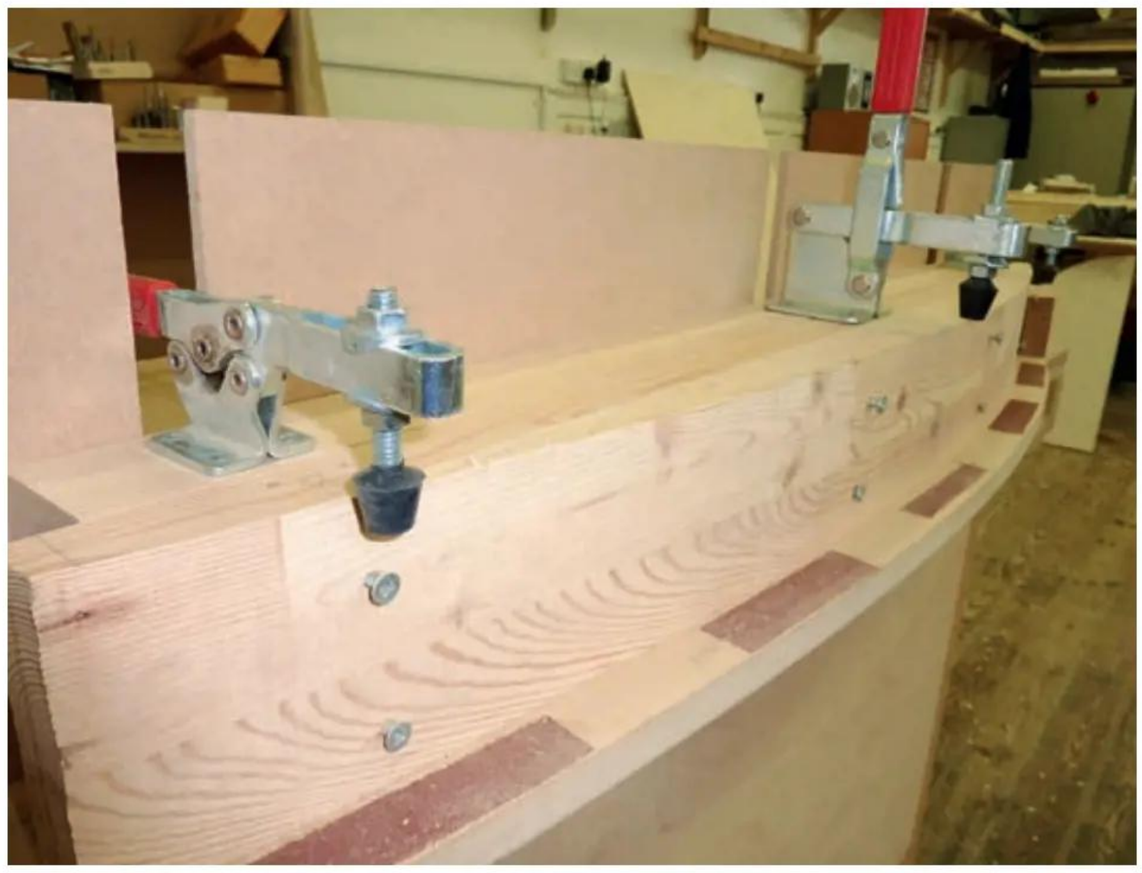


Fig.1 Overall dimensions of the 'Iris' drinks cabinet





2 & 3 A pair of jigs were used to first shape the slats' inside faces, then their concave outer faces, by running the jigs' MDF base against a fence to produce consistent curves. The screws are 'stops', which support each workpiece's reverse

Making the barrel

The barrel's curved slats could've been built-up by lamination – a technique that readily lends itself to curved shapes – but instead, Toby chose to use solid oak, cutting all slats from the same 100mm-thick board – see ***'A heart of oak'*** sidebar below.

A HEART OF OAK... & LEAD SHOT

There's a lovely curiosity concerning the barrel's timber. When Toby sourced the English oak, he took his time in choosing a piece with a particularly unusual grain – one that'd give him the flame effect at the slats' top and bottom. It was while machining these pieces, however, that he discovered a piece of lead shot at one of the slat's bases. The perfectionist in him was tempted to cut a new slat, but the part of him that delights in hidden things was intrigued by the turns of fate that must have led to the shot being revealed by the saw cut. In the end, then, Toby decided to leave the lead where he'd found it and so continue that part of the timber's story through the life of this rather extraordinary cabinet



This means that not only does the timber's figures flow from one slat to the next, but that the slats share the same chemistry – an important consideration when it came to the finishing stage because Toby had decided that fuming the oak would lend it a richness that would work in enhancing the grain. If the slats had been taken from pieces of timber of different origins, they might each have reacted differently to the fuming process, thus resulting in an inconsistent finish.

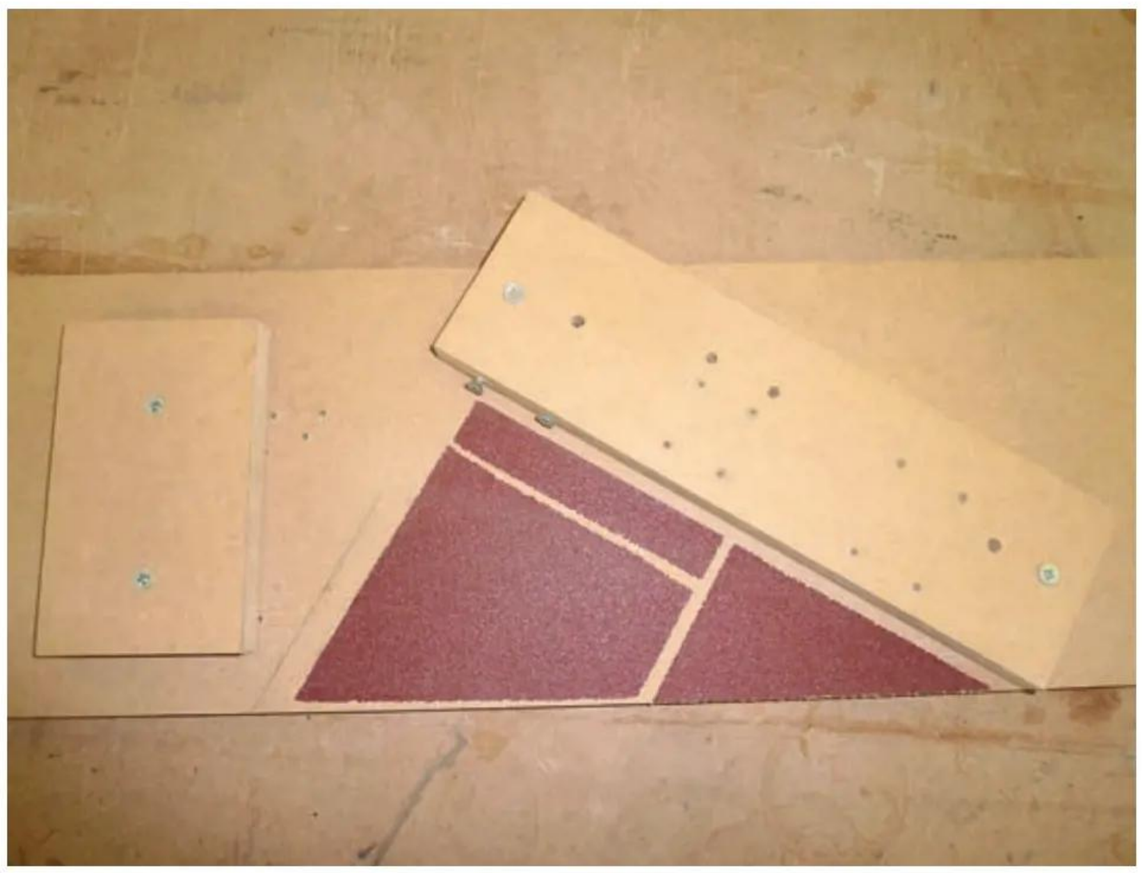
Making the slats from solid, however, required that both faces of each piece had to be accurately shaped to create the curve of the barrel's waisted profile, while their edges had to be chamfered to exactly 7.5°, so that they could be butted together to form the barrel.

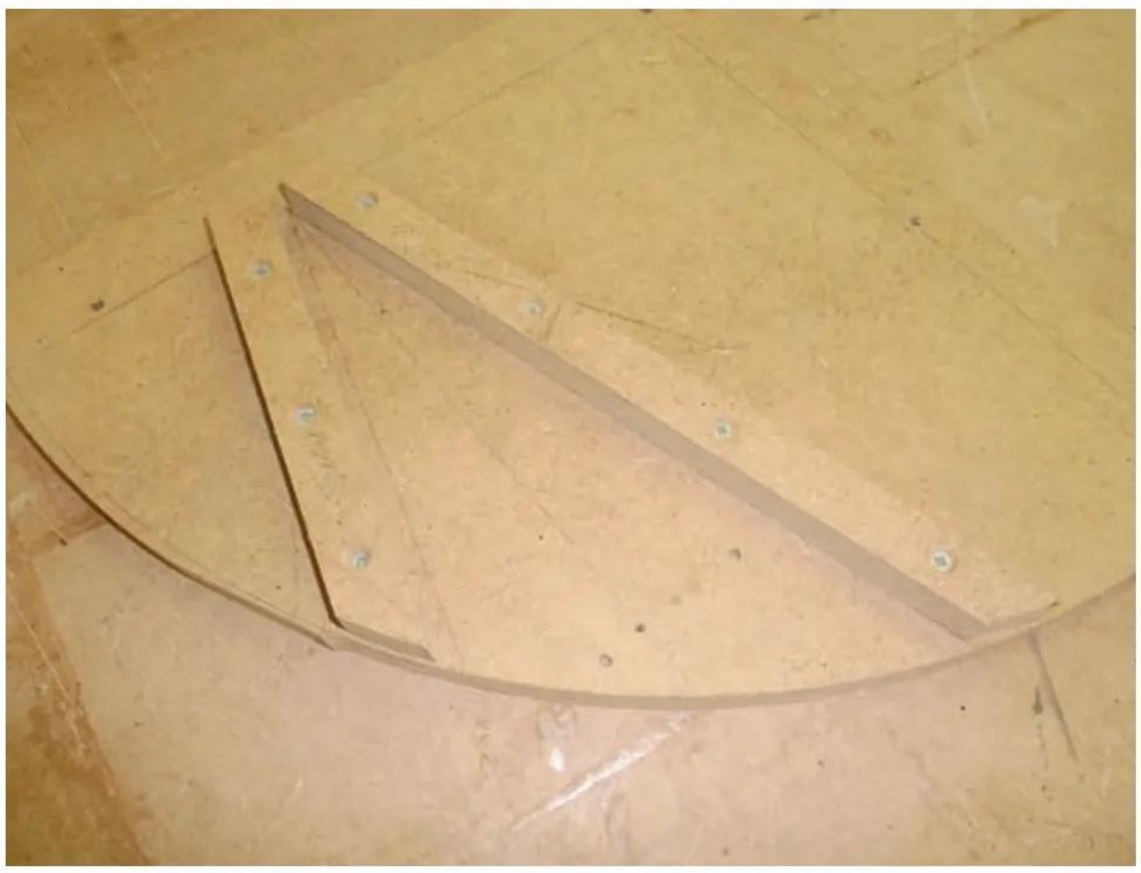
Toby had ruled out using biscuits to join slats on the grounds that their angled faces would make cutting multiple biscuit slots too complex to be reliable. Besides, he reasoned, butt joints have been successfully used for centuries, so there was no reason to suggest why they wouldn't work here – providing that he could shape the slats with the degree of accuracy required to make a sound joint!

