

Traditional Woodworking

The magazine for all woodworkers

October 2003 £2.85

Make this Pine Cabinet

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ON TEST

RESTORATION
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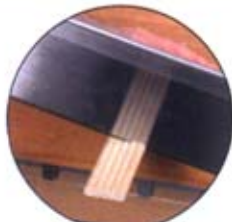
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this month in...

Traditional Woodworking



**To learn the basics
of woodcarving
turn to page 70**

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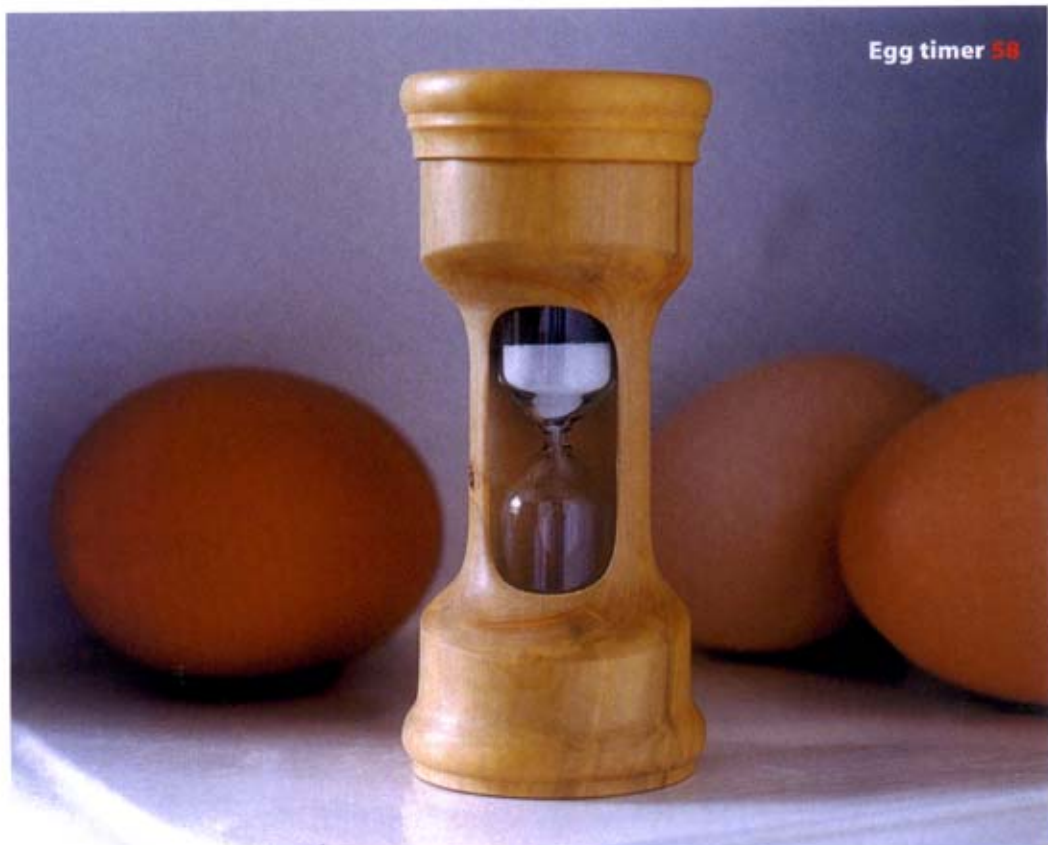
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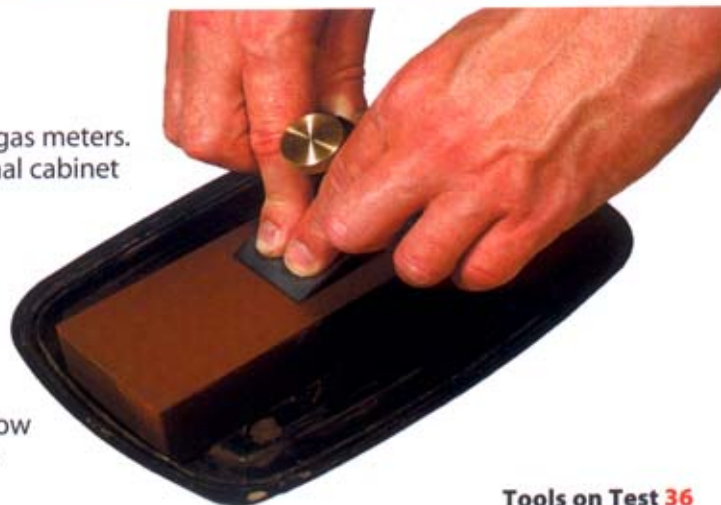
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Pine Cabinet

The reason for this commission was just a little bit of a surprise to say the least — to cover up a gas meter in full view in the lounge of a small attractive thatched village cottage.

Three drawers and doors were agreed, plus shelving, to surround the meter

I have to say that I shouldn't have been too surprised as I regularly deal with old cottages and come across some really weird and wonderful situations. I find that this type of experience adds greatly to the interest element of the work.

The design was discussed at length with the young couple

who owned the cottage and from this emerged most of the design requirements.

Firstly it is a small cottage in dire need of storage space. Secondly there is a restricted area surrounding the meter as it was sited at the foot of an open tread type barn staircase. Of course there was also the desire for the new cabinet to blend in with the cottage's style and existing furniture.

So it was to be a rustic pine piece similar to some existing cabinets. I have to say that it is not my favourite choice of timber but nevertheless quite fitting for the purpose and setting.

Drawing

The first step was of course the necessary routine of doing a scale drawing supported with a little isometric detail to aid the clients' understanding of what I was proposing.

Three drawers and doors were agreed plus shelving to surround the offending meter to maximise its storage capacity.

I decided the construction would all be from pine board panels (these comprised of strips of pine glued to form panels) which come in a variety of sizes. I chose two thicknesses of 18mm and 28mm which can be readily obtained

from most large DIY outlets.

This type of boarding has less tendency to cup and is therefore more stable than traditionally joined boards.

In an ideal situation the cabinet would be from 300mm wide panels but the agreed clients' requirements meant that I would have to add a further strip to obtain the door widths preferred.

I ploughed through the dimensions until I sorted out the panel sizes I would need for the project.

Readers may well prefer to go the more traditional route and join pine boards with cleats or biscuits.

The first step was to cut the cabinet end panels to length and then mark the routing rebates to take the floor, two shelves and the drawer frame chassis but not forgetting a back edge rebate to take a backing panel. I was to do this at a later date owing to an uneven cottage wall.

A rebate was also routed to accept the front kick strip.

I would supply an infill panel to fill the floor that had been cut out and the back panel at a later date should the clients decide to move house and take the cabinet with them.

The shelf routing completed, the shelves themselves



could be cut to length including the previously mentioned meter hole.

The hole was cut out via two corner holes and the ever handy jigsaw.

I then built the drawer frame chassis. This frame is simply cut butt face jointing with the aid of the biscuit jointer.

Ensure that the cross bear-

ers will afford an adequate ledge for the drawers to slide on.

I followed this by cutting the two top holding rails that were dovetailed into the top edge of the end panels.

This acts as a good tie for the top edges of the end panels whilst affording an ideal fixing to secure the top at eight

screw points (four front and four back).

Top

It was the turn of the top which was cut to length and the front edge and ends were routed with a round over or bull nose cutter profile.

The upstand was cut, rounded at each end and glued and screwed to the back edge allowing for a front overhang.

A point to bear in mind is that you should rout the end grain of the top first to avoid breakout damage on the corners.

Dry run

The time then arrived to do a dry assembly of the cabinet carcass ensuring a good fit of the three shelves, drawer frame chassis and the two top rails.

It does of course allow you to correct any faults early on as well as allow proper assembly planning so that the necessary clamps and cramps are to hand.

As a precaution only I decided to screw a light batten to bridge the meter gap.

Owing to the already mentioned uneven wall I did not fit the back edge shelf support rails but would advise readers to do so.

It would well supported if a





back panel was fitted.

I partially supported the 300mm deep middle shelf by fixing two mirror plates to the back edge and then I screw plugged it into the wall.

I used the router cutting method for the biscuits as it gives a narrower width of cut

This gives a secure site fixing, bearing in mind that the cabinet is only 300mm deep.

Biscuits

The carcass duly clamped and cramped together I carried out the detail measuring and cutting of the facing frame components, again based on butt jointing with the use of glued biscuits again.

Here I used the router cut-

ting method for the biscuits as it gives a narrower width of cut that doesn't show the cut slots on the 38mm wide framing (I used a narrower but fatter biscuit thanks to my helpful friend).

I opted to assemble and glue the facing frame into the glued cabinet carcass making it simpler to undertake.

A small feature detail that I had allowed for was the fact that the board panels have a small bevel edge at manufacturing stage. Consequently, I set the facing frame and shelves back by this amount to add a bit more detail.

The three doors were a straightforward affair as the 300mm boarding panels were

ideal. Except in my case I had to extend the width by adding a strip to attain the required width.

The design called for the appearance of tongue and groove boarding.

This was attained by routing with the appropriate V groove router cutter.

I also used T hinges which have the effect of stiffening the doors but readers can fit cross braces if they feel it is necessary.

The cabinet carcass completed it was time to hang the hinges of the three doors plus the magnetic catches and handles.

Drawers

The drawer stage had now arrived and my choice of construction method was a simple finger jointed box method.

This was readily dealt with by a borrowed Triton kit (it's great to have long suffering and generous friends to hand) this gives a choice of 1/4 or 1/2 fingers.

I appreciate some readers may prefer dovetails or some a simple corner rebate — the choice is yours.

As I had decided to use the same 18mm material for the drawers I opted for the 1/2 fingers.

The drawer boxes were to be fitted with facing boards and edged with cock beading.

Base

The next step was to rout the groove for the 6mm plywood drawer base (I had an abundance of offcuts).

When all the fingers were cut the three drawer boxes were glued up. Note that the fingers

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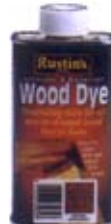
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protrude slightly by 0.5mm and are sanded flush which gives a clean finish.

The completed drawers were then positioned in the drawer frame within the cabinet carcass and the side guide runners were fitted as well as the back stop bars.

It is easier to fix your handles onto the drawer facing boards first then position them to each drawer with four screws fixed from inside.

If your handles are like the ones I fitted you should drill a countersink on the drawer front to take the domed screw head.

All this should of course be done prior to fitting the optional backing panel and top.

The top is fitted via four screws in each of the two top fixing rails which I should point out are set about a millimetre below the top edge of the end panels thus giving a slight pull down on the top.

Finishing

The remaining job was the finishing which begins with several grades of power sanding and is completed with a fine hand sanding.

To prepare for the staining all surfaces were wiped as clean as possible and followed by denibbing.

I use a mixture of white spirit and linseed oil which is wiped over the cabinet with any excess wiped clean.

Next, brush on and gently wipe down with your choice

of rustic pine effect stain.

I should mention to those that may not know that you should make sure during assembly that no glue marks are left untreated as this will leave white spots or contamination marks (I chose a Georgian oak propriety oil stain).

When dry, six coats of finish-

ing oil should be brushed on and gently wiped down. At the application of the fifth coat I used wet and dry paper to do a gentle wet rub which gives a flattening effect to the surface.

After the sixth coat was applied I waited a few days to give the final treatment of beeswax polish applied with 00 grade steel wool and bur-



nished with a lint free cloth supported with a liberal amount of elbow grease. A point I should make in the interests of safety is that as I was enclosing a gas meter I chose to leave a gap at the opening edge of the doors to avoid any gas build up in the event of a leak.

This cabinet can be readily adapted to cover up ugly plumbing or electrical units.

The commission was as stated designed to do two things: cover up an ugly gas meter and add some much needed storage. I trust it has been successful.

Cutting list

All dimensions in mm

Component	No.	Measurements	Notes
Top	1	18 x 300 x 1152	
Top upstand	1	18 x 48 x 1152	
End panels	2	18 x 300 x 998	
Kick board	1	18 x 76 x 1102	
Bottom shelf	1	18 x 300 x 1102	
Middle shelf	1	18 x 300 x 1102	
Small shelf	1	18 x 150 x 1102	
Shelf support rails	2	18 x 38 x 1102	optional
Drawer base frame	2	18 x 38 x 1102	
	4	18 x 76 x 206	
Top tie rails	2	18 x 38 x 1102	
Front frame			
Stiles	2	18 x 38 x 920	
	2	18 x 38 x 844	
Cross Rails	2	18 x 38 x 1008	
Inter cross rails	3	18 x 38 x 312	
Doors	3	18 x 310 x 656	
Drawer fronts	3	18 x 152 x 312	
Drawer sides	12	18 x 152 x 312	
Drawer stops	3	18 x 18 x 312	
Drawer guides	4	18 x 38 x 312	
Drawer bases	3	6 x 294 x 203	plywood
T hinges	6	200 long	
6 handles			

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Stanley hits the road

Tool manufacturer Stanley has joined forces with MG Rover to provide independent retailers with a range of incentives for them to order and sell Stanley goods.

Stanley will be taking delivery of two new MG Express vans to promote its latest sales campaign along with hundreds of DVDs, DVD players, games consoles and wide screen TVs.

The vans will be touring the country with Stanley represen-



tatives and all retailers that put in an order will automatically be placed into a prize draw to win a new MG

Express van of their very own. For more information visit www.stanleyworks.com or www.stanleytools.com.

New TV series champions cause of woodworking



Discovery Home & Leisure continues to champion the cause of woodworking with a new 15 part series.

Cutting Edge Woodworker takes a modern look at woodwork and creates a number of innovative items designed with the modern home and 21st Century living in mind.

The presenter and designer, Paul Bradburn's (pictured) pieces reflect our high-tech society and include a cabinet for a plasma screen, CD drawer unit and an illuminated wall

mirror. As well as featuring the creation of each piece, Paul will also take time out in each episode to feature a particular tool, material process or technique.

He will also provide viewers with essential information on where to go to buy the necessary items needed, the cost involved and the time needed to create each piece.

The series starts on Discovery Home & Leisure at 9pm on Wednesday October 15th.

More big stuff



An offer on an all in one woodworking machine is one of the new additions in the latest Screwfix Big Stuff catalogue.

The machine has been reduced by £100 to £1899 and offers all the capability of a professional workshop in a compact form. It incorporates a 2hp motor, a swinging arm and a five piece cutterblock set as standard. It also houses a planer/thicknesser, circular saw and spindle moulder.

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Axminster introduces next day delivery

Axminster Power Tool Centre has teamed up with a logistics firm to introduce a next day delivery service.

The 'Tools to your door' service will deliver to homes across the UK with the help of Harley Waters Logistics.

Managing director Ian Styles said: "This new service will give our customers greater control over their delivery and minimise



any inconvenience."

All vehicles will be clearly liveried and all drivers easily identified in Axminster clothing.

The new service coincides with the launch of the new catalogue. For a free copy call 0800 371822.

Woodland Trust stays FSC certified

The UK's leading woodland conservation charity has successfully maintained its certification for responsible forest management for another five years.

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), which has developed standards in 42 countries, has extended the Woodland Trust's status as it conforms to 10 principles drawn up by the FSC including biodiversity, community involvement and how harvesting operations are carried out.

The trust, was the first major UK-wide organisation to achieve FSC certification in England and Wales in 1998, adding its Scottish and Northern Ireland estates in 1999.

UK joinery is world class

North Yorkshire based Lee Fawcett is celebrating after winning the gold medal in joinery at the WorldSkills Competition in Switzerland.

Lee, 22, was chosen to join the UK Skills team earlier this year and fought against competitors from around the world over a four-day period. Lee's winning effort was part of the best ever performing UK Skills team which brought home a total of two gold and two bronze medals.

Lee was part of the 31-strong UK Skills team who competed against 40 other countries in a range of vocational tests designed to test the competitors at a world class standard.

He was tested on his ability to create and assemble a complex window system and

wooden steps directly from two-dimensional plans — a test he passed with flying colours. Lee said: "I was really pleased to win the Gold Medal. Before the competition I had decided that I was going to take as much from the experience in Switzerland as possible — and to come away with the gold medal is amazing."