For this, Toby employed a spindle moulder and a set of ingenious jigs. After cutting slats roughly to shape on the bandsaw, they were mounted in turn in a pair of jigs (**photos 2** & **3**), to first machine their convex inside faces, followed by the concave outer faces. The jigs are shown here without a slat in place, of course, but you can see that each workpiece was secured between the clamps and non-slip pads, then offered up to the spindle moulder; the jig's MDF base ran against a fence to produce consistent curves on all pieces. Those visible screws, by the way, served as 'stops' that could be adjusted to support the back of each workpiece, and in particular the rough, bandsawn outer face he



4 A third jig was then employed to hold the slats while the cutterblock, tilted to 7.5°, formed the chamfers on their edges





5 & 6 The iris' precise mechanics remains Toby's trade secret, but the leaf jigs give some clues as to the shape of the leaves' hidden ends and where they might be drilled for pivots. Perhaps!

had to contend with while making the first pass to shape the inner face.

A third jig (**photo 4**) was then employed to hold the slats while the chamfers were cut on their edges, an operation achieved by tilting the spindle moulder's head to 7.5°. Clearly, it was all a heavily labour-intensive business – one pass for each face, with a change of jigs in between, followed by another pass for each of the edges.

The final piece of the barrel puzzle was how on earth to manage the tricky gluing up process. There was no way that all 24 slats could be glued up simultaneously; apart from the problem of accurate alignment, there was the glue's open time to consider. At the time of making, Toby used PVA, but these days, he opts to use a resin adhesive. The answer, proved in the prototype, was to start by gluing up six slats to form a quarter of the barrel. This alone was enough of a challenge: the internal shelves' grooves had to be perfectly aligned before applying clamping pressure. Once dry, the quarters were assembled into halves, which were then glued together to form the completed barrel.

Maquettes & mechanisms

When Toby came to design the mechanism that'd open and close the iris' leaves, the task's complexity began to give rise to some moments of doubt. In a leaf shutter, the metal blades slide over one another – an arrangement that wouldn't work with wooden pieces, as they'd wear too heavily. So how could he make the iris look like a camera shutter yet work in a different way? Toby had to find a means of making the leaves slide against each other in unison, and here's where his natural optimism came into play – there was bound to be a solution, it was surely just a matter of research and ingenuity?

After trawling the internet for examples of similar mechanisms, he began to deconstruct and reconstruct the iris in different ways – first on paper, then in cardboard before finally making a working prototype – see ***'Thinking aloud...'*** Toby found that the best way to visualise how the mechanism would operate was to cut out the shapes and see how they moved against one another. Some makers would use CAD for this process, of course, but Toby prefers the immediacy and tactility of modelling, and it's a testament to his crafting skill that such a complicated idea worked first time when translated into the MDF prototype.

Once the mechanism was designed, the next challenge – as with the barrel – was to make each identical leaf with the accuracy necessary to allow all of them to move in unison. Each of the 12 leaves is a 30° segment of a circle, and needed to be cut to within 0.5°, in order to achieve the sliding fit that creates the kaleidoscope movement of the burr oak-veneered leaves when the lacquered MDF top is rotated. Not surprisingly, Toby regards the fine detail of the iris' operation as his 'trade secret', but if you study the photos – which reveal the leaves' slotted sides, and the leaf jigs (**photos 5** & **6**) – they give some clues as to the shape of the leaves' hidden end and where they might – perhaps! – be drilled for pivots. From here, you can make some inspired guesses as to how these might be articulated. The rest is down to your own research and ingenuity!

Mixing the traditional & modern

Even the cabinet's interior holds a few surprises. When the iris is fully open, a micro switch triggers a string of LEDs, which are set beneath the top. These make the glasses sparkle where they sit on a Perspex shelf, which in turn allows the light to shine through onto the bottles below, bringing to life what might otherwise have been a dark space. Moreover, Toby's use of Perspex here underscores the cabinet's skilful reworking of traditional techniques and clean, modern lines into a singular and timeless, not to mention unique, design.

FURTHER INFORMATION

To find out more about Toby Howes and see more of his work, visit the website: **www.tobyhowesfurniture.co.uk**



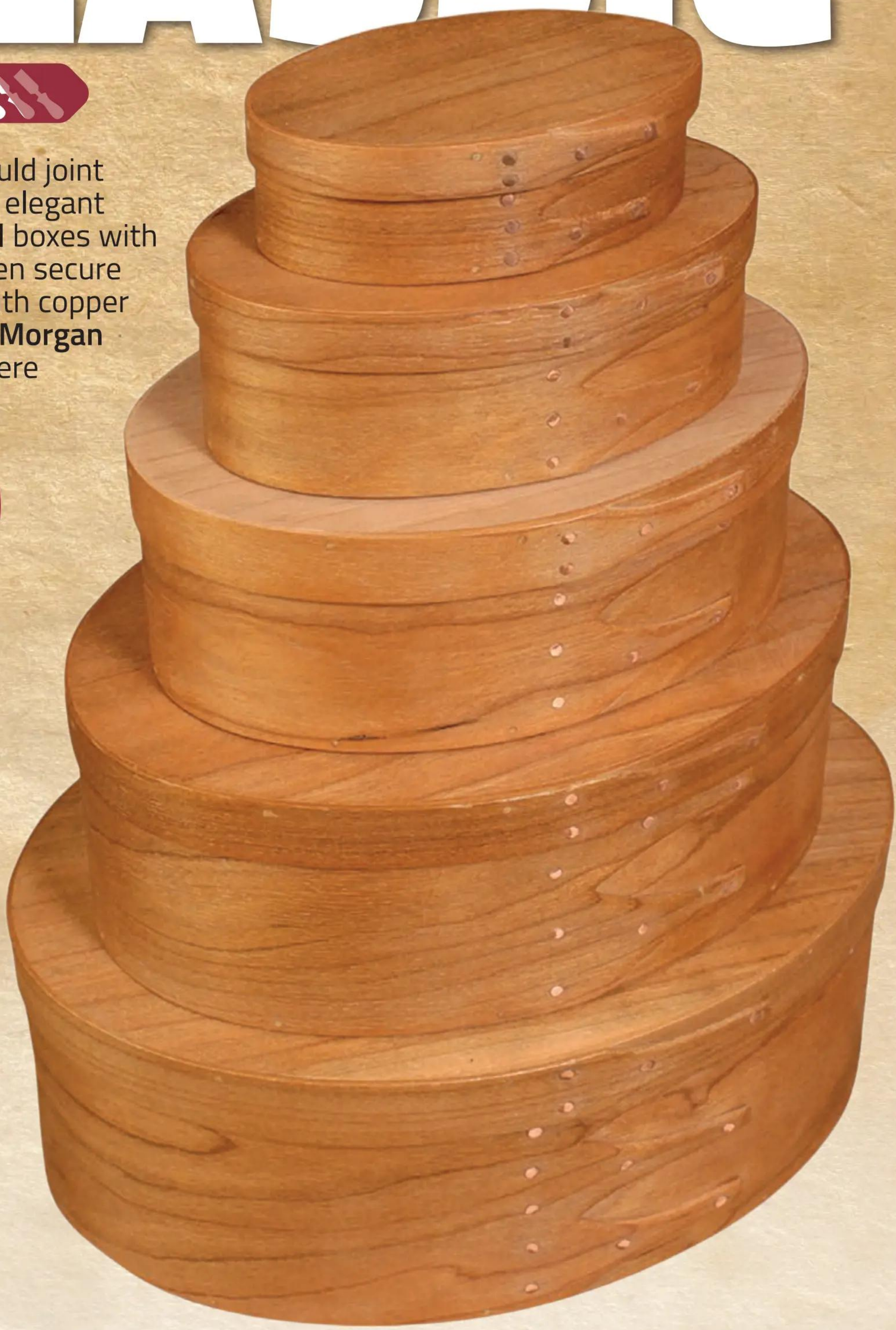
The coopered body is made from 24 oak slats, glued together like a barrel, the top from burr oak, and the black section from lacquered MDF

SHAKER CLASSIC

CHISEL RATING

The Shakers would joint their distinctive, elegant steam-bent oval boxes with swallowtails, then secure them in place with copper tacks, as **James Morgan** demonstrates here

WW PROJECT





1 Make an oval core from softwood or laminated MDF, then bandsaw to shape



2 After marking and cutting the swallowtails with a sharp knife, drill tack holes using a 1mm drill bit to prevent the wood splitting



3 Feather the lap end – opposite end to that of the swallowtails – in order to achieve a smooth internal finish



4 After soaking the bands in hot water for 15-20 minutes, remove from the water and wrap the band around the core. This must be done quickly before the band cools

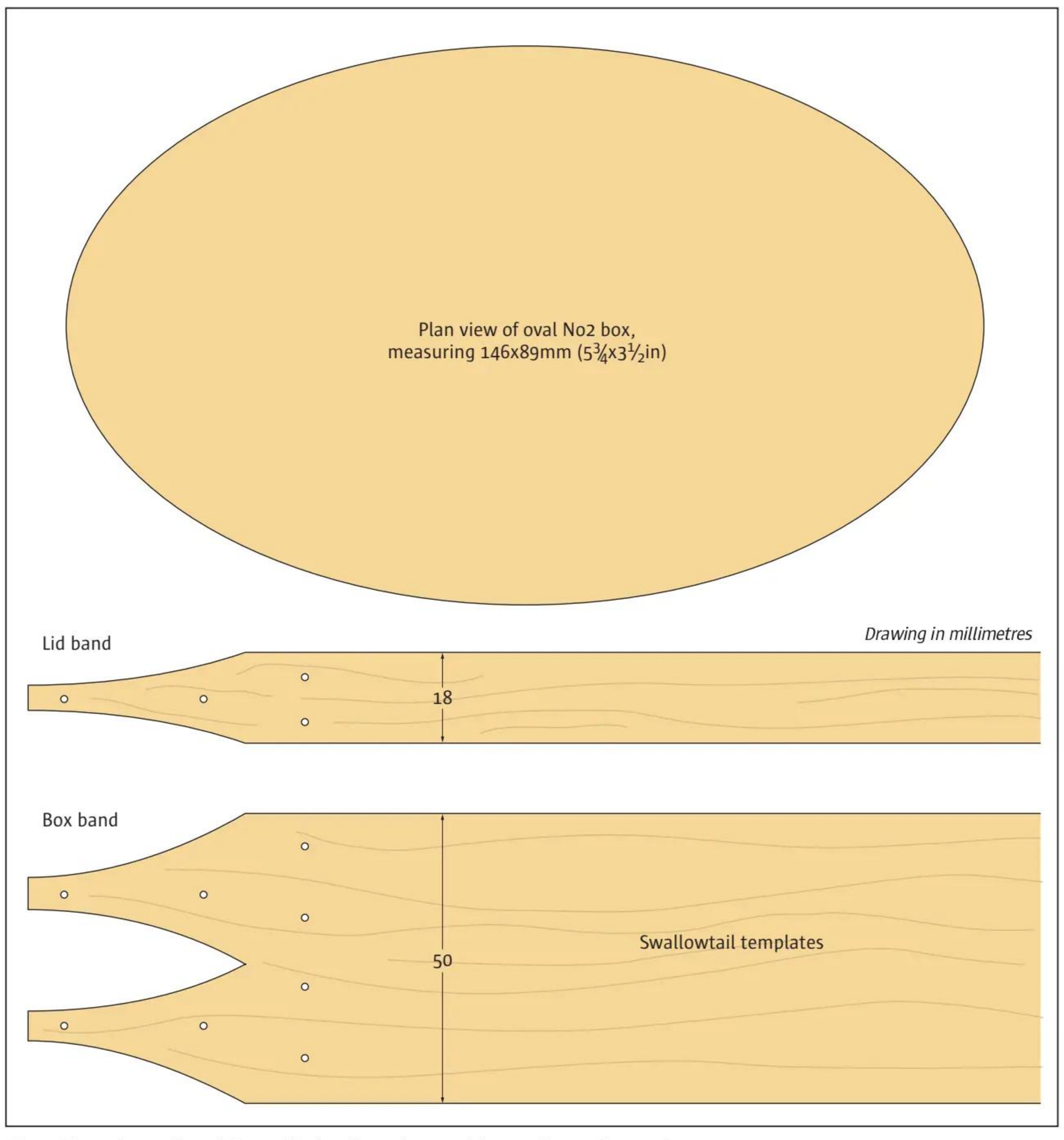


Fig.1 Plan view of oval No.2 Shaker box along with swallowtail templates

Shaker boxes don't use any glue; instead bands are cinched together with small copper tacks. As a precaution against shrinkage, small wooden pegs hold the snug-fitting tops and bottoms. The sides of the No.2 box shown in this article, which measure approximately 90 × 135mm, are made from 1.5mm-thick constructional veneer. You could use any wood here, although the Shakers tended to use North American cherry and maple.

Core & shapers

The first job is to make the core – used to shape the wet veneer bands – from either softwood or MDF laminated together (**photo 1**). The two shapers are made from 13mm MDF and cut slightly larger than the core, with the edges bevelled to 10°. The shapers are put into the newly-made box top and bottom when it's set aside to dry.

Next, using a sharp craft knife, cut the two bands for the top and bottom to size



5 Mark the band's top with a pencil and release from the core, then realign the pencil marks



6 Hold the band in position, insert the tacks into the pre-drilled holes, and hammer home on a steel pipe



7 Place the shapers into the top and bottom to hold the box's shape until it's dry

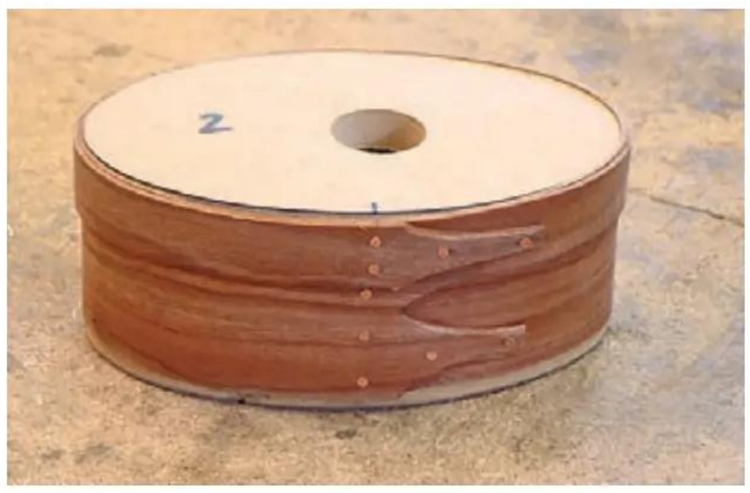
TIP

Use a piece of card to hold small tacks or pins upright before tapping them home with a hammer. After the first couple of blows, pull the card away. This should save you hitting those fingers!

from 1.5mm cherry veneer. Make a card template of the swallowtails – fingers – which are shown in **Fig.1**. Cut this out and draw around it onto the veneer, after which you can then cut out the swallowtails in the veneer.

Drill the tack holes with a 1mm bit (**photo 2**) and feather the lap end on a belt sander with some scrap wood held on top of the cherry band (**photo 3**). Repeat for the other band.

Now place the swallowtail end in a bath of hot water for a few minutes; this will soften the wood and allow you to trim the fingers with the knife, bevelling them to create a graceful, pleasing shape.



8 After wrapping the lid band around the box and tacking as before, leave the box to dry for 24 hours. Carefully ease the core out from the box

Place both bands in water with a temperature of at least 82°C for 15-20 minutes, then shape the bottom band tightly around the core with the lap end 45mm from the core's centre (**photo 4**). The vertical row of tack holes should be lined up with the core's centre.

Mark the band's top edges with a pencil, then release the band from the core and realign the pencil marks (**photo 5**).



9 Mark out the bottom of the box using a shaper or the core. This can then be cut roughly to shape on a bandsaw

Insert the tacks in the holes and hammer them home on a circular anvil or piece of steel pipe (**photo 6**); this will peen the tacks over and hold the band securely.

Now push a shaper into the box's top and bottom to hold it in shape while drying (**photo 7**). Follow the same method for the top band, but wrap it around the box's base to ensure a tight-fitting lid (**photo 8**).

TOP & BOTTOM BANDS

Part thickness	Quantity	Mats	Length	Width	Thickness
A – Base band	1	Veneer	477mm	50mm	1.5mm
B –Top band	1	Veneer	492mm	18mm	1.5mm
C –Top/bottom	2	Ply	153mm	102mm	6mm



10 Shape the bottom on a disc sander so that it fits the box exactly. Set the table to 4° below horizontal to achieve a slight bevel for easier fitting



11 Mark out the box's top, drawing around the band. Cut on the bandsaw and shape on a disc sander



12 Fit the top into the lid band. Any gaps that are present can be filled with sawdust and PVA

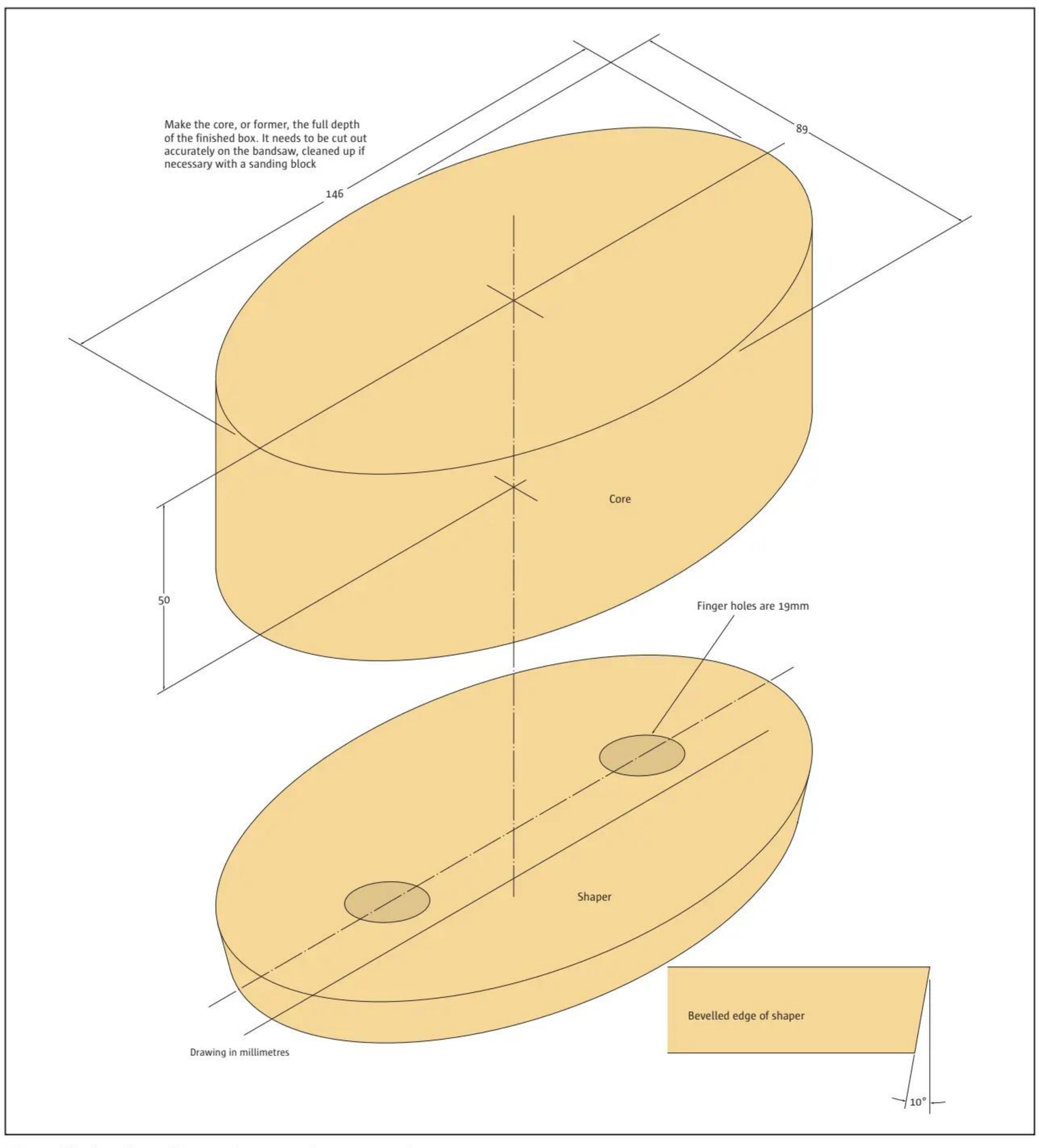


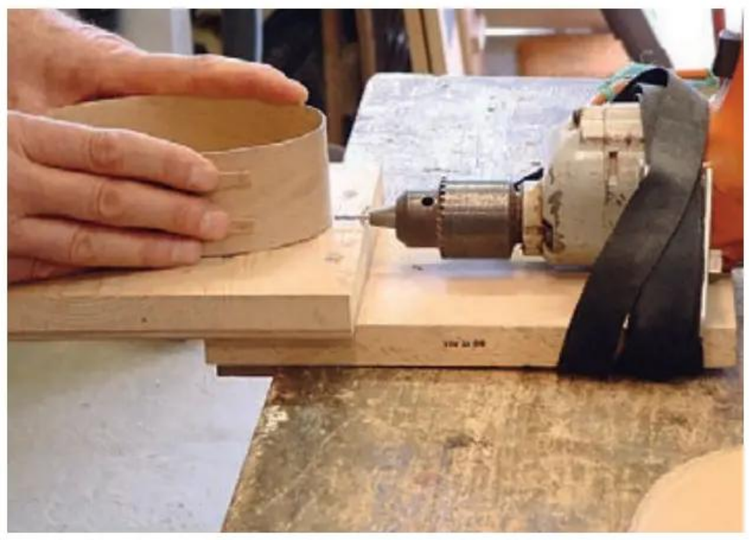
Fig.2 Shaker box dimensions and construction