CITB chief executive, Peter Lobban, said: "Lee's achievements are a fine example of the level of skill that can be achieved through hard work, commitment and training."

"The industry needs to recruit more young people who are looking for a rewarding and exciting career, offering a host of opportunities and the chance to develop world class skills such as these."

Jet secures distributing contracts



Woodworking tool specialists Craig Poynton and Nick Brown have teamed up to establish a UK based distributive outlet for a Swiss owned company that manufactures bench mounted and floor standing woodworking machinery.

The tools from Walter Meir Holdings Group (WMH) will be incorporated under the Jet Tools banner.

A number of other high profile brands will be available on an exclusive agency basis.

These include the range of wood and panel hand tools, gluing systems and laminate trimmers by Lamello of Switzerland, formerly marketed by JKO.

The product range includes dowel drilling and inserting tools, biscuit joiners and associated consumables together with the company's range of glue application technology for flat surfaces, panel edges and all forms of joints and rebates.

Jet is also to distribute the Titebond wood glue along with the range of saw blades, router cutters and spindle moulder tooling from CMT.

What's more Jet is aiming to launch another 20 major new products in the UK and Ireland by the end of this year and many are to appear in conjunction with a new woodworking television series.

The Great British Woodshop is to feature Jet products alongside Titebond and Lamello and is scheduled to hit your screens next January.

Fresh board finishes from Caberdecor

Elm and pear are two of the new decorative board finishes from Caberdecor.

The pear finish is said to be warmer than traditional pear finishes and offers a mid range colour which crosses the boundaries of timber species.

Both designs, along with the rest of the range, can be seen at www.caberdecor.net and samples may be ordered. Alternatively, call 01769 575 300.



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Writeback

I have just bought the August issue of *Traditional Woodworking* and as usual I took particular interest in the adverts for power tools (or at least the price of them).

Over time I've read review after review and understand the pros and cons of them all but the biggest con is undoubtedly the price.

Not just with the ones reviewed but nearly all tools on sale here in the UK, both powered and hand, not to mention the accessories.

It usually isn't the fault of the companies who sell them on, but the manufacturing suppliers and the Government for hiking up the prices just because of where we live and because the Government likes to tax everyone and everything into oblivion!

I got wise to the Rip off Britain culture a long time ago and have been buying from overseas ever since.

At this point, most people will probably come up with the same old moan of "yes, but they won't work on our electrical system" and "the cost of getting them here is too much."

I'm out to get the best machines and the best parts at the best price that I can.

I always buy from the US now and I'm incredibly pleased with the deals that I've got.

I've so far only bought Porter Cable power tools which are infinitely superior to anything on our markets. DeWalt has a good reputation here but are put in the shade by PC.

I sourced a step down transformer at RS Components which cost me around £90.

This has two US style plugs running from it so you don't have to buy more than one to competently run a couple of tools at the same time.

You can buy the transformers to handle between 10 and 30 amps so there's more than enough power handling capability.

Incidentally, RS also stock US style plugs should anybody be on the lookout for them.

So far, I have bought a PC router with a 3.25 hp motor for \$339, a superb random orbit sander for \$49, an excellent router table for \$149 and I'm on the lookout for more. I have endless Freud router bits and sets that have been a steal, especially when compared to prices over here.

I've also bought a superb device for the router table called a Router Raizer from the

STAR Letter

Router Technologies Company, this was \$89. On these machines I have spent \$626 or £406, transformer £90, postage has cost a further \$110 or £71.43 — total £568. As a comparison, the best prices I can find from people here are: DeWalt router £349, DeWalt sander £139.99 and DeWalt router table £299, no price for an alternative Router Raizer but a conservative estimate would be £80, total £868.

A saving of £300 on these items alone. With the router bits included, that's another saving of £160 plus. Even with import duties (which are very rarely added) you are still saving bundles whilst getting better tools.

All of the tools work as designed with absolutely no power drop off or any problems.

The companies that I've dealt with have extended return of goods periods which make it better for overseas customers and offer a full refund of postage if not 100 per cent satisfied.

I ordered my router table on the 21st and it arrived via Fedex on the 23rd. The one thing that I've found priceless from them is this — customer service! Something which over here seems like a dying animal.

Those people know what they are talking about, are extremely helpful and very polite.

If any of my fellow readers and woodworkers are interested, the Woodcraft company of Parkersburg, WV can supply your needs. The number is 001 800 225 1153 or go to www.woodcraft.com for more details.

Come on, stop this rip off culture, buy overseas, save money, get better tools, better results and a whole lot more satisfaction!

**Martin Jackson
Lincoln**

Thanks Martin, you've certainly raised a few points that power tool firms and people in higher places should think about!

Router Raizers, however, are available in the UK through Wood Workers Workshop at £69.95. Call 0800 9700 140 for your nearest stockist.

Why so much fuss over crown guards?

If you know what you are doing it's OK, isn't it? As an apprentice I was taught to be cautious.

Check where your fingers are before you turn on the machine, then you will know where they are afterwards.

I have a 2000w router that can spin a panel raising cutter at 60,000 rpm.

I also have five circular saws. Four of them have big blades and motors ranging from 800W to 1500W.

I treat them all with the greatest of respect, but then it wasn't one of them that bit me.

The other saw is a DW984. A battery powered trim saw with a five inch blade.

Just a toy really!

The builders were coming the next day so I had to cut some sticks to help them do their job.

I was tired and in a hurry, so I didn't bother to get out the Workmate. I rested the wood against the window sill. Quick and easy. Then it slipped.

I spent the rest of the after-

noon in casualty. I was lucky I had missed the bone but cut a nerve.

The end of my finger is now permanently numb. The builders came and went. They did a perfect job without my help.

Thanks to my stupid contempt, I now have a permanent reminder to be more careful, even with the little tools.

**Gordon Watt
Swindon**

Ouch! - Ed

Want to make your voice heard? Write to us at *Traditional Woodworking* – every month, the writer of our Star Letter will receive a Freud Diablo 1/4" Biscuit Jointing Kit and 100 biscuits (worth nearly £34 in total) for his or her efforts, courtesy of Screwfix Direct.

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I have read and heard about Disston saws but have always wondered why they are so prized among the woodworking community

I have recently acquired a 14" brass backed tenon saw and a 26" skew back hand saw by this maker. Can somebody please tell me what is so special about them?

May I say while writing how much I enjoy your magazine.

Peter Franklin
Woking, Surrey

Well according to the Disstonian

Institute the steel in Disston saws was harder than the competition without being brittle, making for a thinner, lighter steel plate. It was stiff without being as thick as other saws, making for an easier cut.

They had a good deal of taper to the blade, so less set is needed on the teeth, also making a narrower kerf, resulting in an easier cut through the wood. The saws were consistent in their quality. The handles were comfortable, and there were several models to fit the taste and budget of woodworkers and carpenters. The

quality played a large part in Disston's ability to reverse what happened in the 19th century. Before the 1830s, nearly all hand-saws in the US were made in England. Those few that were made in the US had Sheffield steel.

In 1855 Disston produced his own Crucible steel, one of the first instances of commercial steel production in the US. By the turn of the century, Disston started selling saws in the British commonwealth, and in 1910 bought a factory in Toronto Canada to manufacture saws

that were not subject to tariffs in the commonwealth. Disston also opened a plant in Sydney Australia in 1926.

An old Disston No.7 or No. 12 will feel more like an English saw in the hand, with a higher center of gravity, due to the placement of the handle and its shape. A D-8 or D-23 will feel smaller in your hand and provide more control because your hand is closer to the teeth. In all cases, the blade will be thinner than a Spear and Jackson or other quality English saw, but will be no less stiff and subject to bending.

On a visit to the UK earlier this month I was lucky to find a copy of *Traditional Woodworking* at a bookstore in Stone, hidden behind other woodworking magazines. It was the cover page and article on the matching pair of foot stools that caught my attention.

I was pleasantly surprised that a number of other articles were interesting to me and as I was on a restful holiday on a barge on the Trent and Mersey Canal was able to read the magazine from cover to cover.

Firstly, I noted that a member of our local woodworking guild, Jurie Richards, had a letter printed. Little does he know it but he will soon be asked to demonstrate the making of his threaded dowel and 'nut', made with a circular saw, at one of our future meetings!

Secondly, I was very interested in reading the article by George Buchanan, under Comment, on the replacement of a church organ with a more modern one.

I was recently involved in the latter

stages of the installation of a 19th Century pipe organ which had been dismantled and transported from a church in Norfolk to South Africa.

After about nine months work by a dedicated team of volunteers and final input by an organ builder, the organ now gushes forth resplendently. My involvement was making some missing parts.

It concerned me somewhat that the organ referred to in the article was 'skipped'. As a fund-raising activity much of the timber that went into the skip could have been converted to various articles for sale at church fetes, craft fairs etc, each article being suitably marked — burnt or engraved — given the origin of the timber.

Articles that come to mind include crosses for sale at Easter fairs, book marks, Christmas cards, small animals, Christmas decorations, etc.

The organ stops for example could have been converted to light pulls; nothing should have gone to waste. The articles

would have had a marvellous provenance — over 100 years in a church! Similar use could be made of timber recovered from other well known buildings facing demolition; schools, soccer stands, pubs etc come to mind.

Thirdly, being interested in computers I was very pleased to see your webguide to sites of interest for woodworkers. However, why are the majority of the clubs listed woodturning clubs, where are the wood-working clubs?

Are woodworkers being taken over by woodturners? A very good and interesting magazine, I shall look out for copies at our local bookstores.

Brian Walford
South Africa

Thanks for your comments, Brian. I am more than happy to include more 'woodworky' clubs in that section, if there are any out there that would like to be listed call 01283 742950 or e-mail alison.bell@twonline.co.uk.

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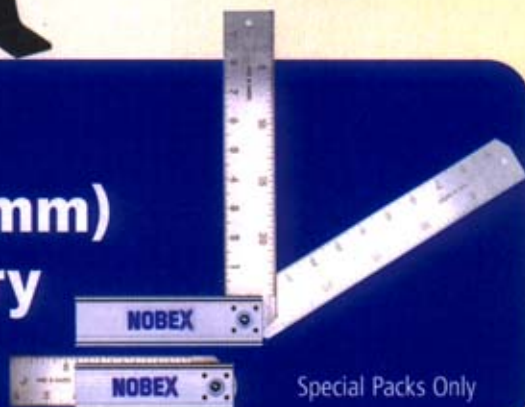
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What happens if things go wrong?

Text: Stephen Simmons

Pictures: Steve Taylor and Stephen Simmons

Antique furniture restorers are not a race apart. We are all human and therefore fallible and we have to accept the inevitable, that is we all make mistakes.

And for the more realistic amongst us it's more of a question of when rather than if things go wrong, if we're honest.

So what do we do when the inevitable happens? The answer itself is inevitable too, it

depends on what you mean by "wrong".

Generally, it's more a case of when things go wrong rather than if

It carries a range of meanings, from the mildly annoying reversible slip to serious extra physical damage. It can include, with increasing seriousness:

- Not right — If your colouring and staining doesn't match
- Unfortunate — if a repair slips during clamping or you get a piece of grit under

leather inlay, or if a glued joint springs as a result of a piece being knocked apart

- Unexpected — if a chemical bleach removes most stains but brings a previously invisible one to the surface
- Intrusive — if you drill the holes for a new set of

handles askew

- Real damage — if the point or end of a screw goes through an immaculate table top or if you break or bruise something that was previously sound.

Wrong also implies that it's somebody's fault. Current wis-



Prevention is the best approach: label each screw ... to prevent serious damage to a table top (ABOVE)



Reversibility is an important principle in restoration: water soluble adhesives...

dom has it that there's no such thing as an accident, so it's likely to be your mistake.

Within this context, there are four areas I'd like to cover: prevention, minimising the impact, repairing the damage, and how to deal with the customer — the owner of the now-damaged piece of furniture.

There is a lot you can do to prevent things going wrong in the first place. Throughout this series both Helen and I have emphasised the importance of thinking hard about your restoration projects before you start the physical work, understanding your tools and raw materials and knowing what you are doing.

We warned against letting your enthusiasm run too far ahead of ability and urged you to think about different possible courses of action and their implications and to anticipate any difficulties rather than just diving in.

Now exactly the same applies to mistakes. If you think carefully and plan ahead a lot of silly mistakes can be avoided, because a good deal of prevention is really just common sense and good restoration workshop practice.

Screw holes

For example, take the screw-through-the-table-top problem: if you are dismantling a table whose top is secured with screws, simply mark each screw hole with a numbered piece of masking tape and as you remove the screw, mark it likewise.

The right screw will then be

put back in the correct hole with no risk of breaking the surface, unless you over tighten.

The screw holes can be marked with chalk, but it's easily rubbed off which increases the risk of putting screws back in the wrong holes.

If you are replacing broken or missing screws, or re-drilling worn screw holes that have been plugged, you can still minimise the risk by exact measurement, a depth gauge and the use of a hand drill for precise control. A lot of 18th and 19th century table-tops were secured with screws that had had their points removed.

This practice certainly prevented the point from coming through, but if you're following it, remember that a blunt end can still cause an ugly eruption on the surface if you don't pre-drill far enough.

The same practice of marking corresponding joints and members applies to all aspects of dismantling.

It is a simple expedient yet very effective and does help prevent you from making mistakes in the re-assembly process. However, don't be tempted to dismantle more than once piece at a time, there are a lot of pieces of wood in just one chair without confusing the issue with more.

It is very easy to get the members of two pieces mixed up. Two chairs in a set might appear identical but before mechanisation there were always slight variations, and you can do serious damage by trying to force incompatible pieces together.



...and stains can minimise the long term impact of mistakes



The slightest slip with an inappropriate tool can cause a lot of grief



Always be able to see what you are doing. The colour can change quickly and permanently with fuming

Finishes

If you are proposing to strip off an old finish prior to re-polishing, all you want to do is remove the old finish and no more. The surface of the wood must remain intact, so you shouldn't use an abrasive, a mechanical sander or a cabinet scraper.

Use a proprietary stripper or other solvent instead. Remember that with age dark woods get lighter and light woods darker. So if you do cut through the surface you're likely to have an ugly patch of a different colour.

A lighter patch can be stained down and sometimes a darker one bleached, but it's not guaranteed. And if you cut through the surface of a patinated rosewood there is nothing you can do about the disfiguring livid patch and the owner is likely to be, well, livid too.

Other simple practices can

also help prevent mistakes: dry runs, for instance. When I looked at clamping (TW January 2003) I stressed two things: the importance of the dry run to help translate theory into practice and to iron out unforeseen problems; and the real damage you could do to a sound piece by insensitive clamping and the exertion of too much force.

When Helen looked at colour matching (TW February 2003) she stressed the need for practising on scrap before staining and warned against using the job itself as a mixing palette. And last month I highlighted the importance of sharp tools in the context of health and safety and how they reduced the risk of damage to both body and timber, they help prevent mistakes too.

The same applies to the clear labelling of all substances. Using the right tool for the job

is another form of prevention. If a softwood stick slips when you're cleaning crevices it'll do little damage to polished show wood, but see what happens if a chisel or screwdriver does the same.

Using a fine gentleman's saw instead of a tenon saw is another way to avoid damage to show wood and reduce critical wood loss. Knowing your solvents is also essential: you can clean French polish with white spirit or turpentine quite safely, but meths will strip it off, and vice versa for beeswax. The state of your workshop is significant too. That spot of grit or other foreign body under an expensive skiver is easily avoided by keeping your work surfaces and glue pots clean.

Generally, we tend to under-restore our commissions and our clients appreciate it. It's why they come to us. We take this approach for two reasons.

The first is purely personal in that we don't like the look of over-restored pieces, and the second is the more practical concern that the less you do the less scope there is for making mistakes.

This sounds as if we lack confidence in our ability, but it's not that at all. We regard it as an integral part of damage prevention. We also like to work on the principle "if it doesn't do any good it shouldn't do any harm" which applies to raw materials and practices for the same reason.

Minimising the impact comes next and in some ways is an extension of prevention.

When we looked at the principles of restoration, the ability to reverse your work and to make minimal intrusion into the original came high on the list. These are now directly related to minimising the impact of mistakes. Take adhesives for example. Animal glue can be easily dissolved whereas modern resins cannot.