Top & bottom

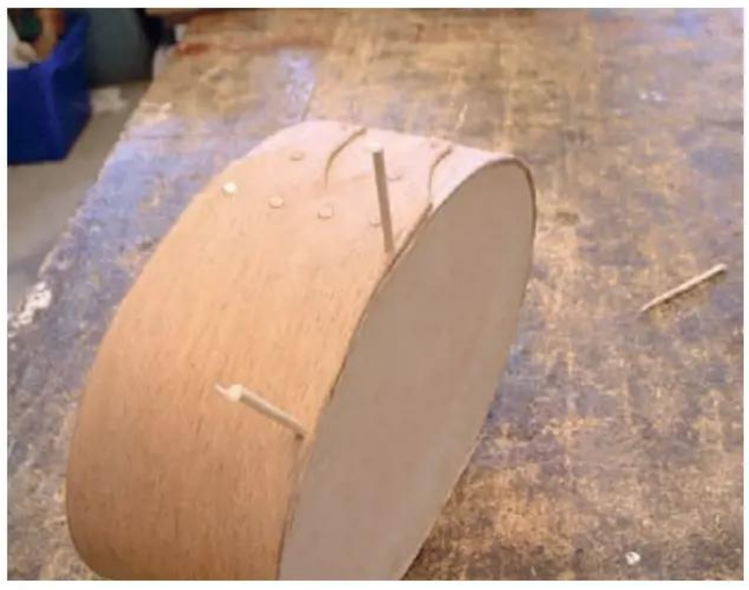
The top and bottom are made from 6mm plywood, which is veneered on both sides. Use the core to mark out the bottom (**photo 9**) and cut just outside the line on a bandsaw, then carefully sand to exact size on a disc sander (**photo 10**). There shouldn't be any gaps between the box's bottom and side. Repeat for the top, but use the box rather than the core to mark out the shape (**photo 11**). Both the top and bottom should fit snugly into the box body and require no glue (**photo 12**), but to help secure them in place, drill eight evenly spaced 1.5mm diameter holes through the band into the top and bottom (**photo 13**, then tap in small dowels – cocktail sticks are ideal (**photo 14**) – before trimming flush.

Finishing the box

Sand the whole box (**photo 15**) first using 180 grit abrasive followed by 320. Next, apply a coat of teak oil followed by a neutral furniture wax before adding a final finish of paint, oil, varnish or shellac.



13 Using a 1.5mm bit, drill eight even holes through the bands in the top and bottom



14 Tap a cocktail stick dowel into each hole without using glue, trim with flat-nosed cutters and sand the ends flush



15 Sand the box and lid smooth and apply a coat of oil and furniture wax if desired

COPPER TACKS

Copper tacks are available online from **www.objectsofuse.com**: 5mm tacks – pack of 400 – £13.50; 8mm tacks – pack of 300; £16

SHAKER BOX MAKERS IN THE UK

Andrew Spilsbury Shaker boxes

Based in South West England, Andrew Spilsbury makes his Shaker boxes using traditional patterns and sizes, from a tiny No.0 to a large No.8 size.

Andrew relies on patterns and methods introduced by the Shaker community some 200 years ago and all the boxes he makes are hand-crafted from North American cherry and maple – two timbers favoured by the Shaker communities – using steam-bending techniques. The bands are held together by copper tacks made on some of the original machines and imported from the USA.

The Shakers were a Christian religious group who left England for America to make a new life. Well-known for their simple but practical and pleasing designs, to this day Shaker-style furniture, kitchens and indeed these oval boxes are still popular today.

The elegant oval boxes were used to contain everything from foodstuffs to needlework and nails, and today they still have a multitude of uses such as jewellery and sewing boxes and for keeping precious things safe. Each box Andrew makes is unique and finished using natural oils and wax polish to enhance the wood's beauty.

Andrew regularly attends various craft events and festivals throughout the UK; visit his website – **www.spilsburyshakerbox.co.uk** – for further information.



Useful and decorative with a sturdy oval shape, Andrew Spilsbury's Shaker carriers are made using warm cherry wood



Shaker-style workbasket by Andrew Spilsbury



Shaker boxes underway in Richard Shaston's Dorset workshop

Shaston Shaker boxes

Richard Shaston's traditional and contemporary Shaker boxes are handmade in Dorset using English hardwoods sourced from locally-grown trees in Dorset and the neighbouring counties.

Inspired by the Shaker box's simplicity and functionality, Richard's designs are both traditional and contemporary but all echo the tactile, oval shape.

The principle of Shaker design and ethics captivated Richard some years ago and he aims to remain true to these minimalist principles and innovative designs as he develops items for everyday use. "I maintain the Shaker hands-on approach, processing the timber myself, from tree trunk to finished box," he explains. The Shakers paid careful attention to the quality of all their work and Richard hopes to continue in this same tradition with every piece he makes.

Over the years, his range of products has expanded to include shelves, coffee tables along with a range of tools for knitters and stitchers.

In addition to selling his work, Richard also offers courses for individuals and groups; visit **www.shastonboxes.co.uk** to find out more.



Andrew Spilsbury's heirloom ring or earring box – 90mm long × 60mm wide × 40mm high. Handmade using either maple or cherry; lids inset with cherry, burr walnut, burr oak or bird's eye maple



Painted egg carriers by Richard Shaston

LUMBER-JACK OF ALL TRADES

Mike Riley's woodworking wanderings lead him to deal with raw logs, for which a shiny new carving axe will come in useful



Without a clear plan in mind, I set to work with carving and gouging tools...



... giving me some much-needed practice with the likes of this No.9 sweep

Recently, I've spent quite a lot of time looking around my local area for new sources of wood. Unfortunately, my search hasn't been entirely fruitful – it seems that people round these parts only want firewood, so I've seen piles of perfectly usable logs stacked up in the yards waiting to be butchered into small chips and lumps, destined for the fireplace. Having found a couple of new suppliers of logs, then, I'm all set up well in advance for the winter, but could I find any decent boards?

One, but only one, supplier told me that he'd plank some of the larger logs at a cost, so that was a faint glimmer of hope. I got the impression, however, that he was really only prepared to do this because his wife is an acquaintance of mine; she referred me to him in the first place.

But on the whole, the log suppliers seemed unwilling to help, I suppose because hauling logs to their yards implies a change in working practice that doesn't make sense to them. It seems like a missed opportunity to me, but then, if it made financial sense, I'm sure they'd do it. The hard truth is simply that there isn't a great demand for planks of wood these days.

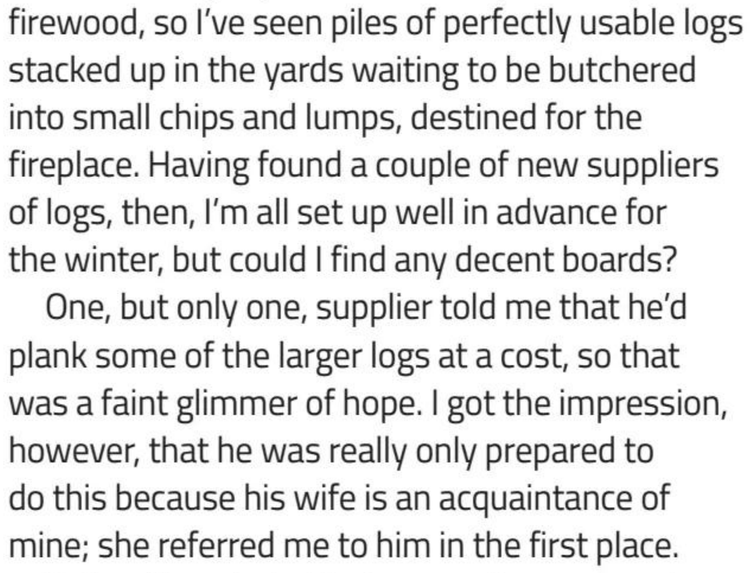
Until that demand changes, I guess I'm stuck with a two-hour round-trip into Somerset to the nearest woodyard, where I can pick my own boards and not be surprised at payment time with delivery charges.

Logs & mallets

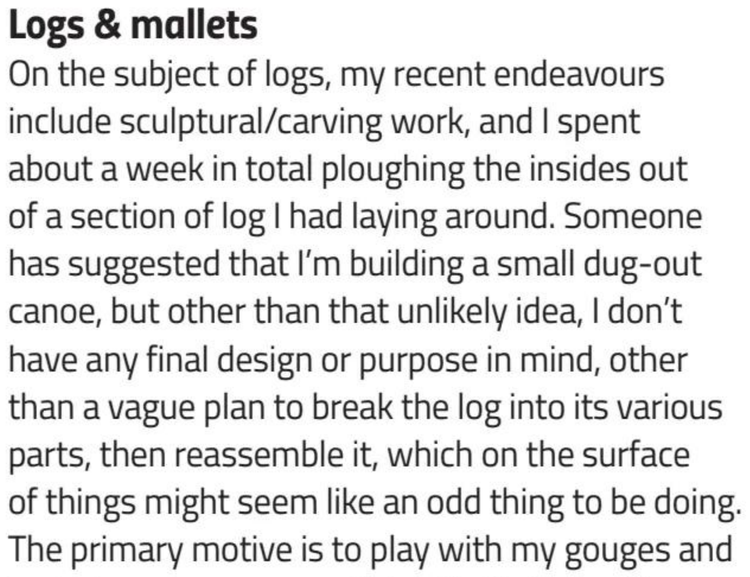
On the subject of logs, my recent endeavours include sculptural/carving work, and I spent about a week in total ploughing the insides out of a section of log I had laying around. Someone has suggested that I'm building a small dug-out canoe, but other than that unlikely idea, I don't have any final design or purpose in mind, other than a vague plan to break the log into its various parts, then reassemble it, which on the surface of things might seem like an odd thing to be doing. The primary motive is to play with my gouges and try to become more proficient in their use. I have a few large gouges that can leave a lovely textured surface when used properly; equally, they can leave a chewed and generally destroyed surface if used carelessly, and the difference between the two is, as with most things, practice.

To remove the bulk of wood out of the half log, I've been using a No.9 sweep. This is a big aggressive gouge which, when driven with a reasonably weighty mallet, makes short work of most things – it took me a leisurely three hours to scoop out the majority of waste. For a mallet, I've been using another chopped down log, but it's seen better days, sporting cracks and dents in places, so I'm feeling the urge to replace it. When I made this first log mallet – though I'm not sure 'made' is the correct word – I didn't have access to a lathe, so I hacked the basic shape out using chisels and a drawknife. If I get round to making a new one, it'll be a different affair. My partner has long been telling me to buy a new axe to deal with the firewood so, with that as my excuse, I ordered a Gransfors Brux Swedish carving axe. I'm sure it'll cope with the firewood just fine, but more importantly, things like a new carving mallet should now be much easier to chop out of the larger logs.

Until now I've been cutting blanks for carved bowls and spoons on the bandsaw, then shaping with gouges and knives. It's always been quite a long process, but the axe should change that. With a bit of practice, wasting away excess wood from these little green wood projects can be completed pretty quickly – that is, if I manage to keep limbs and fingers intact in the mean time...



The finish that such tools can leave on a surface is pretty impressive



My wooden mallet, made from a log, has definitely seen better days...



I've been investigating what can be gained from working with raw logs

Axe-wielding dangers

After chopping a few lumps of wood into matchsticks for the hell of it, I decided to touch up the edge with a coarse, fine combination sharpening stone, which I bought specifically for the axe. Of course, if the first thing you do is sharpen something, the next thing you do is cut yourself with it – and so it was for me. The axe has one side bevelled and one side flat, so touching up the bevel creates a wire edge on the blade's backside.

Usually, I knock the wire edge off on a bit of old canvas apron, but for some reason, this time, I chose to push it off with a finger. The result? A long deep cut to the fingertip. While it didn't hurt much at the time, it certainly stings enough now to remind me not to do this again!

The sharpening stone has also come in very handy for the carving gouges, making it much easier to bring the small round stone to the gouge rather than gouge to the larger water-stones. Similarly, I think the axe stone will prove useful for touching up the drawknife, as well as my various carving knives.

With my new axe ready for use, then, and my gouging and carving skills steadily improving, I'm planning a log gathering trip to the forest. Some intensive bowl, cup and spoon carving should get me fairly proficient with the axe and then, when it comes to firewood chopping, I'll be well practised.

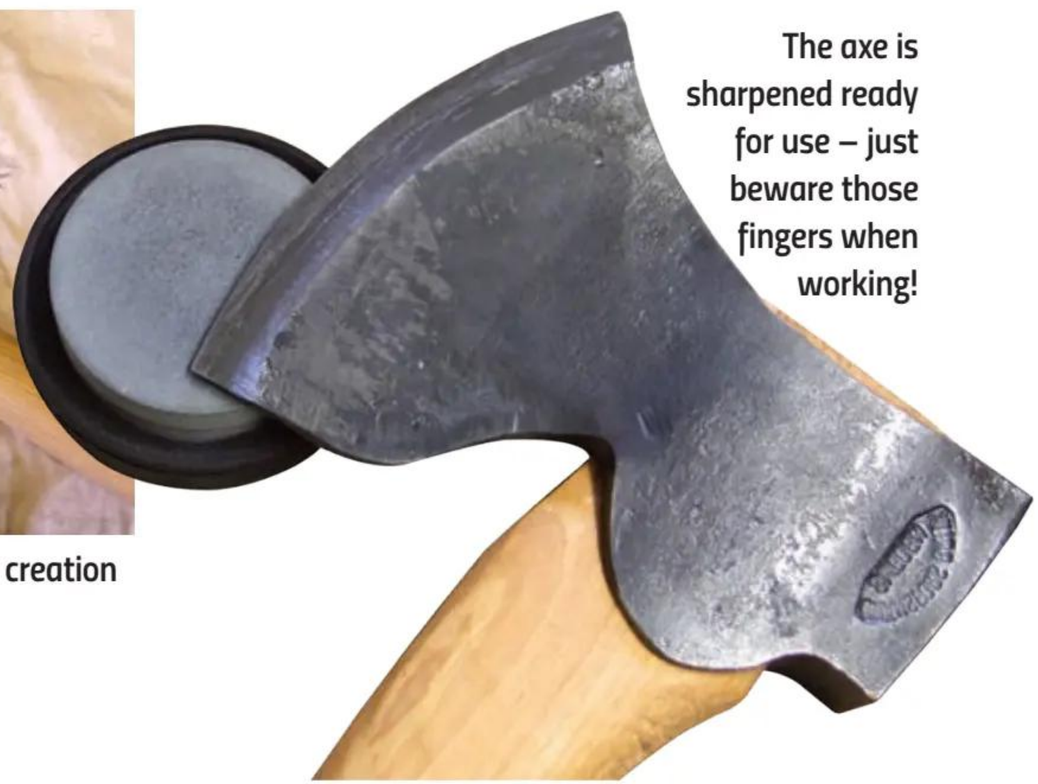
A new endeavour

Another exciting happening has been receiving a commission of sorts. A friend of mine who collects seashells wants a large framed mirror into which she can mount her shells. The only specification is that the frame should be either made from driftwood or some kind of recycled wood, so I'm also on the hunt for a suitable material for this purpose. I have a few leftover fencing lengths in the workshop, which I could recycle, but I suspect this isn't what she has in mind.

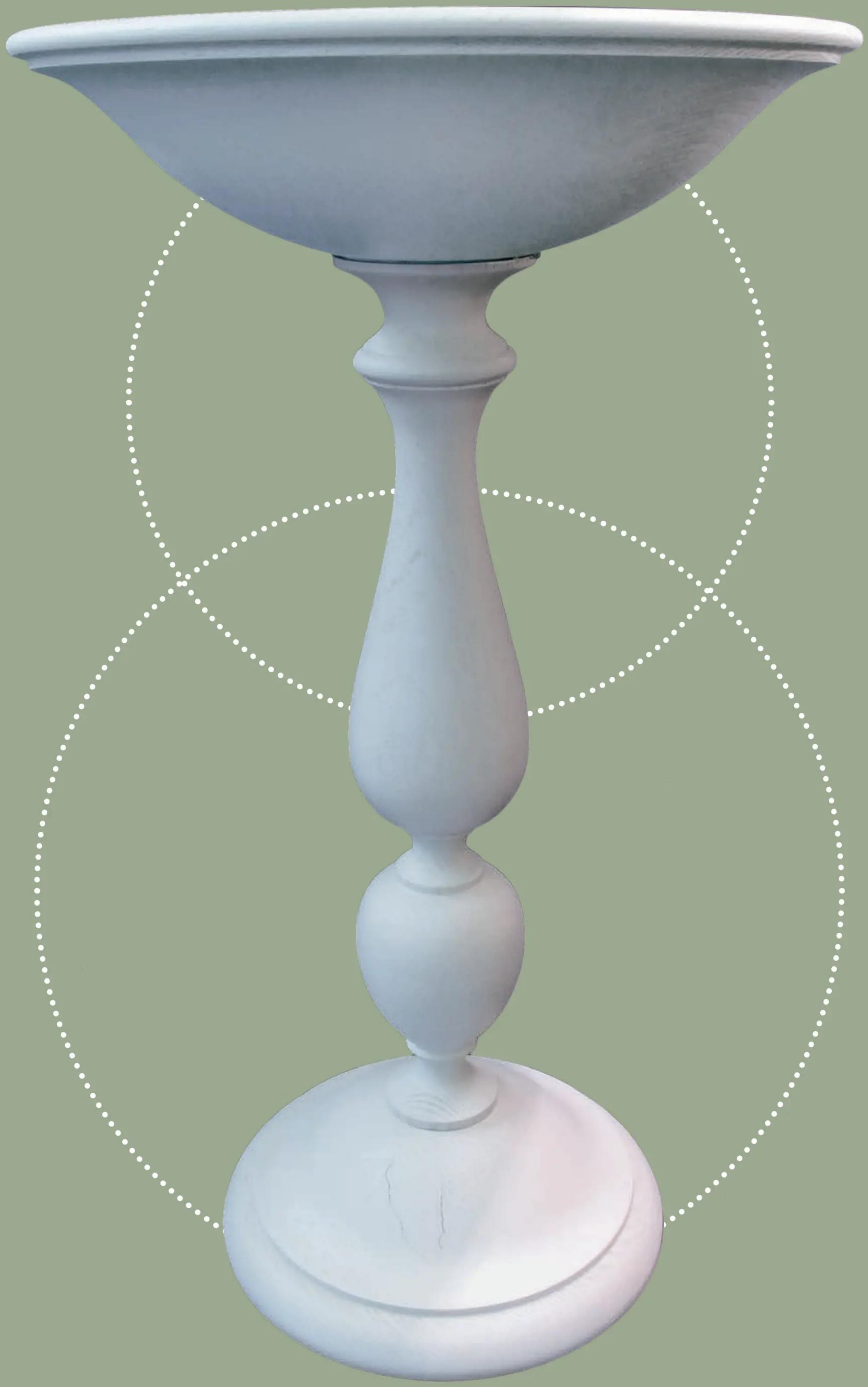
If the mirror turns out well, she's suggested that we make, then approach the local arts and crafts gallery with a view to selling these to tourists. If I'm quick about getting a cost for glass, we should have time to get a few mirrors made and finished over the coming months.



... but my new carving axe should make the creation of smaller items easier



The axe is sharpened ready for use – just beware those fingers when working!



CHISEL RATING

BRIM FULL OF CLASSICAL

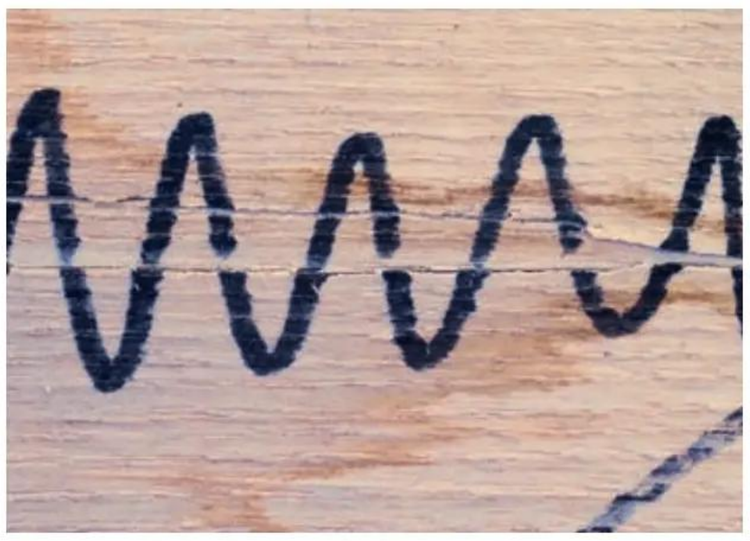
For those of you interested in turning a tazza, join **Les Thorne** as he shows how to make this elegant pedestal bowl

When I started turning, a bowl on a stem was called a pedestal bowl. Since then, they've become generally known as tazza, but call them what you like – they still make excellent dining vessels or serving dishes, while the largest ones can be used as fruit bowls. They also make an excellent woodturning exercise, combining both spindle turning and faceplate work.