Should your joint slip in the clamping, it can be dismantled fairly simply if animal glue is used and the mistake corrected without additional damage to the original.

Certainly a joint fixed with resin can be reversed by taking a saw to it, but the intrusion into the original in doing so can be costly both in terms of

your time to reinstate it and the potential devaluation of the whole piece. You may end up having to cut and fit a whole set of false tenons or repolish sections of damaged show wood.

Colouring and staining is another such area, and one where a lot of woodworkers do have problems. We prefer water-soluble Van Dyck crystals in conjunction with water based concentrates for a variety of reasons, but primarily because they are largely reversible. If you make a mistake with your colour matching, it can be largely pulled out with a damp cloth and you can start again, having done no harm. However, nothing in this world is perfect and it must be noted that the more colour concentrates you add the less reversible the overall stain.

Water stains

I know that a lot of people don't like water stains because of the "problem" of grain-raising. But I regard it as a normal part of preparation, and it's a small price to pay for being able to correct mistakes.

On the other hand, some other colouring techniques are irreversible but necessary for the restorer. Darkening oak by fuming is one. If you are going to do this, fume any new components before splicing into the original and to ensure you get the right colour make sure you can see what's happening. The colour can change quite quickly in the ammonia fumes and you need to catch it before it goes too dark.

Most modern and traditional hard finishes, such as polyurethane varnish and French polish, are reversible in that they can be stripped off with no damage to the wood's surface. Some may need a tough proprietary varnish remover to do so, but they will come off. The problems are more likely to come with oil finishes. They are easier to apply than hard finishes, but they are more difficult to remove.

The robustness of linseed oil polish lies in its depth of penetration into the wood, and whilst small patches of oil and grease can be removed with fuller's earth a good linseed oil

polish is permanent.

It can only be removed by removing the surface of the wood itself with a plane or cabinet scraper, and then you will have destroyed the patina and more. When using non-reversible finishes, it is essential that you — and your customer — are quite sure that it is the finish that's required.

So, we've done our best to avoid mistakes and reduce their impact from the outset, but things will still go wrong. How do we go about repairing the damage?

Don't panic

The most important thing is not to panic. That will only make things worse. Repairing damage is best done with a cool head. If something goes wrong with French polishing, for instance, it's much easier to rescue the situation by letting it cure overnight rather than trying to cope with a sticky mess there and then.

For one thing, "the problem" may have shrunk out of its own accord, and you will have had time to think about it and tackle it dispassionately.

I've found that the best way of dealing with errors is simply to regard them as another restoration project, using straightforward techniques.

Most restoration is repairing damage and in this case the only difference is that you have caused it, and at least you now have the advantage of knowing what has gone on and what materials have been used. It is likely that all you will need the second time round is a bit more care, thought and forward planning. So let's now go back to the range of mistakes set out at the beginning and deal with each in turn.

The mildest form of mistake is when something isn't quite right, it can be easily reversed and there is no physical damage to the original. Colouring with Van Dyck crystals is a good example. You can wash it out and start again, and all you will have lost is your time. Hole filling with shellac sticks or beaumontage is another.

If the colour and texture don't match, all you have to do is melt it out with a soldering iron and have another go. There is no additional physical

damage to the original and very often the second go is much easier and success is sweeter.

The cutting of veneer, inlay or splicing to fit a given shape also falls into this category. Once you've made the template the only thing that can go wrong is that you make a mistake on the fresh material rather than the original. If, say, a piece of brass or veneer is over-cut, it's annoying rather than damaging and you can put it down to experience.

Similarly, when patching a surface with an inlay of solid, the match of grain can go awry once it's pared flush if you haven't checked the run of the grain. If it then stands out like a sore thumb when glued into place, it can still be chopped out carefully and replaced with a second attempt...or a third if necessary.

The next category is the "unfortunate" where there is potential additional damage to the original. Grit under a skiver is not likely to cause damage to the original, but unless you can very carefully slit the leather, remove the foreign body and re-glue, it can prove expensive if you have to replace the whole piece at your own cost.

However, it's a different matter if a repair slips in the clamping. A joint glued with animal glue can be taken apart with little or no damage to the original, although even this can take some time and patience. A joint glued with a resin glue can be separated by sawing it apart, which naturally increases the risk of damage.

This can happen in two ways. If you don't use a fine saw blade you can damage the show wood and you are likely to sacrifice an original joint. The answer is, therefore, to make sure that you have the right tools and that you have the skills to cut and fit false tenons and other classic wood-working joints.

If you have to sacrifice an original joint in this way, I advise that you always try to re-instate a replica and then re-assemble the piece as designed rather than trying to cobble it. It may



If you have to cut a joint apart make sure you have a fine blade to minimise damage and wood loss. Here you can even use a razor saw or jeweller's blade but never a tenon saw

The best way to deal with problems is to regard them as another restoration project



Once cut apart, false tenons and other joints have to be cut and fitted



Some mistakes are easy to repair with a simple rub joint...

take some time and effort, but that is the cost and responsibility you have to bear as a restorer who has made a mistake.

Sometimes an old joint will spring when working on another part of a piece. In the photo, the cheek/shoulder became dislodged from the top of a cabriole leg when the chair was being dismantled.

This is not an uncommon problem and is the result of shock being transferred through the timber, and sometimes the biggest difficulty is finding the detached piece after it has flown off.

Although the original has been damaged, it is easily reinstated — in this case with a simple rub joint.

The "unexpected" category can pose bigger — and more intractable — problems. And this is where customer relations can become strained. Several years ago we were commissioned to remove some blemishes from an early 18th century oak table.

Oxalic acid did the job, but somehow it also brought a much worse, and previously

invisible, ugly stain to the surface. Nothing would move it and it remains to this day. At the time the customer was "understanding" yet tense, but she says that she's quite fond of it now.

Hidden nails and screws from previous repairs can do unexpected damage in two ways. Unless their holes were pre-drilled — which from experience is rare — they can cause even more damage to the joints they are supposed to be strengthening. And then they can split sound wood when dismantling a piece, even if you use minimum force when doing so.

This damage is frustrating as very often the screws and nails don't actually do the job intended, but it still has to be made good by either gluing and clamping, pegging, filling or splicing in new wood.

As before, tackle the damage logically and repair each member separately before reassembling the piece as normal. Other forms of internal damage almost come into this category, but they are not of

your making. For example, broken tenon or dowel joints sometimes only become apparent when you dismantle a piece, as in the photograph. They are usually straightforward to repair, but they can make nonsense of your estimate — in time or money — for the job.

If unexpected damage is outside your control, the last two categories really are down to you. Causing additional damage to the original piece can have serious implications for its value. Drilling holes in the wrong place for a new set of handles can be readily corrected by plugging and re-aligning, and it is likely that the damage will be hidden by the handles. But the point is that it's still unnecessary intrusion which could have been avoided.

However, far more serious is what I've described as real damage, such as the screw through the table top,

deep bruises from unprotected clamp heads, scratches and gouges caused by inappropriate tools or the breakage of previously sound wood.

Some can be rescued by normal techniques. Eruptions on the table top can be glued and clamped back and any wood loss made good with shellac filler or polisher's putty. Similar treatments can also be used for other breakages, and the repair can be virtually invisible.

But on other occasions you



... but the unexpected can sometimes be embarrassingly permanent



For all the time-consuming remedies possible, a simple wipe of black wax is sometimes sufficient to disguise the problem



The full extent of some damage is not apparent until you dismantle a piece and then find out how badly screws and nails can do a job. Note too, the bruise from an unprotected clamp head

have to accept that your damage will always be apparent. We saw in TW July 2003 that scratches and gouges in French polish can be patched with patience, but that option is not available for other traditional finishes such as wax or oil.

Removing them by stripping the surface with an abrasive or cabinet scraper is not an option.

The only approach may be to disguise them with black wax make them look old and blend them in with other blemishes. Bruises from clamp heads may also be permanent. There's no guarantee that they will steam out, as often the fibres of the wood or severed too, and steaming will destroy the original finish which you'll then have to patch or rebuild.

Owners

So, there may be a permanent legacy of your mistake, how do you deal with the owner of the piece? If you've not done any permanent damage to the original it's a simple matter. You need say nothing should you get a colour match wrong and successfully reverse it, or ruin a piece of expensive new leather and replace it at your own cost.

And if it takes three attempts to get a veneer patch right, so what? On the other hand, in cases where you have caused additional damage, honesty is always the best policy.

You may need to screw up your courage, but it has to be done, even if you have corrected your mistake to a near-invisible degree. If he or she doesn't notice a new blemish, somebody else will. And so when the irate owner gets back to you, you'll be in an indefensible position.

Good – and expensive – insurance cover will not stop you making mistakes, but it can help soften the consequences. But don't be lulled into a false sense of security just because you have got cover.

If something completely unexpected happens, like the unseen stain, you have to explain that sometimes these things do happen and are really nobody's fault. But the time to do that is either when you do the estimate or when you collect the job, or both. A good restorer must always be aware that the unexpected can happen and part of her responsibility is to warn the customer accordingly before starting work.

In furniture restoration, people see things differently. What is important to one person is insignificant to another. So whilst you may have made no mistake the customer may perceive something that catches the eye as one. In this respect it is important to agree with the customer before you start work about how they want the work to look when you've finished. I'll deal with this is notion in



To prevent bruising from unprotected clamp heads – and even softwood blocks – pad them both well

greater detail when I look at how to prepare an estimate, but you need to help them to express what they consider to be the problems. This approach can help reduce the risk of the customer seeing such "mistakes" when you take the work back.

A customer's over-high expectations can also lead to them being identified. It is important to emphasise that as a restorer you are not a miracle worker or some sort of wizard. Make the point that you are always able to do an excellent job, but perfection is not always possible because of the nature of things...stains will not always bleach out, bruises steam out or dark rosewood lighten. And so explain why this is the case. But if you have actually damaged their cherished piece of furniture rather

than just not meeting expectations, admit it.

Don't be put off restoration for fear of making mistakes. There's a world of difference between something being "not quite right" but correctable and irreparable damage to someone else's property. The first can stem from your own perfectionism — which is a good thing — whilst the other extreme is generally attributable to carelessness and ignorance, which should have no place in traditional woodworking.

Information

If you have any queries about this article, contact the author direct at: ask@simmonsandmiles.co.uk

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Students' gallery



Edwardian small child's chair by Kathy Logan

This furniture restoration work shows the high standard achieved by students within Creative Studies at South Nottingham College.

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For more details about the range of courses available at South Nottingham College, contact the Creative Studies department on 0115 9146471 or e-mail enquiries@south-nottingham.ac.uk



Various kitchen utensils restored by Elaine McCreedy

From top to bottom: sharpening steel, corkscrew, cheese grating iron, whisk



LEFT - Chest of drawers restored by Graham Doust

BELOW - Balloon back dining chair restored by Catherine Todd





ABOVE - Military officer's footlocker restored by Phil Jervis



RIGHT - Letter box restored by Anne Toombs



LEFT - Dressing table mirror restored by Pete Wright



Victorian caned nursing chair restored by Graham Doust



Two cane-chairs restored by Mandy Andrews



Smoker's bow chair restored by Mike Senior

Sketchbook

A wall mirror

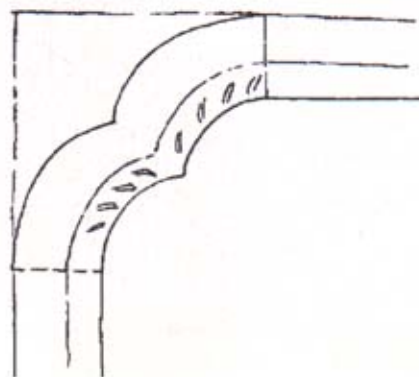
This very fine and much loved wall mirror still sports the Christmas decorations hung there by its elderly owner; the photograph was taken in June.

The mirror is veneered in Mahogany on a pine groundwork, and the strip of moulding retaining the glass is gilt and carved.

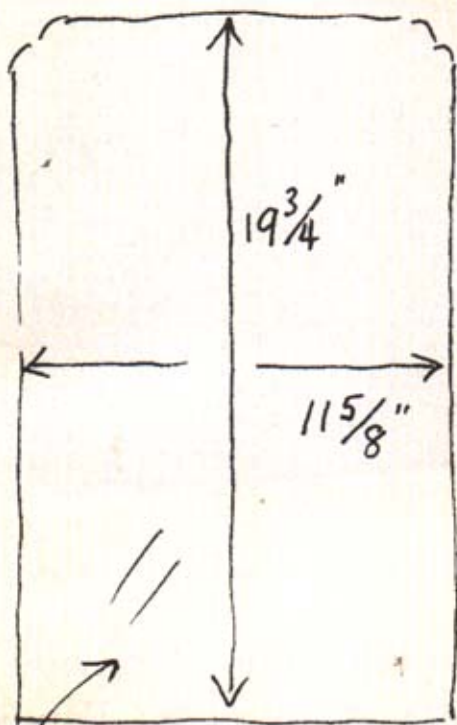
The unbevelled glass is original. It is blemished by a few dead areas where parts of the gilding have dropped away.

The mirror itself is cut square, but notice the 'inward point' of the surrounding moulding which covers the top corners - this feature, along with the extravagantly cut decorations suggest an early date - 1750.

A carved and gilt feature (bird, spray of leaves?) once perched at the crest. This is now missing.



GENERAL ARRANGEMENT.



Glass aperture.

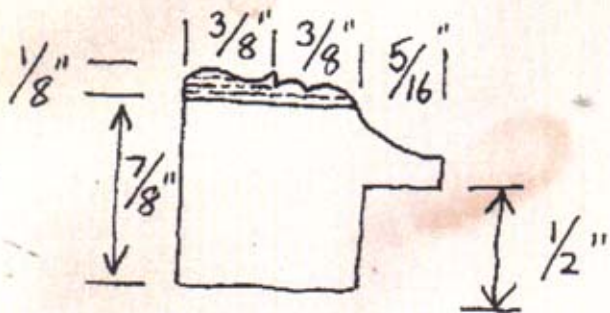


The overall height of the MIRROR is $33\frac{5}{8}$ " , with nearly 6" of moulding and frieze at the top and about $7\frac{1}{2}$ " at the bottom. The overall width at the top is $19\frac{3}{4}$ " and 20" at the bottom. At its narrowest point the mirror measures $13\frac{5}{8}$ "



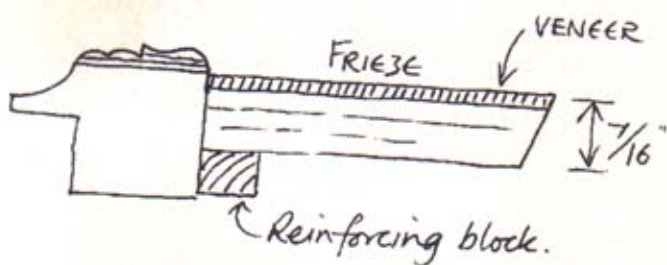
CONSTRUCTION DETAILS

The decorative panels, and the glass are all hung on a fairly flimsy, pine frame, capped by



a cross banded mahogany strip.

A section through the frame and decorative board would resemble this:

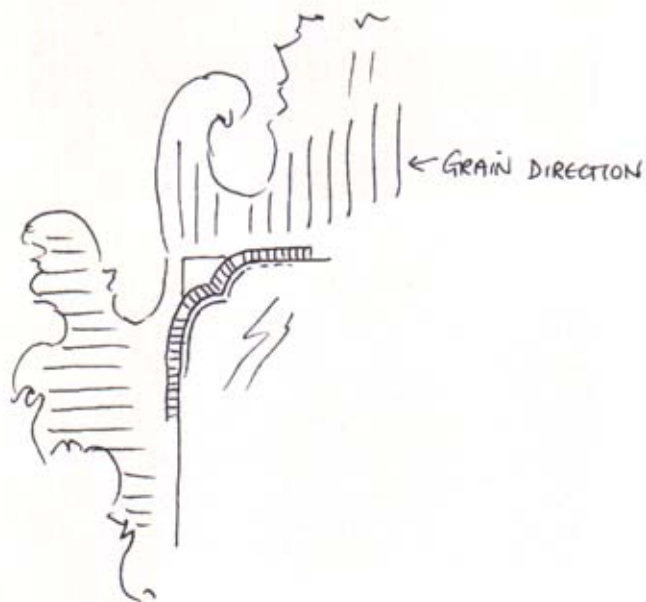


The veneer thickness is approximately $3/32$ ". The joints at the corners of the main frame are probably cross halvings.