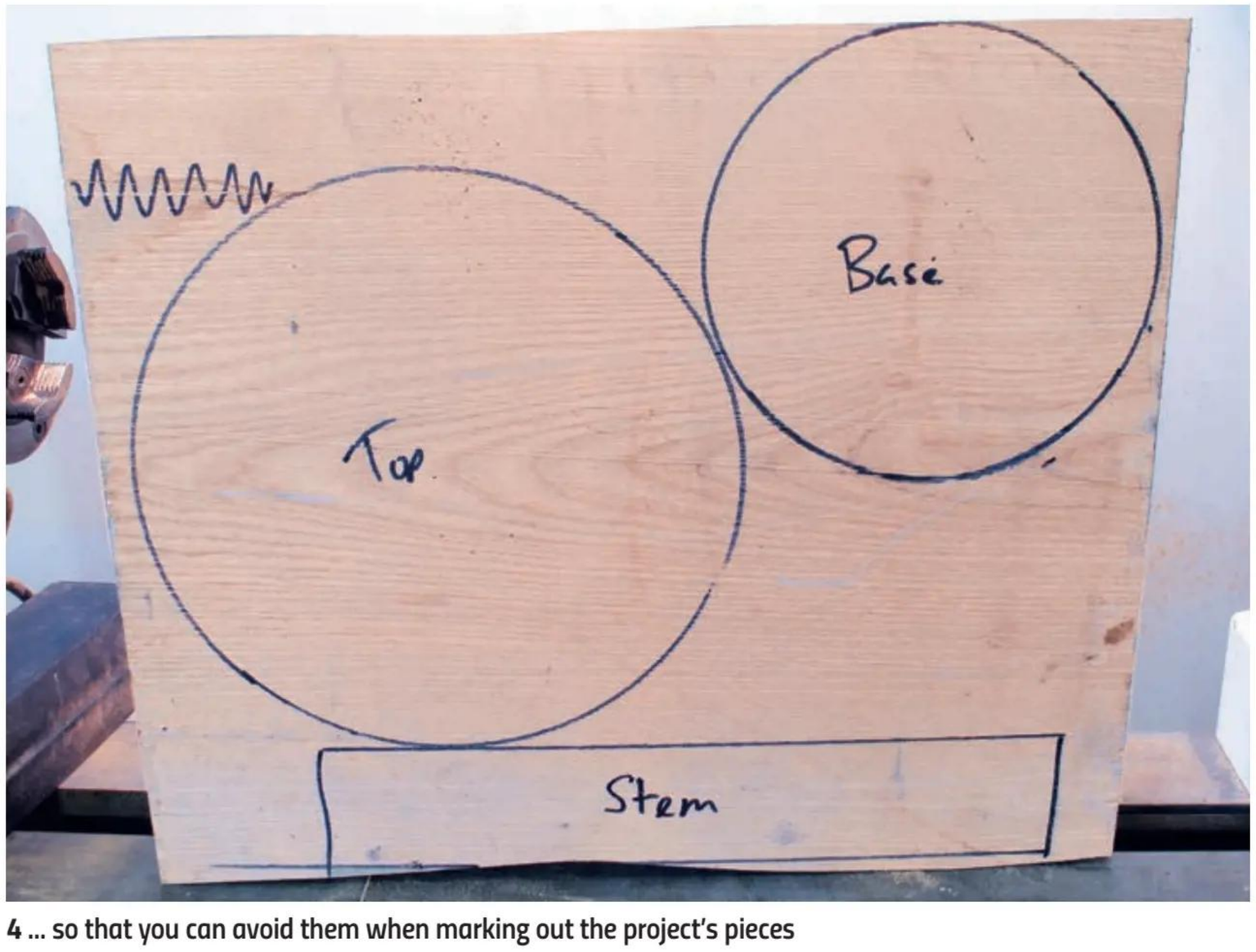
Getting started

I've selected ash for this project, partly because I had a suitable piece in stock, and also due to the fact it gives me the option to add some form of decoration later on.

Taking care to avoid any faults that may be present in the timber (**photo 3**), mark the wood for the base, bowls and stem (**photo 4**), then cut on a bandsaw (**photo 5**). You're now ready to begin turning, but as with most projects made from multiple components, you'll need to work out the order for creating these. For this project, I started by making the base, followed by the bowl, and finally the central spindle.

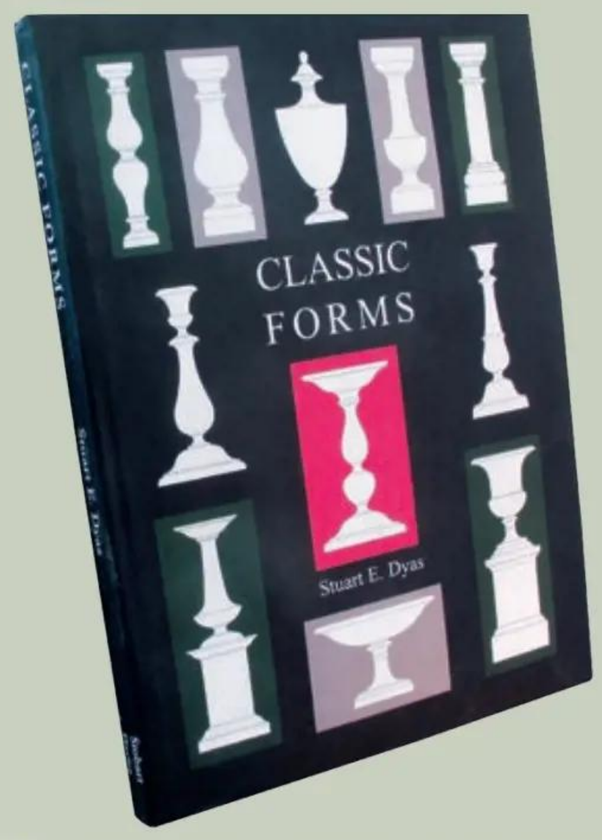


3 When sorting your timber for cutting, clearly mark out the faults...



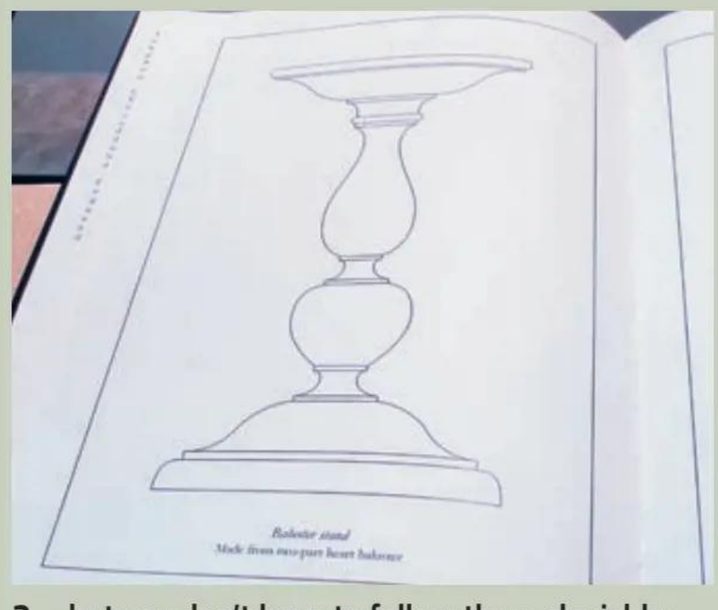
4 ... so that you can avoid them when marking out the project's pieces

LOOKING FOR INSPIRATION?



1 There are plenty of sources to draw on when looking for inspiration...

One of the things that beginners and even some more experienced turners struggle with is getting the design of a piece correct, which is when you can seek inspiration either online, or in the many turning books available. Of all these sources, however, my favourite design aid is a book called *Classic Forms* (**photo 1**) by Stuart E Dyas, which shows many combinations of those shapes most commonly used in wood, stone and cast-iron. This project, then, was loosely based on one of the designs in Dyas' book (**photo 2**), but the operative word is 'loosely' – I'll often adjust shapes and proportions, sometimes out of necessity to suit the available timber



2 ... but you don't have to follow them slavishly; feel free to adapt and improve

Turning the base...

Mount the smaller of the two discs onto a screw chuck; this will give you the ability to turn the base's underside (**photo 6**), starting with a bowl gouge to flatten the bottom. I also cut a recess on the underside to accept my Oneway chuck's dovetail jaws (**photo 7**), which will allow me to turn the base around to shape the topside. By the way, you don't need to apply a finish to the base, if, like me, you plan to cover the bottom with baize.

I like to use both a bowl gouge and spindle gouge for this sort of shaping (**photo 8**), working with the grain wherever possible to give the best finish off the tool and also minimise the need for sanding later on.

The next job is to drill a 25mm diameter hole, which will accept the central stem (**photo 9**), before cutting a very thin, angled slot in the base's underside (**photo 10**); the purpose of this will be revealed when we get to fitting the baize.

Sand the piece as you normally would, starting with a sufficiently coarse grit to remove any tool marks, progressing through the grades to remove any scratches left by the previous one.



5 Ash was used for this particular project, as it provides a 'blank canvas' for a range of finishes



6 I mounted the base on a screw chuck in order to turn the underside...

... & the bowl

This is basically the same as one of my standard bowls apart from the fact that, rather than using a spigot to remount it when turning the inside, I use a recess on the bowl's base to accept my chuck's dovetail jaws. The bowl is turned using a normal long-grind bowl gouge, employing a combination of push and pull cuts.

Once the back is shaped, cut a recess for the chuck's jaws; I try to keep the chucking point's diameter as small as possible, as it'll later act as the mortise to accept the stem's top. Next, turn the bowl around and expand the jaws into the recess (**photo 11**) – remember not to over-tighten the chuck into the opening as this can weaken the timber.

When you start shaping the bowl's interior, aim to work with the grain; this means starting

THE LIFE OF A WOODTURNER

For the last 10 years, the main lathe in my workshop is a Oneway 2436, which, with its large bed extension, gives me a whopping 2,400mm between centres, that can be extended by another 400mm if necessary. While I can comfortably turn 600mm over the bed, there's also a large outboard extension on the headstock that gives me the ability to turn blanks up to 1,220mm in diameter. After all, as a jobbing turner, I don't want to potentially lose work because it's too large!

Recently, for example, an artist in London approached me for some 1m-diameter discs, which he wanted shaped like a shallow bowl with a hole in the middle. The blanks were made up from block-laminated tulipwood by one of my customers. As I'm the one who has to stand next to the blanks while they're spinning around, I only trust a few joinery companies to make up things like this: after all, one failed glue joint could have really serious implications. That said, tulipwood is an ideal material for work such as its lightness reduces the strain on machinery when spinning it up to a high enough speed to be able to cut the wood effectively. Using the lowest rate of gearing and wood revolving at about 200rpm, the Oneway has the necessary torque to allow me to make large cuts.

Of course, the blanks are simply too large to mount using a normal scroll chuck, so instead I've used a 200mm cast-iron faceplate and lots of screws. This set-up allows me to work the back and front all from one fixing; the screw holes will be covered over when the wood is finally decorated with resins and paints. As you can imagine, it's a challenging yet very rewarding job, and one that the lathe is able to handle with ease



The outboard extension on the headstock of my Oneway lathe allows me to turn big blanks...



... like these monster pieces of laminated tulipwood. Handily, the timber makes for...



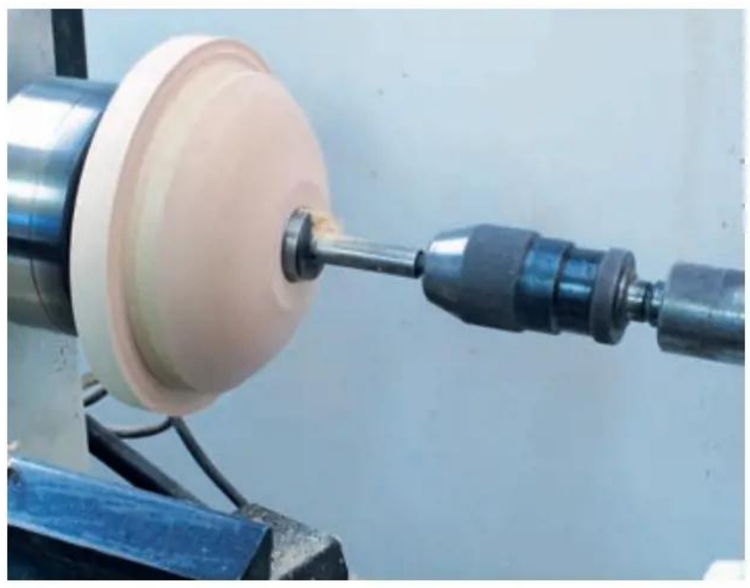
... a relatively light blank, but you still don't want a glue joint to fail at 200rpm!



7 ... in which I also formed a recess for the dovetail jaws of my Oneway chuck, which I used when turning the...



8 ... base's topside. The aim here is to leave a clean finish in order to minimise sanding



9 The base is then drilled with a 25mm diameter hole, ready to accept the bowl's pedestal

from the left of centre and working in towards the centre (**photo 12**). I like to leave some bulk in the middle, however, as it tends to lend the bowl some stability, especially as I like to turn the bowl so the walls are quite thin, which affords the finished piece a nice balance. It also leaves some depth of material around the area where the recess has been cut on the underside.

Whatever you do, ensure to not go too thin at the bottom or you'll end up with a hole! You can see that my design features a bead, which runs around the bowl's rim. I work this in with a spindle gouge, and would normally use a little shear cut with the tool's wing (**photo 13)**. Once done, sand the interior, then put the bowl aside.

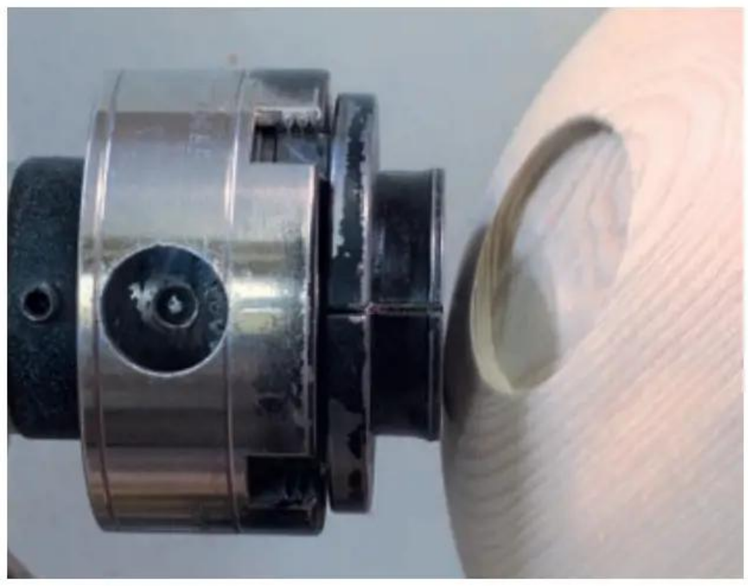
Turning the stem – the make or break shape

I've found that the design and turning of the stem can make or break this type of work, so don't be afraid to copy this or another design if it helps you to get things right. Talking of shapes, if I were going to make more of these, I would've prepared a rod so that I could transfer all measurements onto the blanks. Sometimes, however, I like doing things by eye – it's good practice, and keeps my hand-to-eye co-ordination up to scratch.

Once you've turned the piece round, the first task is to form the spigots that'll fit into the bowl and base (**photo 14**). Use Vernier callipers for this because, ultimately, the joint will work



10 This thin, angled slot in the base is later used to seat the baize's edge, which is used to cover the base's underside



11 The bowl blank was also prepared with a recess for the chuck jaws; when mounting the blank, ensure not to over-tighten it



12 Equally, you need to leave some meat in the bowl's middle, which will lend the thinly turned walls some stability



13 I worked the bead running around the bowl's rim with a spindle gouge, using a shear cut, which is taken with the tool's wing



14 Once the bowl's finished, measure up the base recess and transfer this dimension to...



15 ...the top of the spigot on the pedestal's top; remember to round over the jaws if using them against the spinning wood



16 When turning the pedestal detail, I started at the tailstock end...



17 ... using either a 10mm spindle gouge, 12mm round skew, or spindle roughing gouge



18 Sharp tools and a rubbing bevel will help to keep your cuts clean...

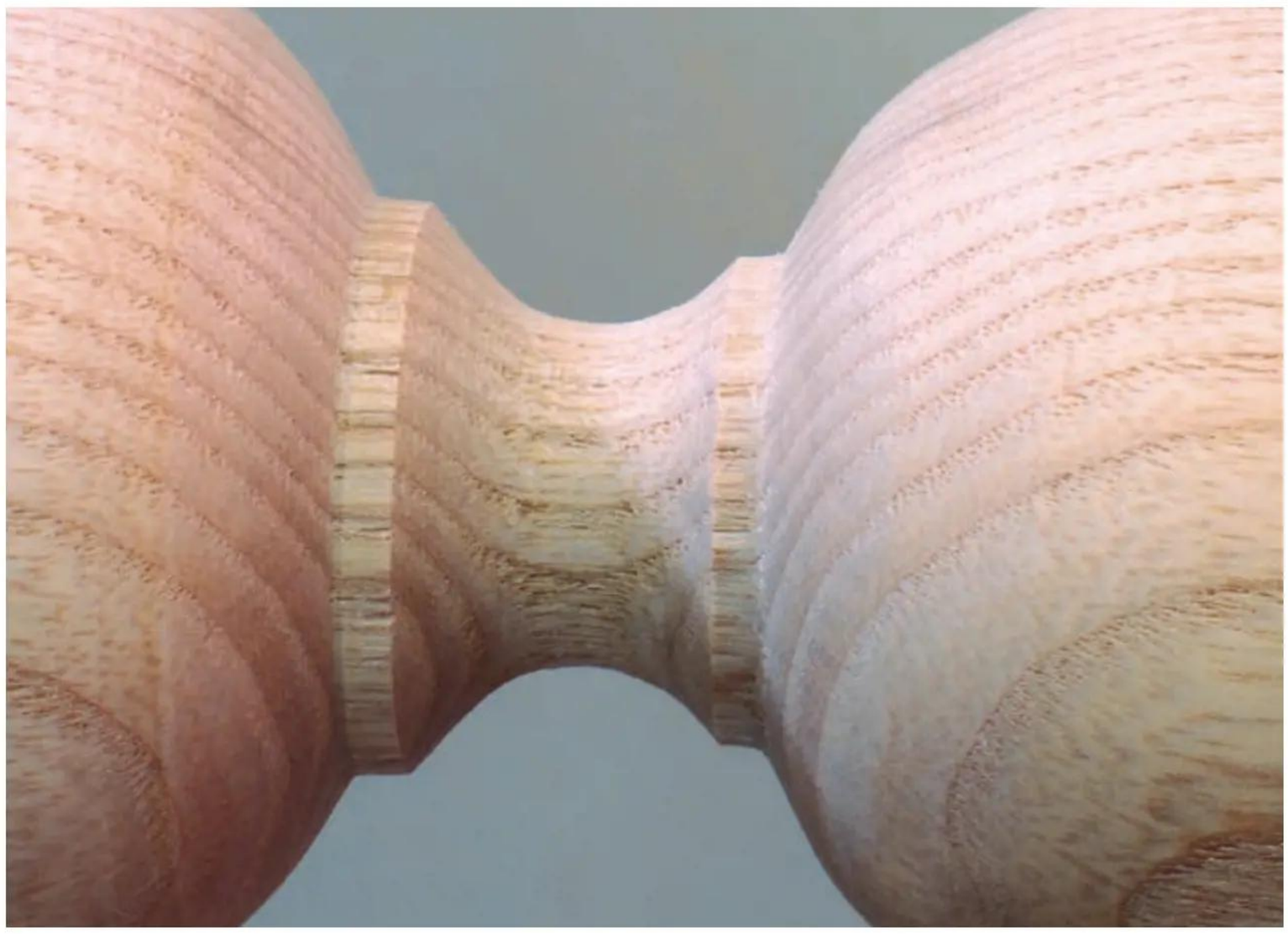
loose so you need to start with as tight a fit as possible. Also, don't forget to round off the callipers' corners if presenting them to the spinning wood, otherwise they'll grab (**photo 15**).

After turning the spigots, form the fillets top and bottom; the diameter of these is also important as they 'tie' both bowl and base to the spindle.

Now that you have a fixed overall length for the spindle, turn it to your chosen design. I start at the tailstock end (**photo 16**) and work towards the headstock, turning all detail as I go. Just be careful not to make the headstock end too thin as this'll weaken the piece and you may experience some vibration. I used a 10mm spindle gouge and 12mm round skew for all of this shaping (**photo 17**), and the latter tool will also double up as a parting tool.

For some of the bigger details, I use a spindle roughing gouge, though this does require a little care when used for this type of detailing, due to the fact it can catch. With this in mind, always keep your tools sharpened, then, and try to keep the bevel rubbing to achieve as clean a cut as possible (**photo 18**).

Also, aim to make the fillets as crisp as possible as they provide what another turner once called 'punctuation points', which mark the changes in direction between beads, coves, etc. (**photo 19**).



19 ... which is particularly important on the fillets that punctuate the moulded details

Time for reflection

At this stage with a new design, I'll sometimes assemble the piece and leave it somewhere obvious in the workshop to see whether, over the next few days, I spot a way in which to improve it. Only when satisfied with the shape do I sand before deciding on the final finish.

If I'd made my bowl from a more desirable wood, I might've lacquered or waxed it, but because it's ash, I decided to simply spray on an undercoat, which would allow the customer to add their choice of finish and perhaps colour-match it to its surroundings.

Commercially, it's important to keep your options open in this way: in the past, for example, I've provided flower arrangers with pedestals for their creations, and leaving them free to choose the colour of the pieces made my work more saleable.

After a couple of applications of undercoat (**photo 20**), I was then ready to fit the baize on to the bottom – which would obviously be attached after the full finish had been applied to any other piece.