A veneer laid on unsupported thin pine tends to cup. To counter this, the veneer on the front is laid at right angles to that of the ground.

On the face side, the veneers are as shown:



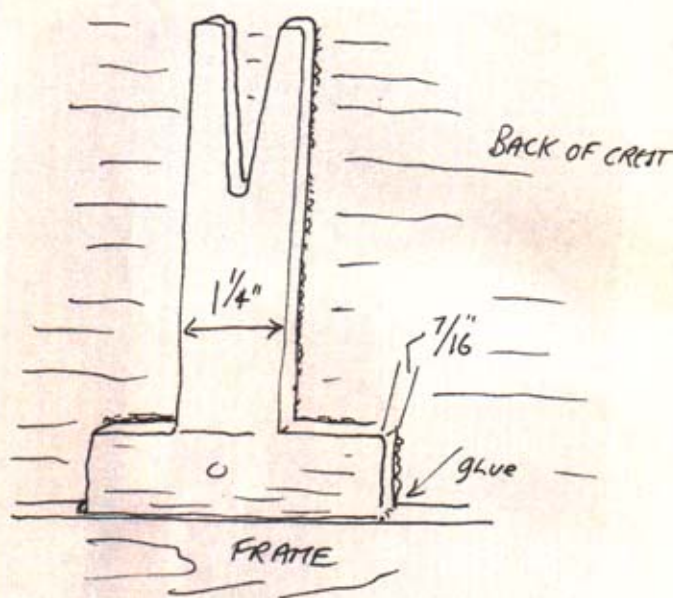
Construction details: Back.

The work on the back of the mirror is rather crude.

The snapshots show the main frame, and the wings etc. and an assortment of wooden struts fanning out to support the more vulnerable parts. These generally appear to be mortise and tenoned together so that the spur is braced by the side of the frame proper.

In particular, a central top support is positioned to hold the crest decoration:

The neat angled supports at the corners are somewhat lighter:



THE SAWN WORK

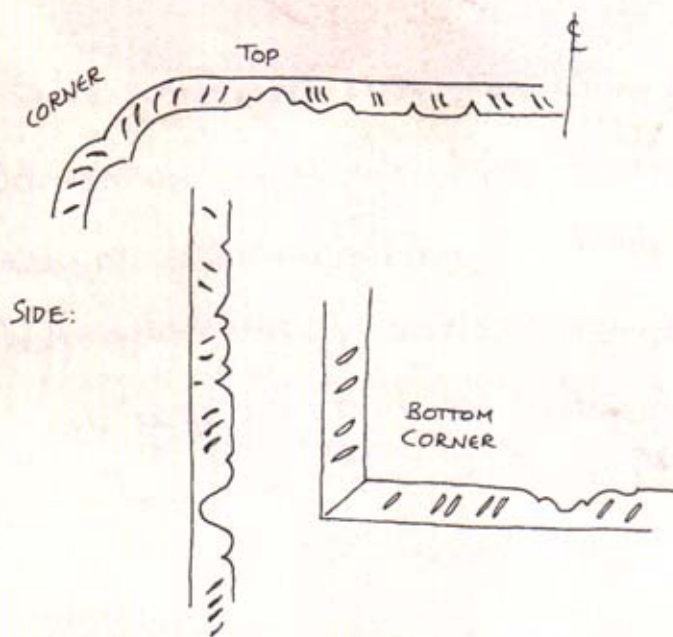
The very complex cuts through the veneer and ground are sawn at an angle to give the effect of lightness and delicacy. In places the saw work has been cleaned up with a knife.

Note how the incised carving highlights and adds form to the shapes. These narrow cuts would have been made with a pointing chisel.





The gilding is very worn, and in many areas the gold is missing. Still, the carved groundwork of gesso seems intact, and this drawing attempts to show the nature of the decoration at the border with the glass:



The moulding

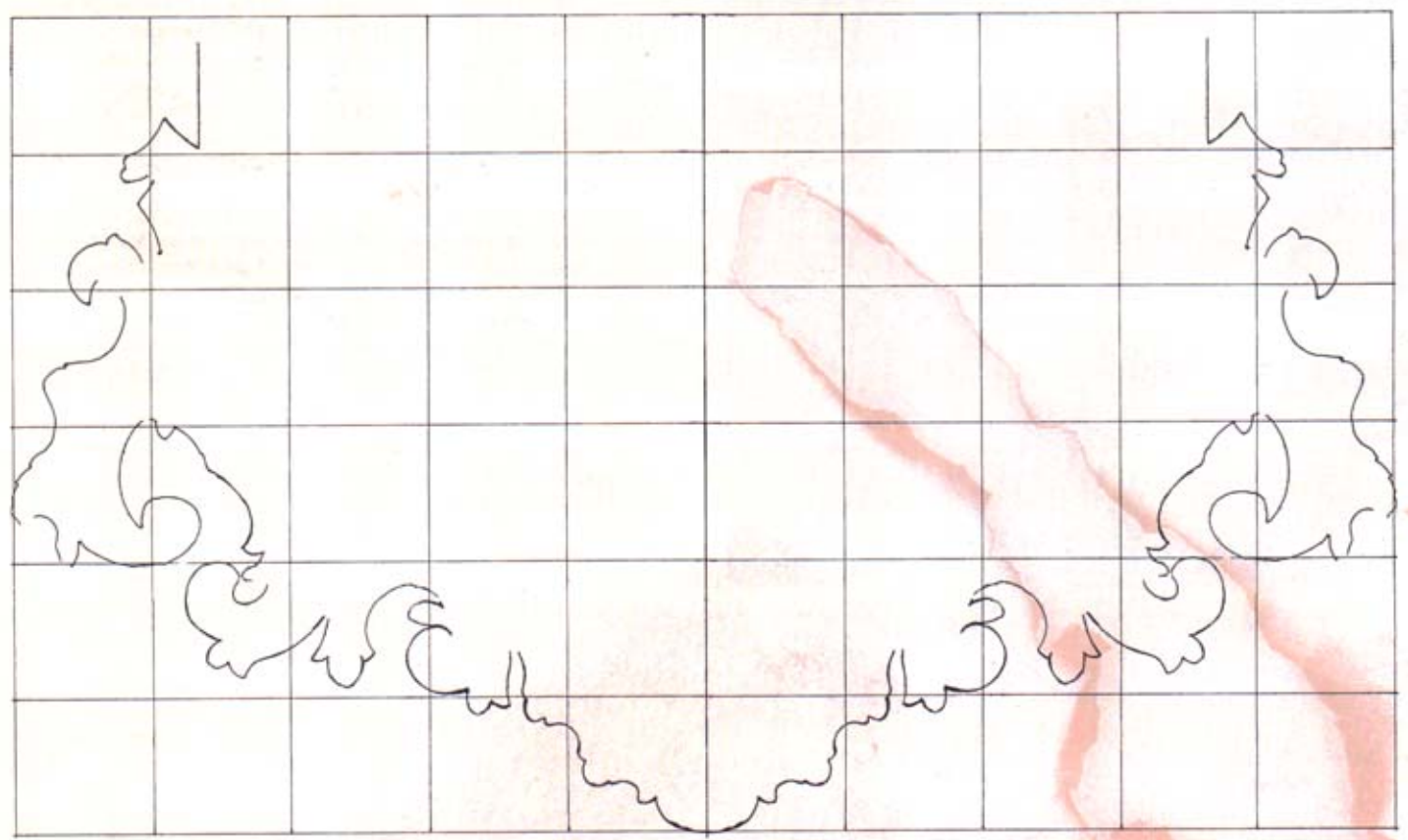
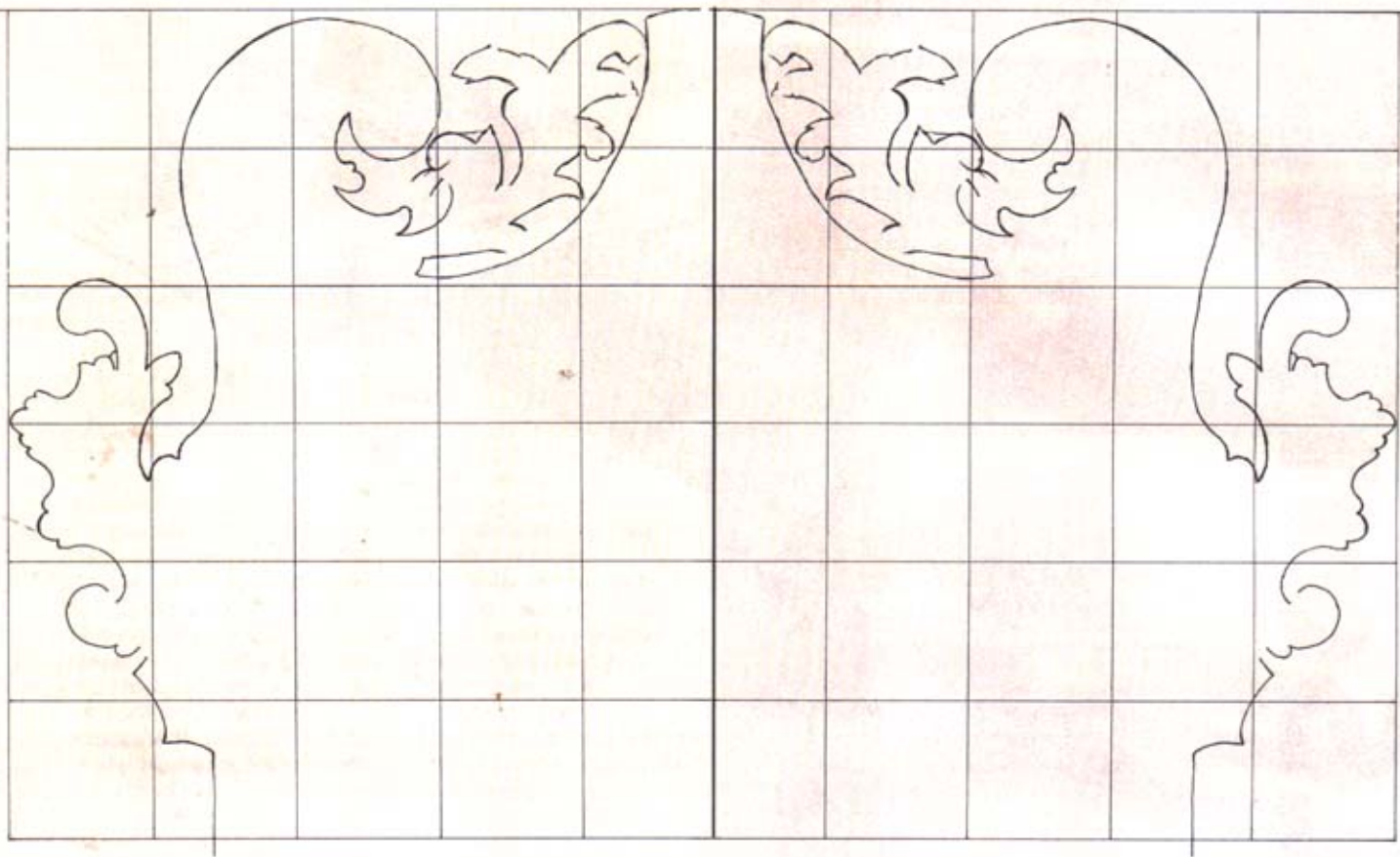
The crossgrain moulding, which is a very fine and clean piece of work, was probably worked by some form of mounted and steadied chair scraper. The 'inward points' at the corner are probably carved separately (most likely by chisel), from a square mahogany block, and applied with the veneers. I expect both the manufacture of the lengths of crossgrain moulding and the corners was performed by out-workers.

The pattern seems to have been carved with some abandon. The incisions are short, and no more than $\frac{1}{16}$ " deep.

The OUTLINE

The outline drawing showing the main features of the decorative ends, is covered by a 2" grid. From the basic outline drawn in the sweeps of foliage freehand. This is the best way to make sense of the pattern.

Scale: 1 square = 2in²



The WoodRat

Text: Jeff Loader

While ago, I got to grips with the WoodRat's smaller sibling, the LittleRat. So impressive did this excellent item of woodworking equipment prove to be, that we thought that the big WoodRat itself merited closer inspection. Although the basic concept and working principles of the WoodRat is surprisingly straightforward, it does require time, imagination and the wit of the operator to fully exploit and comprehend it.

Therefore, I was despatched to the picturesque village of Godney, set way down in the depths of the Somerset levels, to meet Martin Godfrey, the inventor of the Woodrat, to fully explain it and to help put the large rodent through its paces.

The first, and in fact the main, hurdle for the uninitiated to tackle is to understand what exactly is the WoodRat.

Many label it, and think of it, as a dovetail jig. Sure, it can produce the widest range of dovetail joints, both in size and type, than any other jig available, but it is much more than that.

The legend under the WoodRat logo, in their current advertisements, calls them "precision joinery machines". This terminology is fairly accurate,

but once you learn that the WoodRat is capable of tackling a staggering range of woodworking jointing and



moulding tasks, you soon realise that the WoodRat enables the user to engineer wood in a unique way.

Another hard pill of comprehension to swallow is that an item of woodworking equipment that claims — quite truthfully as it turns out — to assist in the production of just about every constructional jointing task known to traditional cabinet making, comprises of such few main, and relatively lightweight, components.

There are no heavy-duty cast iron tables, no large sheet metal panels, no big leg stand and no complex electronic gadgetry — except for the need to utilise your regular router power tool.

It is simply mounted onto a straightforward to make wooden wall plate fixed to a workshop wall. Provision for dust extraction can be, and should be, made by the user following directions in the excellent user manual.

The system operates unlike any other woodworking machine or jig, although its basic principles are straightforward.

The router, unlike a router table, is operated the 'right way up' at all times. It either tracks back and

forwards whilst the work is securely clamped or stationary while the work is safely fed into and through the cutter.

When joint cutting, no guide bushes and templates are used, so you can usually always obtain a clear view of the cut. One of the great advantages of the WoodRat, especially when joint cutting, is that both the router and the work are clamped.

And as the sliding rail is cranked along the channel, the WoodRat provides, what is in effect, a power feed system!

One of the main components of the WoodRat is the channel, which is made of aluminium extrusion anodised silver.

This houses a sliding bar that is operated by means of a crank handle and Bowden cable (wire) system. Two excellent cam locks fix the work vertically, when appropriate, to two fences that are attached to the rail.

Your router is attached to the base plate, which locates on the top of the channel. Rest assured that pretty much all of the components are of good build quality; and a testament to this is the incredibly smooth operation of all aspects of the WoodRat. Rotating the crank handle moves the sliding bar instantly, with no slack or backlash, and it becomes a real joy to feed the work and/or cutter into action.

So what can the Woodrat do? Well, it would be easier to name the very short list of things it cannot be used to



accomplish. However, Martin reckons that there are about 120 named woodworking joints and all these can be undertaken with the WoodRat.

And when you get to grips with the tool you can well believe this incredible claim. The WoodRat can be used for a multitude of profiling and grooving tasks and when hand-feeding the work, a scrubbing brush (it has to be seen to be believed!) ensures the work is kept stable to the cutter and doesn't kick back. Incredibly this works a treat!

Trenching, sliding dovetails, halving joints, bridle joints and mortice and tenons of all varieties are all readily achievable. The process of cutting some tenons is particularly interesting, as a tenon can be machined in four cuts, due to the fact that the work is vertical and the cutter used can be long. Some types of joints require a simple add-on accessory or two, but these can be shop made inexpensively out of MDF and a block or two of wood.

The only main accessory add-ons that WoodRat sells separately is a mitre box that can be used for a variety of work including secret dovetailing and aluminium guide rails – which are especially useful for mass-producing tenons.

Of course, the WoodRat is famous for, and quite rightly so, for being able to produce just about any type and practical size of dovetail joint. Due to the way in which this type of joint is worked – the WoodRat utilises a marking system which allows one half of the joint to become the template for the other half – no guide bushes or fixed 'following' finger template accessories need be purchased or used.

As a consequence, the dovetail joints may be spaced as you wish and cut in even the thinnest of wood pieces.

Regular TCT dovetail cutters may be used, or you can use the ones obtainable direct from WoodRat. These are a full range of graded HSS dovetail cutters that enable finished joints that very much match the appearance of hand cut ones.

WoodRat has chosen high-speed steel for the cutters as it

allows for very slim and elegant dovetail profiles to be produced. The surprisingly long cutters appropriately enable long tails to be formed and the really small ones can produce tails that defy the casual observer to believe that they are machine made.

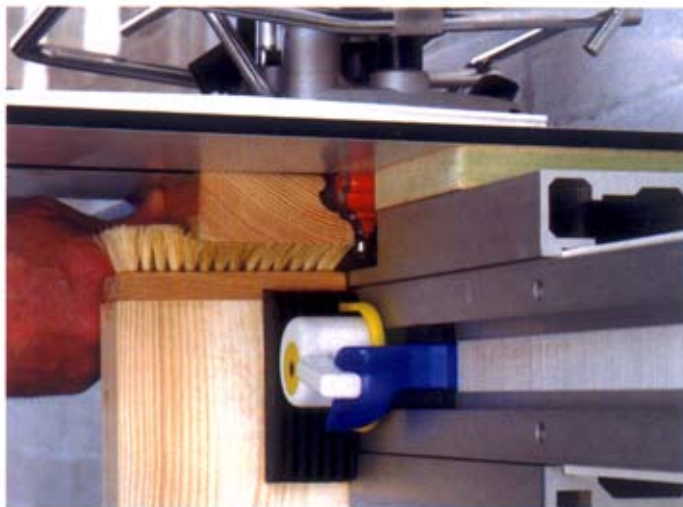
On learning more about the WoodRat, what became clear to me was that the range and scope of the jointing work it can achieve is mainly dependent upon the imagination of the user and his/her timber budget!

Unlike any other machine, mechanical aid or system, the WoodRat promotes, and in fact performs, tried and tested woodworking practises. Craftsmen of yesteryear have developed certain specific ways of jointing wood, as this was the best way for the structure of the wood and the construction of the item, or piece of furniture, itself.

The WoodRat enables the woodworker to produce the project with the best time honoured methods and not to make compromises due to his/her lack of skill or the shortcomings of regular mechanical jointing machines, jigs, systems and aids.

The potential for the professional woodworker, such as the furniture designer/maker, is incredible. For exacting constructional methods can be carried out to match the accuracy and delicacy of hand-tooled work, but in a fraction of the time. Fully mastering the WoodRat will take quite a while, but there is no question that this will be time very well spent.

At the beginning of this article, I discussed the difficulty of determining exactly what the WoodRat is. After finding out more about it, I would simply say it's a woodworking tool – and a darn good one at that!



Verdict

A small price to pay for an almost complete joinery system

Price

WoodRat: £395

Aluminium Rails, Stop & Instructions: £29.95

Mitre Box £18.06

Contact

0845 458 2033

Makita 4340FCT Jigsaw

A jigsaw is a must-have power tool for many woodworkers. Arguably this tool is of most use for site work where portability and the need to cut curves are paramount.

However, there are many tasks for the workshop based — or home — woodworker, where a jigsaw is the favoured option. Makita has earned the reputation of producing power tools that are suitable for professional use, as well as providing good service for the enthusiastic amateur. And not all that long ago they launched this impressive looking jigsaw to complement their comprehensive range of power tools.

From the moment you open this jigsaw's handy carry case, you can tell that this model is likely to be a good'un.

The designers have obviously put a lot of careful thought into its design and have incorporated a whole host of practical features that regular jigsaw users will approve of.

It has been equipped with a four-stage pendulum cutting action, variable speed, mini work light, detachable dust extraction port, anti scratch soleplate over shoe and tool free blade changing.

Changing blades can sometimes be a bit of a fiddle with inferior models, but this fine power tool sports a tool-free chuck that is operated by the hinging front guard/light cover.

At first this moulded clear plastic part may appear flimsy,



put as soon as you put it into action it proves itself well up to the task. In fact, so smooth is the chuck's action, that blade changing can be accomplished in just a couple of seconds.

The tool's build quality seems pretty good and it proved good to handle. However, on the model we tested, there was an irritating sharp ridge along the casing joint line underneath the main handle. And it's a little surprising to find a tool of this quality and performance bracket not sporting soft rubber grip areas.

Put this jigsaw into action and you soon know that you are using a serious power tool. For starters, you will be impressed with its soft-start up and the fact that there is hardly



any discernable vibration — even at full speed. And you won't find that the work light is a gimmick, for it illuminates the immediate cut line well and so proves to be a genuine cutting aid.

The saw has been designed so that a good view of the cutting line is afforded at all times. However, we did find that, even with dust extraction, sawdust got trapped between the clear plastic anti-splinter insert around the blade. Interestingly though, with this little device removed the saw cut some lovely curves in birch plywood, with scant evidence of any splintering.

Of course, this could also be partly due to the use of one of the reverse toothed blades provided, and full marks must be awarded to Makita for supplying a set of six excellent blades as standard.

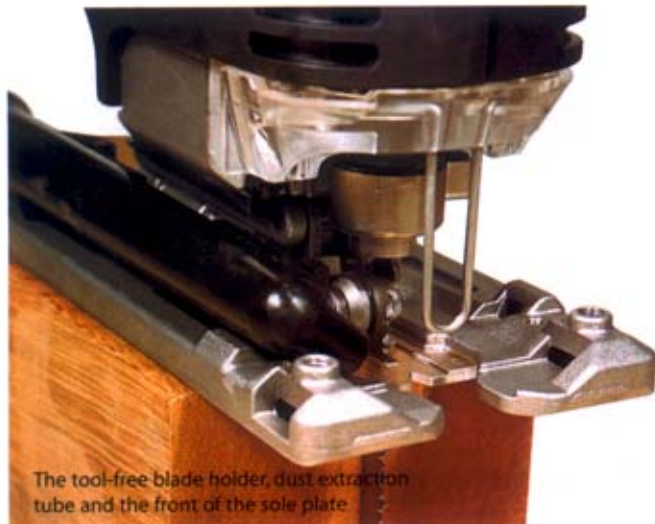
The novel detachable dust extraction pipe isn't just for show. For with vacuum extraction fitted, it does a very good job of helping to remove most of the sawdust away from the

immediate cutting area. The overall cutting performance of this jigsaw is very good indeed. It proved to be a lovely tool to cut general curves, as well as providing pretty good service when performing ripping and crosscutting tasks. The pendulum cutting action works well and really comes into its own when whipping through the 2" thick pine we provided for it.

The Makita 4340FCT is a super jigsaw and certainly warrants serious consideration for those seeking a jigsaw that will provide a professional standard of service. For a tool of this sort, it is a joy to use and so certainly deserves to be ranked amongst the best.

Specifications

Power Input	720w
Length of Stroke	26mm
Strokes per minute	800 - 2800
Overall length	239mm
Cutting Capacity in Wood	135mm
Cutting Capacity in Steel	10mm
Weight	2.4kg



The tool-free blade holder, dust extraction tube and the front of the sole plate

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Erbauer 1/2" Router

Nowadays, there seems to be a fair degree of rebranding, or at least the sourcing of identical main parts, for a variety of products.

Be it hi-fi, general electrical equipment, white goods or cars, it can seem as if there aren't many products that don't share a parent company or possess an almost identical twin dressed in a different coloured livery.

Of course, power tools are no different and this new large router is very similar in appearance to that of another brand that has previously graced the pages of this fair magazine.

That particular model was of middling build quality, but provided a not too shabby level of performance. We asked ourselves if this new offering from Erbauer, via Screwfix Direct, would be any different.

One of the first notable aspects of this big router is that you get a fair amount of operational features and ancillary, although fairly standard, accessories. An elaborate depth of cut control, micro depth adjustment, rotational dust extraction spout and an eight stage preset plunge depth turret, all contribute to give an impression that a lot of useful features are supplied, for a pleasingly low price, for a router of this ilk.

However, examine the router and its accessories more closely and you can soon see evidence of cost cutting. Build quality isn't exactly bad, except for the appallingly formed guide bush, but it certainly doesn't bear comparison with the best routers on the market.

However, for its relatively low retail price, the buyer must expect the odd anomaly and if it performs all right, then the slight constructional faux pas can be forgiven.

Operating the router produces a mixed bag of results, but the depth controls are straightforward to set and operate.

Sure, you have to make allowances for a millimetre of play in the eight preset turret plunge stop, but once this is done accurate plunge cutting can be undertaken.



Plunge depth controls and handle incorporating power switch



The base. Note repositionable dust extraction port and spindle lock

I really like the thinking behind a rotational eight-step depth stop turret, opposed to the regular three-stop, as it proved very useful — particularly when plunge cutting in tough hardwoods.

A safety conscious soft start and a variable speed facility really help to enable a wide range of routing work to be undertaken.

A safety lock lever must be depressed to allow the main power switch to be activated. The latter proves to be rather uncomfortable and a tad difficult to keep pressed into the handle all the time.

Unfortunately no manual was supplied with this



machine, but the operator should be able to safely rig up a trigger lock of some sort, if used in conjunction with a no-volt release switch, for router table use.

Apart from the main power switch the router proved fairly hassle free to operate for a variety of routing tasks, providing satisfactory results.

The rotational dust extraction facility works reasonably well and cutter changing proves straightforward — thanks to a decent spindle lock.

There is a fair amount of play between the router's main body and plunge columns, but this doesn't seem to effect accurate plunging too unduly

and once the excellent plunge lock lever is engaged, the router remains well locked into its working position.

Erbauer certainly does provide a lot of router for surprisingly little money and this model could prove to be a fairly good budget conscious option for the occasional to moderate user.

Specifications

Power	1650W
Collet Size	1/4" & 1/2"
Plunge depth	60mm
Variable speed	10000 – 24000rpm
Weight	6.8kg

Verdict An economically priced rough diamond

Price £99.99 (inc VAT)

Contact Screwfix Direct Tel 0500 41 41 41

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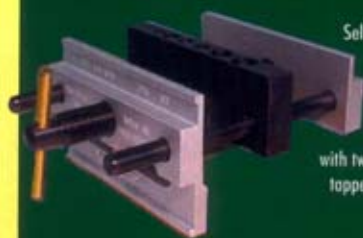
Drums available: Standard chuck mounted, Spindle moulder, Mini and Oscillating models.

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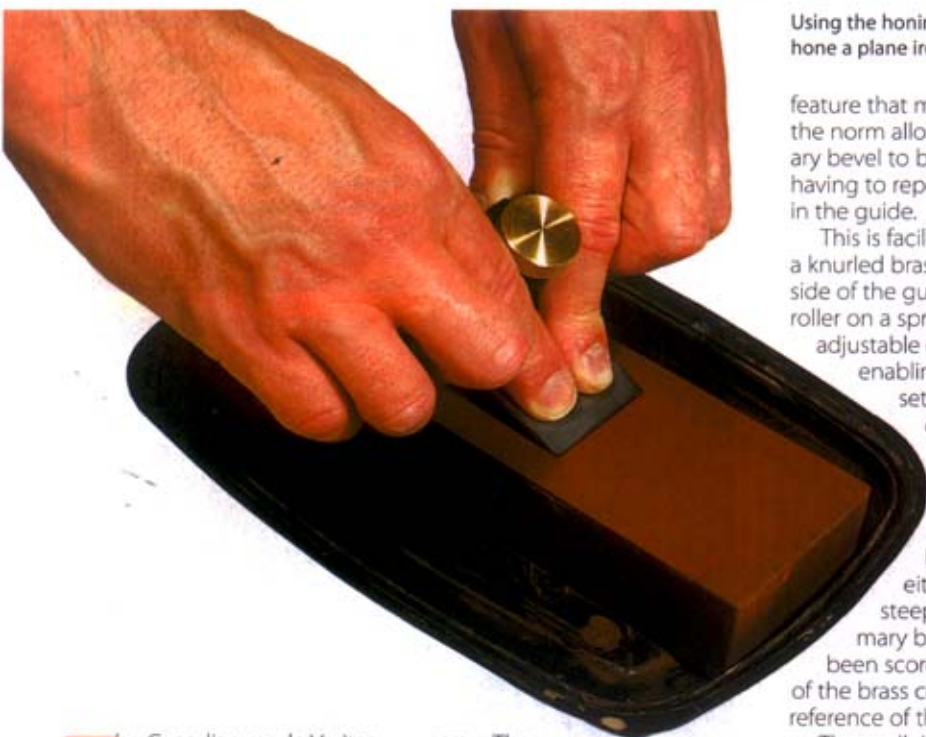
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Veritas Sharpening System



Using the honing guide to hone a plane iron

feature that makes it differ from the norm allowing the secondary bevel to be honed without having to reposition the blade in the guide.

This is facilitated by turning a knurled brass knob set to the side of the guide that alters the roller on a spring-loaded adjustable camshaft, enabling the roller to be set at one of three different heights.

This has the effect of allowing a secondary micro bevel to be honed at either 1° or 2° steeper than the primary bevel. A notch has been scored into the end of the brass control for ready reference of the roller height.

The tool's instructions include a little table of bevel angles and to what degree the secondary bevels will be formed by the position in which the control is set.

I successfully flat ground the

primary bevels of a selection of plane and chisel blades. It takes just a couple of seconds to turn the control so that the guide is set for honing the secondary bevel. I wasn't sure about the wisdom of making my secondary bevels only a degree or too steeper, but, to be fair, this seemed to work all right.

However, I decided that I preferred working my secondary bevels nearer to the normal 5° steeper and so I reset the blade in the guide with the aid of the angle jig. Due to the good design of the two tools, this took only a little longer to set.

Both the honing guide and the angle jig have been superbly engineered from aluminium, brass and steel. There's not one fragile plastic component to spoil the show and the satin black finish has been very well applied. Due to the excellent constructional quality and usefulness of these items of sharpening equipment, the initially seemingly steep price would appear to actually be money well spent.

The Canadian made Veritas Sharpening System is in actual fact a precision honing guide and angle jig.

It has been devised to enable both the primary and secondary bevels to be worked on regular bench plane irons and chisels up to 60mm wide and 16mm thick.

The five undersides of the angle jig's pentagon are each sloped to facilitate a blade, held in the honing guide, to be set so that its bevel will be honed at a precise angle (15°, 20°, 25°, 30° or 35°).

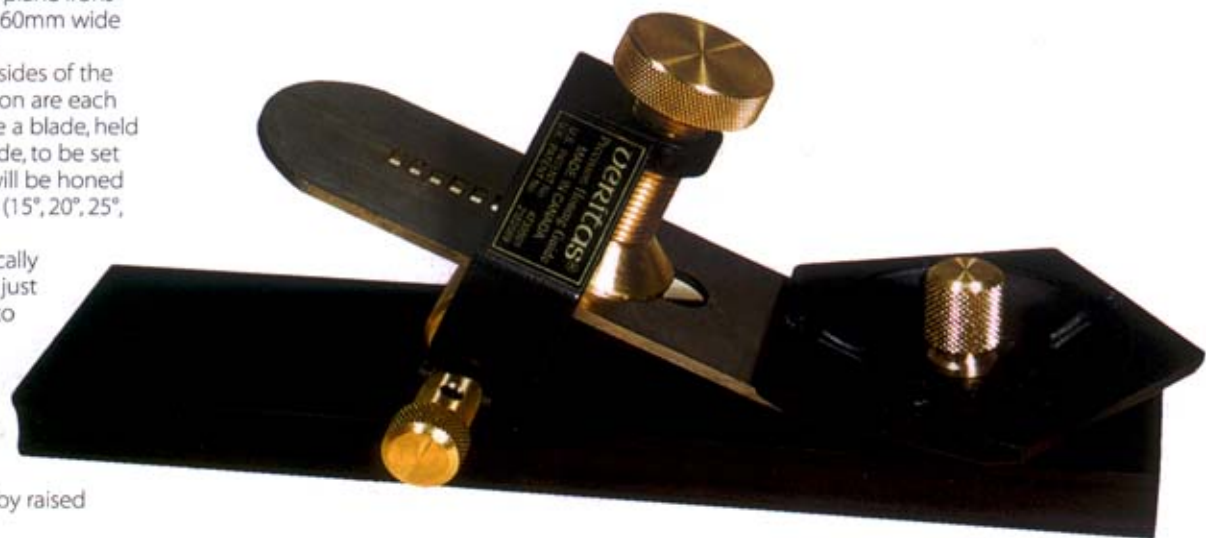
The ergonomically knurled brass nut just needs loosening to allow the pentagon to be rotated in order to select the appropriate angle — which is conveniently identified by raised numbers.