Using the circle cutter (**photo 21**), I cut out a disc of self-adhesive baize, which was fractionally larger than the diameter of the thin slot cut around the base's circumference. The backing paper was then peeled off and the baize pressed into place, after which I used a knife blade to squeeze the baize's edge into the slot (**photo 22**) to form a clean edge.

So there we have it, a functional yet beautiful item. Happy turning!



20 A couple of coats of undercoat seals the tazza ready for a finish



21 The self-adhesive baize for the base is cut slightly over-size, using a circle cutter...



22 ... and its edge carefully trimmed and pressed into the groove around the base

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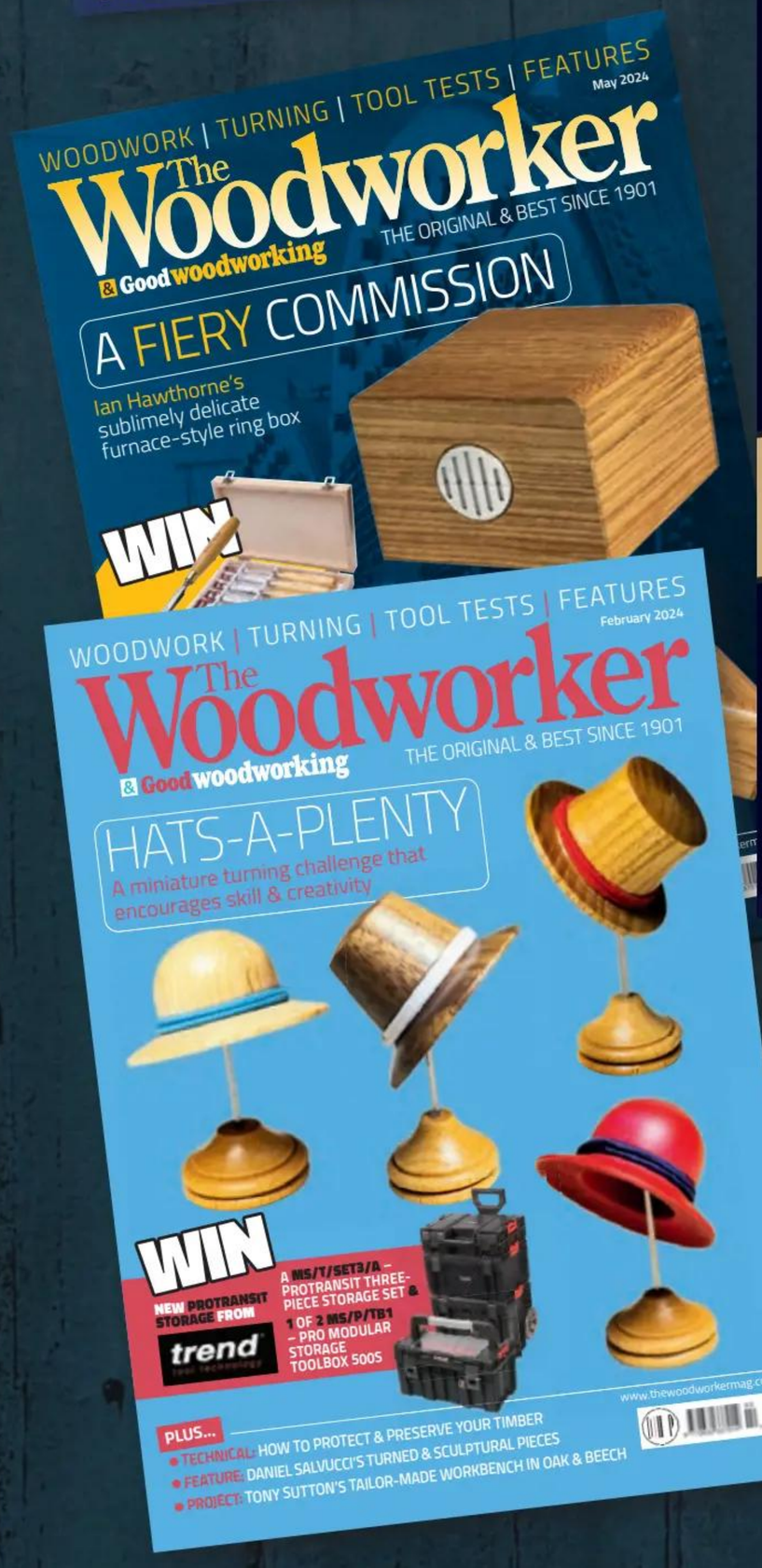
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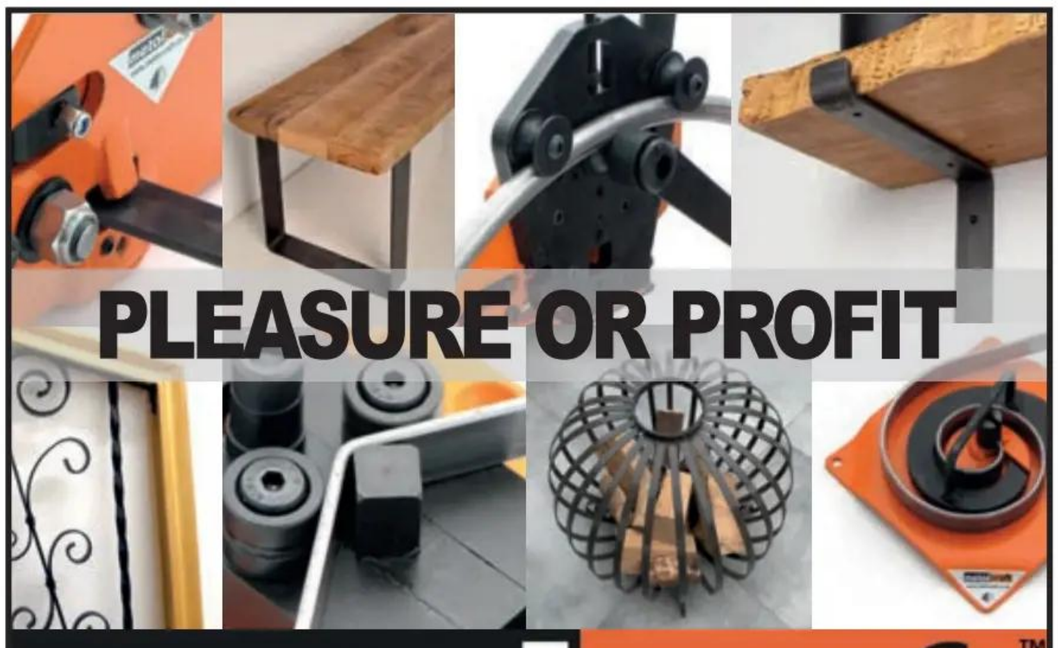


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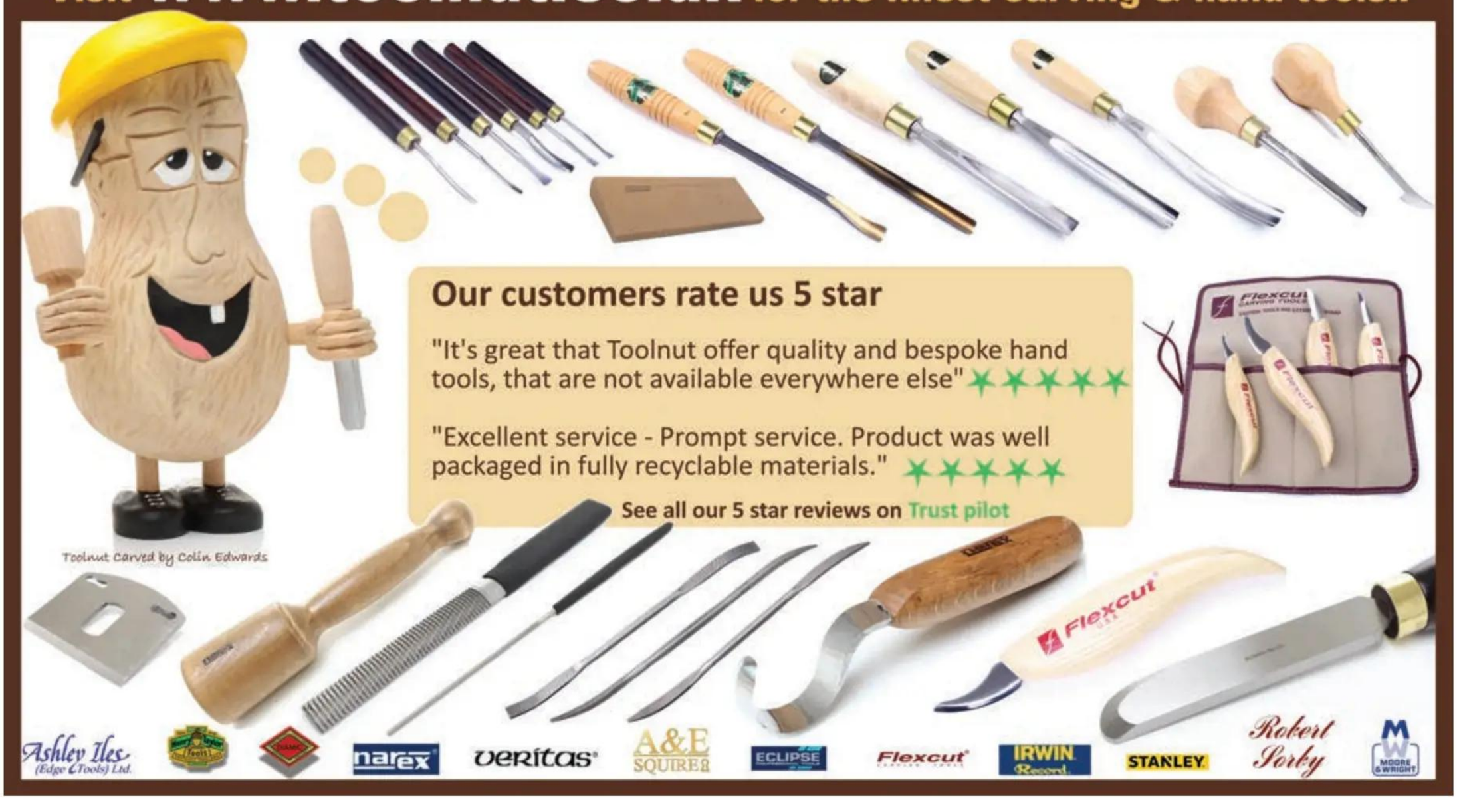
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3 'Pansy Bowl' by Elizabeth Weber – **@icosa_woodworks** – turned, carved and coloured. "The word pansy comes from the French word 'pensées' – thoughts and memories. Other cultures associate these flowers with love. Nature is truly incredible"

4 Cases for two Jaw's harps, made by Luca Boggio – **@fitteafrotte** – and featuring wonderful chip-carved detailing by Riccardo Parolini – **@a_chipcarved_adventure**



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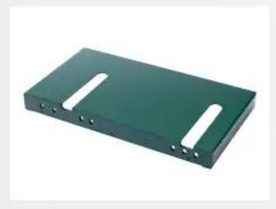
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