To set a blade in the honing guide the blade is loosely clamped and, with the guide's roller placed on the angle jig, the blade (bevel down) is offered up under the chosen side.

With the blade correctly aligned to the jig it is clamped secure in the guide by the rather butch looking locking

screw. The blade can then have its bevel ground on a bench stone.

In use, the honing guide works pretty much like any other regular roller guide. However it has one ingenious



The block plane iron, held in the honing guide and angle setting jig

Verdict

A top quality sharpening aid

Price

£30.75

Contact

BriMarc 01926 493389

Veritas Small-Blade Holder

It can prove a real trial to successfully and safely hold a spokeshave blade, and certain small plane irons, when they are being sharpened.

Fortunately, then, Veritas manufacture this natty small-blade holder that certainly makes this chore less of a hassle.

A blade is held in place by two very powerful rare-earth magnets and gripped by an adjustable stop block.

This has the practical effect of lengthening the blade by a tad over 100mm (4") making it easier to gain a more efficient handhold when honing free-hand.

However, the holder and blade may be readily fitted into the Veritas honing guide.

Consequently, the manufacturers have thoughtfully provided a screw and spacer, so that the pentagon of their angle jig may be raised to accept the thickness of the small-blade holder.

The holder is very well made and in use it does what it should: hold a small blade securely whilst it is being sharpened.

It works particularly well in conjunction with the Veritas sharpening system. So much so in fact, that I was able to



The blade holder, with spokeshave blade fitted, being set for sharpening with the Veritas sharpening system

produce a razor sharp edge to a Veritas low-angle spokeshave blade that unfortunately severely cut my finger when I was removing it from the holder.

However, the operator's clumsiness and stupidity was at fault here and not this useful little sharpening aid!

Verdict

Greatly complements the sharpening system

Price

£13.15

Contact

BriMarc 01926 493389

Win a starter tool kit

Traditional Woodworking has teamed up with Stanley to offer five lucky winners the chance to win a fantastic starter tool kit.

The kit includes a JetCut saw, a block plane and an 8m Leverlock measuring tape — a great start for your tool collection.

Stanley is a recognised and trusted industry name synonymous with quality and value, built upon a history of innovation, expertise and reliability. Since 1857, Stanley has produced some of the most innovative and famous products on the market, from the classic Stanley Knife to their new premium Fat Max range.



For your chance to win one of these fantastic kits simply put your name, address and telephone number on a post-card and answer the following

question: What is the new Stanley premium range called? The first five correct answers pulled out of the hat will win one of these kits!



Makita

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Makita UK are proud to have sponsored Lee Fawcett throughout the competition and are very happy to announce that he has now won a Gold Medal at the World Skills Championship 19th-22nd June 2003

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More power for Makita

Makita has improved the battery power and therefore the tool operating duration of its powerful 24volt power tools.

The 24v range includes the high torque Marathon combi drills, the SDS+ rotary hammer, the 200Nm-torque half-inch drive impact wrench and the versatile compound mitre saw.

Now the batteries of these tools have been upgraded from 3 amp/hour to 3.3 amp/hour.

The 24v range is usually supplied with a 3.3Ah battery and a separate 2Ah battery (previously 1.7Ah) for maximum all-day working. This upgrade adds more than 12 per cent usable working time to this popular tool range.



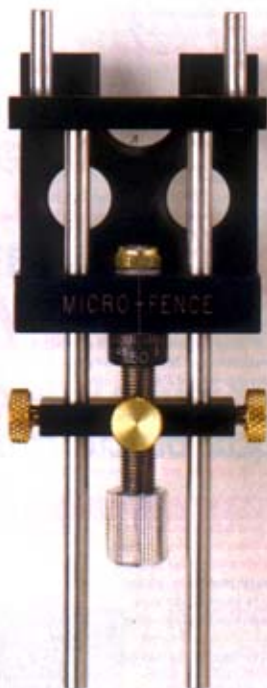
BriMarc adds to range

BriMarc has been appointed the exclusive UK agents for a product that helps turn your hand held router into a precision milling machine for straight line, circular and elliptical woodworking applications.

The Micro Fence Edge Guide System has been designed for serious woodworkers and cabinet makers and has a built in micrometer. This makes the edge to cutter distance setting easy, fast and precise.

The new addition coincides with the launch of the new catalogue which should be attached to this copy of *Traditional Woodworking!*

If you would like more information about this product call 01926 836906 or e-mail sales@brimarc.com.



Spectra Tool's vices are a virtue

Two vices designed to hold small pieces of work are being sold by Spectra Tools.

Firstly, the Vacuum Vice mounts onto any flat surface with an easy lock handle to ensure that it is secure. It weighs 2.8lbs and is 8" tall so it is a fully portable vice. However, it is made from cast aluminium and has V groove steel jaws.

Secondly, the Hobby Vice is made from plastic so it won't rust and also stands at 8" tall.

Both vices have a 360° swivel action, 180° tilt action and removable rubber clamps.

If you would like to know more about the Spectra Tools range visit www.spectratools.co.uk.

Cutters from Down Under

A range of Australian manufactured router cutters have been launched on the UK market.

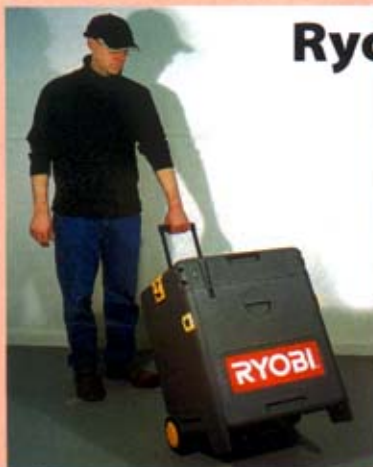
South Wales based Data Powertools will now supply the range which consists of over 200 different profiles including solid carbide and replaceable tip cutters.

You can order them via mail order and a catalogue is available by calling Data on 0845 2300299.

Ryobi winners

The lucky winners of our Ryobi competition were: R Wilson of Droitwich Spa, Mike Bevan of Pembrokeshire and Michael Holt of Shoreham by Sea.

Congratulations and may hope you have many years of woodworking happiness with your new Take Five kit!



Stanley nailing solution

Stanley Bostitch Fastening Solutions has introduced another new nailer.

The product is said to be ideal for wood panelling, cabinet construction, fencing, mouldings and trim work, plywood castings and even sheet flooring.

It is a lightweight, magnesium bodied stapler with a quiet exhaust and an easy to load magazine. For further information on Stanley products call 0114 276 8888.





D & M TOOLS TWICKENHAM

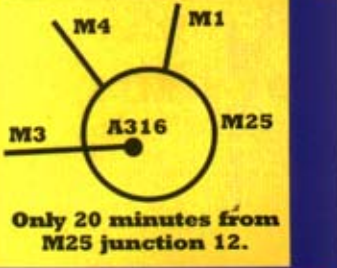
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Text: Norrie Dinning
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Shaker step chest

I believe the next best thing to making a piece from recycled timber is to utilise pieces from one's oddments box. In this case it was bits of oak.

The chosen piece was a Shaker step chest which is a well known and well documented item from a long list of Shaker furniture pieces. I have to admit to being a bit of a Shaker furniture addict.

As a project it is a relatively simple and straightforward exercise for the router, biscuit jointer and bandsaw. Of course some readers may prefer the more traditional hand tool approach.

However Shakers were not slow to absorb mechanised

methods alongside hand tools where possible.

The notion to make a step-chest followed one of my trips to New York to visit my off-springs. Whilst there we made a trip to the Shaker museum at Old Chatham as I have already done all the usual tourist spots on previous trips.

After receiving a few domestic hints that the upper shelves of our oak kitchen cabinets were not getting any easier to reach I armed myself with a few photographs, a list of measurements supported by a healthy workshop library and I set about formalising the details into a simple scale drawing.

The fact that I was using an assortment of oak pieces meant that I would have to first run them through my thicknesser and rely heavily

on my biscuit jointer.

This was necessary in order to make up the requisite number of panel components necessary for the project.

I am sure readers who will be buying their timber in the normal way will find it more straightforward and less dependent on biscuit jointing or cleating — but it is more of a challenge if you go down the oddments road.

With the drawing completed and the timber sorted I began with the thicknesser to make my oddments 18mm thick with the exception of what would be the front and back panels.

These two pieces were reclaimed from an old damaged magazine rack but were 15mm thick. A point I should make clear at this juncture is that the original step-chest I

It is a relatively simple exercise for the router, biscuit jointer and bandsaw



Working out how many biscuits for the first step

viewed was made entirely from 15mm timber.

I used 18mm in the main for my interpretation as I was aiming for a slightly more robust outcome.

Another point that might bear consideration would be to extend the first step by as much as 25mm. The reason for this arose after completing the step-chest and a feeling that the extra gives a more comfortable feeling when stepping onto it. Far be it for me to meddle with the Shaker design but that's how it struck me.

It was time to start by cutting each panel piece to length on the compound saw and then mark up the positions for the biscuit joints.

The biscuit size was 20.

When marking the positions of the biscuit joints do make allowances for where the curves are positioned so as to avoid biscuits appearing in any of the four curves you will be cutting.

The two ends were from two pieces glued up with the aid of my one and only pair of four-way clamps.

The other two panels (first step and second step) were glued with the usual combination of a pair of sash cramps but held flat with a F clamp.

With the three panels glued up it was necessary to give them each a light planing to achieve a smooth, flat surface followed by a few power sandings to boot.

The first stage was to cut to size the two ends from the relevant panel.

The marking up of the 80mm radius to form the feet was done with a compass (a good sized tin often does the job).

The next step is to draw the front curve. This was done with the aid of a 300mm diameter disc that I had to hand, here again a paint tin might do the job. I would advise at this stage marking up the first step rebate, the front panel rebate and finally the back panel rebate.

Routing should be done before considering the band-sawing of all four curves to ease the clamping of the guide bars or side fences.

After the rebates are completed the curves can be quickly despatched via the



One of the two recycled pieces varnish being dry scraped

bandsaw or the trusty old coping saw.

I would advise giving the curved surfaces a thorough bobbin sanding to give a good smooth result.

Another item of routing that is required is a 12mm rebate groove on the underside of the hinge bar, this allied to the extra strip already glued to the underside gives a strong resistance to any strain

from hinging of the second step lid.

With the two ends routed and cut the next stage is to cut to size the first step ensuring that the back edge stops against the back panel. The step has a 12mm groove rebate routed so it can take the front panel.

Now it is the turn of the front and back panels to be carefully cut to size.

Cutting list

All dimensions in mm

Component	No.	Measurements	Notes
All oak			
End panels	2	18 x 280 x 260	(To have a sloped front add 10mm = 270mm)
First step	1	18 x 350 x 248	(To extend step add 25mm)
Front panel	1	12 x 350 x 160	
Back panel	1	12 x 350 x 160	
Hinge bar	1	18 x 38 x 394	
Hinge bar support	1	18 x 18 x 336	
Top step	1	18 x 128 x 394	
Brass coated butt hinges	2	50	
Brass coated hook and eye	1		

Step-by-step... Step-by-step... Step-by-step...



Giving one of the four curves a sanded finish



Routing the front panel rebates



Cutting the front curved edge. Note the first step and panel rebates

In my case, as mentioned earlier, I had sourced these panels from timber taken from an old badly damaged piece of furniture.

I dry scraped the old varnish (I don't like using chemical strippers) which was followed by a thorough sanding.

The main carcass components ready (the two ends, the first step plus the front and back panels), it's time for the essential dry assembly to ensure everything fits neatly, especially as this forms the main structure that one will be standing on.

If everything fits correctly it's time to glue up the carcass, at this stage I opted to add the previously mentioned extra strip under the hinge bar

inside the chest and I glued the hinge bar last.

With the step-chest carcass completed it only remained to fit the hinged second step's lid.

I chose to use simple brass coated butt hinges.

I used a simple brass coated hook and eyelet to lock the top step lid to the chest back panel. I had considered a form of hasp but failed to source a suitable one.

No doubt more imaginative readers will have a better option than I had.

The finishing process is with six coats of finishing oil, each brushed on and gently wiped down with the usual lint free cloth and allowed to dry.

When applying the fifth

coat I also gave it a light wet and dry sanding and wipe clean as this gives a smooth finish.

A few days later when it was thoroughly dry I used a little beeswax polish coupled with ample elbow grease which gave a pleasant sheen to the finish.

A final check, if you choose to use it as a shoe tidy, is to ensure it will accommodate the household's shoe polishing kit.

Now these upper cabinet shelves are no longer an access problem!



Step-by-step... Step-by-step... Step-by-step...



LEFT - Yes, another dry assembly after cutting the front curved edges

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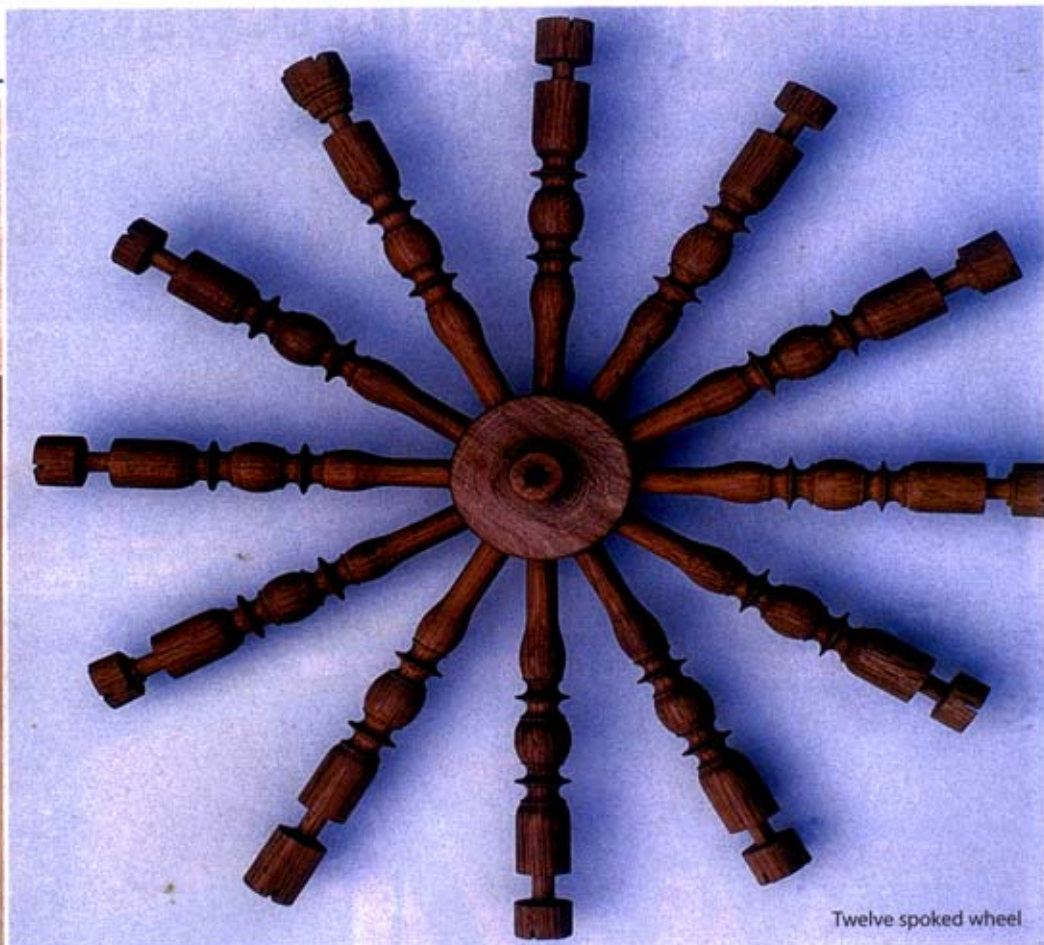
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Tool rest guide bush jig



Index jig components



Twelve spoked wheel

Hub indexing jig

Sometimes in our workshop we wish to drill holes round the circumference of a wood cylinder in regular incremental steps.

How you do this depends to a degree on how accurate you want the end result to be. If it is purely decorative for example, then so long as it looks right and accuracy is of secondary importance you might do it simply by marking and drilling by hand.

If the application is more critical, for example drilling a set of radial holes in the hub of a spinning wheel to fit the spokes connecting to the segmented rim, you need a better system of working.

One method of doing this is to use the indexing facility sometimes built into the headstock of a woodturning lathe, with an index pin pushed in to fix the spindle in position eg Myford ML8. Alternatively the

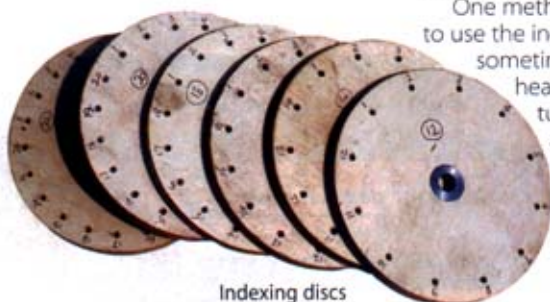
chuck itself can have a built in indexing arrangement in the form of a row of circumferential or tangential holes, for example an Axminster four jaw chuck.

Working this way where the index facility is part of the chuck, the locking pin arrangement is external to the headstock to fit into the chuck holes. This part you sometimes have to make up yourself to suit your lathe. The most common combination offered is a 24 hole index arrangement giving you options of 3, 4, 6, 8 and

12 circumferential holes, and this together with a drill guide jig makes it possible to machine radial holes in a cylinder in incremental steps.

However it is not uncommon for spinning wheels to have 10 or 14 spokes, or even odd combinations such as 7, 9 or 13 spokes, and for this you need to have a different way of working.

My jig design, which uses a bench drill, solves all that but for the time being let's look at the simple tool rest guide system to see what its limitations



Indexing discs



Axminster four jaw indexing chuck

are and how I moved on to something different.

Tool rest

Assuming your lathe has an indexing facility, all you need to accompany it is a drill guide so you can machine the holes.

The simplest arrangement is a small post set in the tool rest, fitted with a range of bushes to suit the hole size you need.

It's simple but it can be a little fussy to set up especially if you only have a single bed bar lathe.

The principal difficulties are checking alignment and squareness with the lathe centre line, which can be impeded due to the need for the jig to be set up close to the work piece.

The bush by its nature also has to have a clearance hole for the drill, and so unless you aim squarely with the power drill you could be angled marginally up or down and side to side.

So long as you are not too finicky it probably may not matter, but it is surprising what little error can make a job look unsightly.

Another aspect is that you can not practically use saw tooth drills, which give a nice clean cutting edge, since there is no shank to speak of as in an engineering drill to guide it through the bush.

Longer bushes will of course work much better with metal cutting drills. To minimise error the bush needs to be up as close the work piece as possible. But so long as you are aware of the jig limitations it will do the job.

Using engineering drills you need to run at slow speed as I am sure you know, otherwise they will just grab the wood and make an unholy mess. Fortunately power hand drills these days have a variable speed facility.

Bench drill

As I explained earlier, with the need to drill hubs sometimes to fit spokes that a lathe indexing system will not accommodate, together with the setting up errors of the tool rest guide bush system, I decided that I needed another jig. Mine is designed instead to fit a standard height bench drill.

The jig fits a 6" (150mm) two way vice and can be used to drill radial holes in hubs up to about 5" (125mm) long.

It will accommodate axle sizes between $\frac{1}{4}$ " and $\frac{1}{2}$ " (6-19mm), any spoke hole combination between 3 and 24 with certain exceptions such as 17 or 19 for example, and a hub diameter up to 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (120mm).

As an alternative to steel if you do not have metal working facilities the U-plates could be made of 9mm thick birch ply, and the index pin a turned wood cylinder with an $\frac{1}{8}$ " (3mm) steel pin fixed in with epoxy resin glue. The $\frac{1}{4}$ " diameter end and disc bushes could also be made of a hardwood such as box.

The principal parts of the jig comprise two steel vice U-plates and a variety of hub axles from $\frac{1}{4}$ " to $\frac{1}{2}$ " with screw nut fixtures and $\frac{1}{2}$ " (19mm) steel bushes.

Also needed are a range of plywood index plates. Mine have hole combinations from 12 to 22 in increments of two. By picking the right one you can drill any hole combination between these limits with the exception of 13, 15, 17, 19 or 21 holes.

If the need is there you can make up a new disc to suit an unusual combination. The weirdest one I came across on an old Swedish spinning wheel had 11 spokes and five rim segments. This seems to me making woodworking difficult!

Index discs

My index discs are 120mm diameter by 9mm thick birch ply with a $\frac{1}{2}$ " (19mm) centre hole into which are pressed tightly fitting steel bushes with varying hole sizes to suit different axle diameters.

The discs drilled with $\frac{1}{2}$ " (19mm) holes were packed tightly onto a wood mandrel fitted between centres on the lathe to clean up the perimeter. A computer program was used to draw a polar array with the required number of holes, which was then printed out and pasted centrally onto each disc.

To drill the index holes in one of the discs a bush with a $\frac{1}{4}$ " (6mm) axle hole was pressed in, and set up under the bench drill mounted on



Drilling index pin hole in front plate



Hub, axle and index plate bolted together



Fitted locking pin



Drilling the hub

steel rod gripped in the vice so it could be rotated.

The disc was turned incrementally and drilled with a 3mm (1/8") hole at each index point to suit the locking pin. Each disc was then marked for reference purposes.

As I mentioned earlier an alternative material to steel for the centre bushes could be boxwood.

Jig set-up

Before using the jig for real you have to set it up in the vice to check its functionality and finish the index pin setting. To initially set up the jig first unscrew the existing vice jaws and replace them with the pair of steel U-plates previously made.

Fit one of the axles up with 1/4" steel end bushes either end to drop into the U-slots, placing an index disc with its pressed in centre bush on the axle in between.

To fix the position for the index pin screw hole in the U-plate, first firmly clamp the index disc to the front plate in situ on its axle. Use two clamps as a minimum so it can't twist or turn.

Remove the axle and unscrew the front U-plate with the index disc firmly clamped to it from the vice jaws. Transfer the pair to the bench drill, and drill a pilot hole through one of the 3mm (1/8") index disc holes into the U-plate. Open up the pilot hole as necessary and tap this to fit the index pin screw.

Using the jig

Having previously machined the hub on a mandrel, the next step is to mount it on the bench drill jig.

Before you do this though check that your drill table is set

plum at 90° to the drill centre-line. If you don't do this you might as well revert to using the lathe guide bush system!

Fit the hub onto the desired axle together with the index disc and its centre bush, to suit the number of radial holes you require. Add on the thick end washers, 1/4" (19mm) end bushes and screw the assembly tight together with its nuts.

Drop the assembly into the vice previously fitted up with the new U-plates. Fit a drill to suit the spoke holes and then align this transversely with the middle of the U-plate slot and longways to the middle of the hub.

Screw the index pin in the U-plate through into one of

the index disc holes and tighten up the vice jaws to clamp the whole assembly. Now drill your first hole. Loosen the vice slightly so you can unscrew the index pin and turn the hub assembly round to the next disc hole.

Remember — if you are using, say, the 14 hole index disc to produce a seven spoked wheel — to index round by two holes each time. Tighten up and drill the second spoke hole and so on until you have all holes drilled. Unscrew the hub assembly and fit up the spokes. If all goes to plan you should produce a hub with seven spokes.

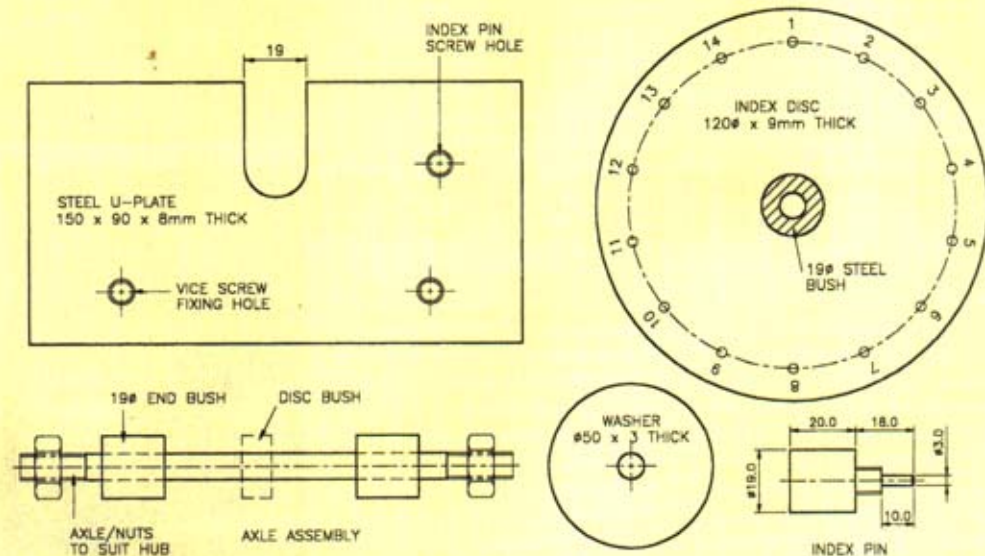
If you want instead to

make a hub with 12 spokes fit this up instead with the 12 hole index plate and repeat the procedure just described.

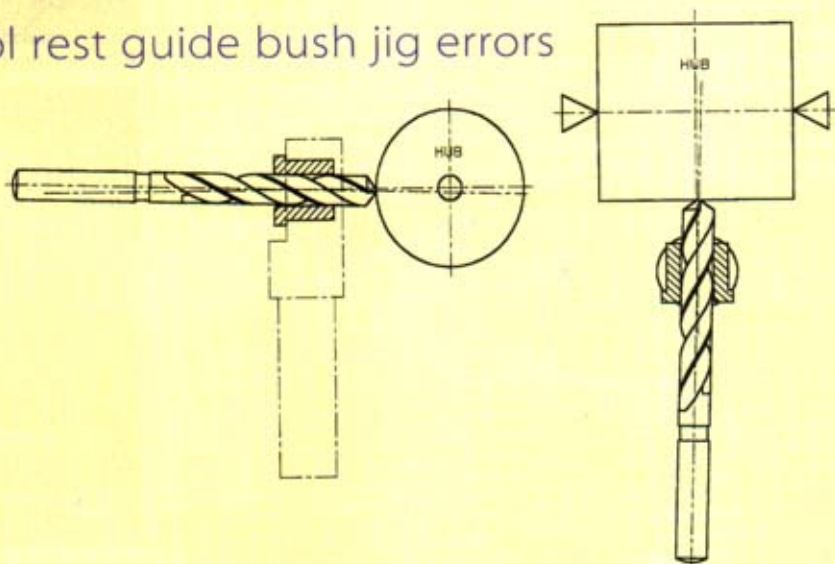
So there you are, a handy jig for drilling wheel hubs with incremental radial holes. You might have to alter it here and there to suit your particular bench drill but that's no problem.

But what, you may ask, should you do if you want to drill incremental holes in a plain wood cylinder without a central hole — that is, not for a wheel hub — or maybe a rather long wood cylinder that this jig will not accommodate? Oh well it's back to the drawing board and another jig I suppose.

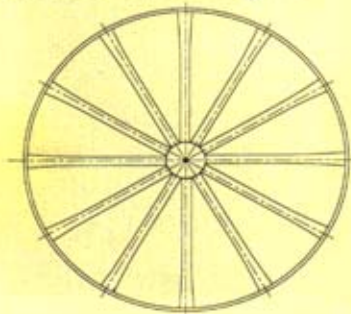
Details of U-plate, axle & index pin



Tool rest guide bush jig errors



Spinning wheel spoke offset drilling error



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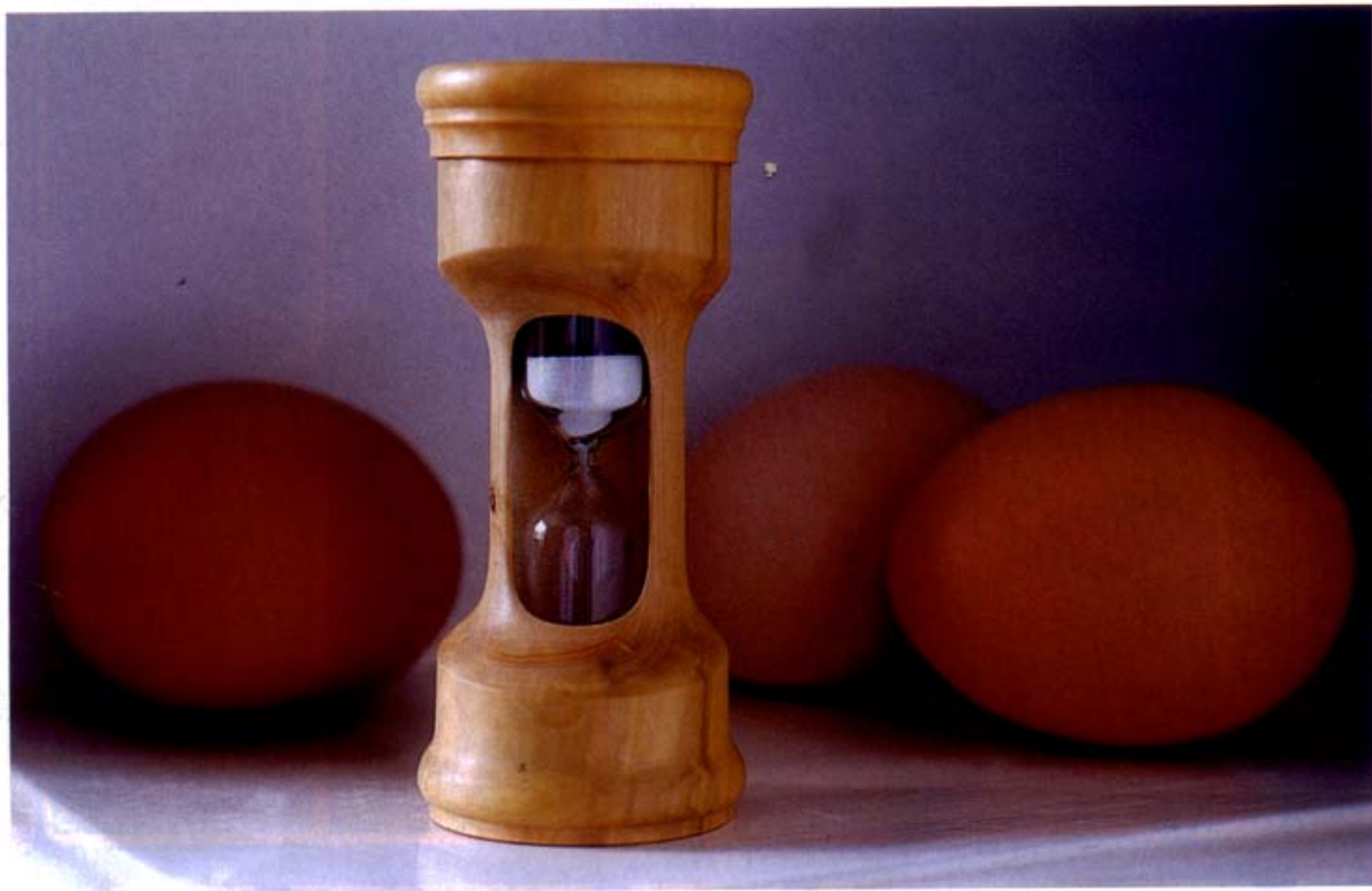


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Text and pictures: Chris Child

Egg timer

Boxwood, with its dense creamy textured grain, is one of my favourite turning woods and it is the only wood in which I have been able to form threads with any level of consistency. The tree is very slow growing and it is rare to find a piece of seasoned stock wider than 4cm which is free from heart splits.

That is why this little egg timer, with its threaded lid and fine mouldings, makes such an ideal project from this timber.

To make this egg timer frame, you will need a section of dry boxwood about 10cm by 4cm. Mount this between centres and turn it to a cylinder and square off the ends so that

the section can be glued directly to a circular plate of plywood.

It is best to do this the day before, so that you can use a slow setting but very strong epoxy which can then be left overnight to set.

Attach the disc to a face-plate with four screws and then mount this on the lathe. Form a shallow recess in the end of the cylinder using, first a small round scraper to remove the majority of waste, followed by a square scraper to cut out the square corner.

Threads

You do not need to make your egg timer with a threaded lid, but a threaded joint will certainly be a refinement worth carrying out if you have the necessary equipment.

A thread allows for the sep-

arate components to be firmly held together, without the need for glue and enables the work to be easily dismantled if the glass mechanism needs to be replaced for any reason.

Thread chasing tools are supplied in sets of two, one for making the internal thread and the other for the external and are sized depending on the number of teeth per inch. For boxwood I use chasers with 20 threads to the inch.

If you have never done thread chasing before, you will need to practice some threads along the side of the work-piece where the wood is going to be removed. Once you have developed the necessary dexterity by creating few trial lengths of external thread, you will then be much better prepared to tackle the real thing.

In the corner of the recess



The block on its off-centring chuck

cut a 2mm gap using the side cutting parting tool.

This space is for the thread chaser to work into at the completion of its thread cutting run. Without it, the nose of the cutter would strike the roof of the lid and mince up the threads. You will need to set the speed of the lathe to around 200rpm and set the height of the toolrest so that, when the thread chaser is held horizontally, the teeth lie 2mm or 3mm above the centre.

Make sure that your toolrest is clean and apply a little oil or candle wax to lubricate the surface. Start the thread by holding the chaser with two or three teeth lightly pressed against the corner of the recess and brush the threads against the wall of the recess. At first you will need to feed the tool across, but as soon as a thread begins to form, the tool will be drawn forward by the spiralling thread.

As soon as the thread begins to form, stop the lathe and check that there is a single thread, (one with a single start) and not a double or triple, which occurs when you feed the tool too quickly across. As the thread gets deeper you can press sideways, so that the teeth of the chaser dig deeply into the threads. I hold the tool right at the end nearest the teeth, to maximize my sense of touch and generate a rhythmic elliptical movement with my fingers.

When you have formed the teeth to the full depth of the chaser, (which you may need to check with a strong light and magnifying glass) use some abrasive nylon matting

to rub some wax into the threads. This will take off any sharp corners and lubricate the threads. Use a fine parting tool to part the lid off.

Base

To make the thread on the base of the frame, cut a rebate on the corner of the body, so that the projected section is 1mm wider than the diameter across the threaded recess in the lid. Cut an end space for the chaser to work into, using a narrow parting tool.

Start the cut with a very gentle sideways pressure on the chasing tool. Once you feel the first signs of a thread forming, let the tool run along by itself. As the thread develops you can press the chaser quite hard into the threads, while allowing it be pulled freely along by the deepening thread. Several passes with the thread chaser will be required before the lid will screw successfully home.

Bore the hole for the glass mechanism using a sharp saw toothed centre. Test that the hole is deep enough by screwing the lid on with the mechanism inside. It's nice if the glass is held perfectly in place, but don't worry if there is a bit of slack, because you can always pack out the hole with a little ball of Blue-Tac.

Remove the mechanism and screw the lid back in place before turning the outside shape of the frame with various mouldings and decorative detail. One of the advantages of boxwood is that you don't need to use any sophisticated turning techniques with slice cutting tools — you can form wonderfully clean detail simply by using small scrapers.

To form the window in the frame, through which the glass mechanism can be viewed, you will need to perform a bit of off-centre turning. Three of the four screws that hold the plywood

disc to the faceplate are removed and then replaced after the work has been moved over slightly.

Chamber

Use a small bowl gouge to cut through the side of the timer frame so that you expose the hollow chamber which holds the mechanism. Work down from each side of the hollow taking delicate cuts with the gouge so that the work does not become dislodged from the plate.

It is best to trim the window surround and sand the work-piece by hand to avoid trapping fingers in the opening. After applying a coat of oil or wax polish to the work, it can be parted off in the usual way, leaving a small amount of waste on the plywood disc.

The parted off surface will require a little hand finishing to bring it up to the same finish as the rest of the egg timer frame.



Scrape a shallow recess in the end



Cut the gap at the end of the thread run



Start cutting the tread



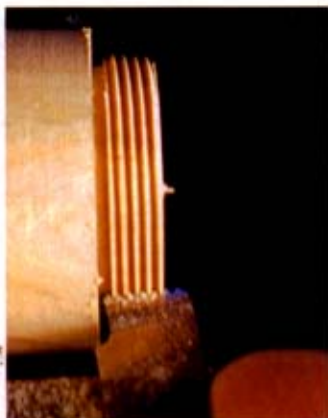
At the end of the thread run...



...lift the the thread chaser out of the thread



Part of the lid



Chase a thread at the top of the frameA



Test that the lid screws on



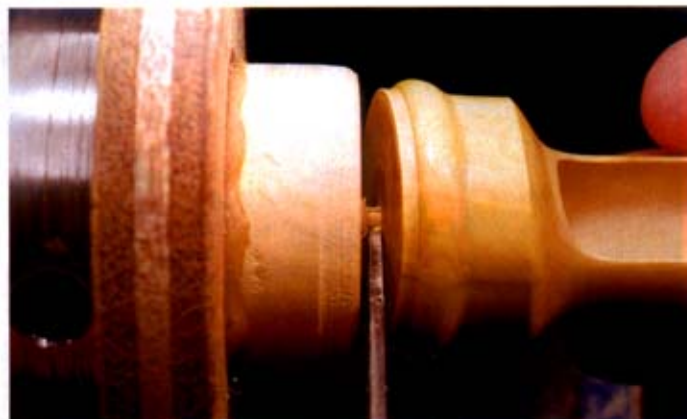
Form the moulding on the side of the lid



Bore out the hole which houses the mechanism



Turn part of the frame away to form a viewing window



Part off the finished frame

HET

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Basic woodcarving techniques



Text: Norrie Dinning
Pictures: Steve Taylor and
Norrie Dinning

After many years enjoying my woodcarving I was surprised to find how daunting many woodworkers viewed it.

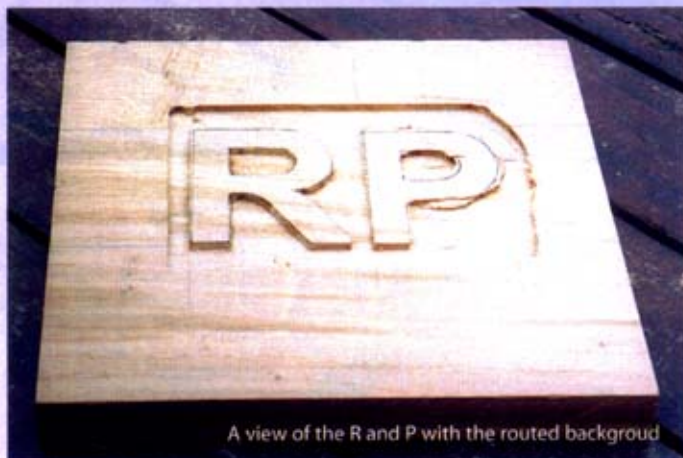
The full extent of this became evident when I undertook some teaching of basic techniques to some beginners.

I have of course made reasonable assumptions that I don't have to go into how to sharpen chisels or cut wood to any great extent (but if you need to know you can turn to page 64 for the first instalment of our new tool sharpening series).

A useful starting exercise is to carve a bowl (not a round one of course), this will help you to get the feel of gouges.

A bowl like the one pictured is a bit big probably, a straight 18mm gouge plus a 14mm curved gouge will be all you need.

The curved gouge is to give you access down into the bowl, the outer profile is gouged and finished with a rasp and powered sanding.



A view of the R and P with the routed background



A modest selection of chisels, mallets and clamps



Defining the cut of the angles into the corners from the centre line

The carving of lettering and chipcarving decoration I feel is wrongfully viewed by many experienced woodcarvers as a poor cousin to sculptural woodcarving.

My task in this article will be to firstly allay the fears of woodworkers and attempt with the aid of photographs to open new horizons and hopefully put some things right.

Naturally within the limits of one magazine article this not intended as a complete treatise on woodcarving but is merely an introduction to basic methods and techniques employed.

If some readers are keen to extend their knowledge there are books on the subject or better still they can undertake lessons.

You can find information on various courses in the diary section of this and subsequent issues.

The applications I will cover

will be lettering and chip carving as a decorative feature used in furniture. I will also give an indication of what is entailed in tackling two dimensional work such as plaques and house signs.

I can assure you that you will gain a great sense of satisfaction from making these items provided you are prepared to be patient and fully determined to succeed.

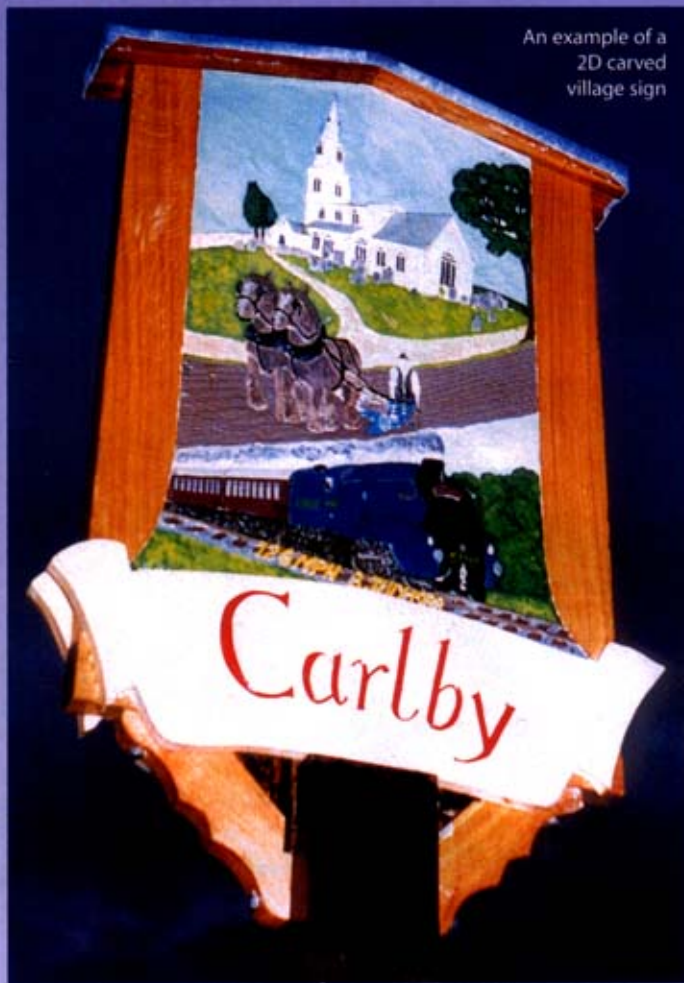
The first stage is to outline what minimum tools and equipment are required plus a few extras (see Equipment).

Incised lettering

The first problem facing the beginner is how to create the necessary lettering. I don't advocate acquiring the typefounder's art but simply turn to your computer or that of a good friend.

Set the required wording as large as possible for example 72pt.

Then have your local copy



An example of a 2D carved village sign



Lettering cut and painted for a church noticeboard



The three stages of carving a 2D piece



The curved lines are dealt with in a similar manner but with a shallow curved gouge as near to the curve as possible, letters such as an R, B or a P are a little more difficult owing to the tight curves



Garden bench with dedicated incised carving of letters and stylised honeysuckle

shop enlarge it to at least 50mm high for the purpose of this exercise.

This method will produce lettering ideal for a house name sign. For house numbers I would suggest digits about a minimum of 100mm high.

I would respectfully suggest avoiding a serif face first time around but would agree that they are more aesthetically pleasing.

I should explain the two most popular typeface groups are sans serif — which refers to the fact that there are no fine tails at the top and bottom of each letter — and serif typefaces which do have the fine tails (I have included examples of these but I am using a bold face to make things a little easier).

The two types of carved lettering are incised and relief. I always feel the incised is the more attractive but the choice is yours.

To start the proceedings align your enlarged letter (a point often made in wood-carving is that the larger it is the easier it is) squarely to your piece of oak and tape it down securely left and right.

Now insert a piece of office type carbon paper often referred to as OTC (one time carbon). A better alternative is a solvent coated carbon paper often found in duplicate books as it can be used over and over again (available from office supply outlets).

With the carbon in place

carefully trace the outline of your lettering with a fine H pencil or a ball point pen. You should go over the resulting image with an HB or B pencil to ensure you retain the image.

This same practise is used to transfer patterns onto parts of furniture in preparation for chip carving.

Now, as a support, draw a centre line throughout each letter, the reason for this will become evident as you progress into cutting your letters.

With your piece of oak firmly clamped to your bench or table it's time to start cutting.

Cutting

The first stage of cutting is to hold your 16mm No 1 chisel vertically on the straight section of the centre line and strike it firmly to a depth of approximately 3mm.

However, make sure to stop short at each end by about 3mm to allow the angle cutting at the corners.

The curved lines are dealt with in a similar manner but with a shallow curved gouge as near to the curve as possible, letters such as an R, B or a P are a little more difficult owing to the tight curves, hence my use of them to illustrate the techniques.

This will be the same approach for both serif or sans serif types of lettering. At this stage the outline cutting of the letters can get underway.

Starting with the straight sections with the 16mm No1 cut from the outside into the centre line at an angle of 52/55° (this is to help make a wedge and can be used for alignment) ensuring a firm but consistent strike.

Overlap each cut to allow for a clean smooth surface. When one side is cut the other side obviously follows ensuring a fine V line of approximately 4mm deep is formed at the centre.

The same approach deals with the curved section except that the gouges come into play and more care will be needed to minimise tool cut ridges so ensure careful overlapping of each cut.

The slightly more difficult part is carving the inner curves owing to the tighter radius, but a little care and patience will see you through.

To tackle the ridges that result in the early stages of your efforts it's best to deal with them by hand held cuts (no mallet) and gently pare



A hand gouged bowl with with a carved and poked celtic border decoration

the ridges to smooth them out. The use of an emery finger board will clean the surface reasonably well.

When the straight and curved V sections are complete this just leaves the ends

to cut. Select your 4mm No 1 chisel and hold over the V valley at a angle of 45° with the corner of the cutting edge gently piercing the point where the V ends.

Pivot the cutting edge until it meets the top edge of the letter. You need to do this on both sides.

The same chisel is now used to cut the top edge chip by cutting at 55°. However, enter the cut with the corner of the cutting edge downwards to meet your V (this is one of these situations where a picture is worth 1,000 words).

If you haven't quite managed a clean cut each point of the serif letters your scalpel can come to readily to your aid allowing you to clean up said point. The scalpel can often reach where a chisel cannot.

The V gouge can often be used for the purpose of cleaning.

The cutting of the fine copper plate script style, whilst it is very attractive, may prove a bit awkward and this is where patience and practice is called for.

It is the province of the V gouges and calls for steady mallet control and a firm hold of the chisel whilst following the line of the letters.

Sometimes owing to the grain direction of the timber it

helps to cut from both directions, much as you would if you were doing a piece of calligraphy.

In the early stages of doing script lettering I would suggest using lime timber as it is a little softer and cuts much easier than oak.

You can tidy up your cutting with the scalpel and a suitable riffler file until you have gained a practised finish, which in time will come.

Relief lettering

The approach for relief lettering is quite different to incised lettering in terms of cutting the letter outline.

Essentially your aim will be to cut away the background areas to a consistent depth of probably about 4mm.

The most effective way to do this is to use a router with straight cutters and of widths to suit the space inside and outside your letters.

To outline your panel area I would suggest a side fence plus a guide bar where relevant. Then it is free hand routing as close as possible to the outline of the letters and the inside bits.

The final detailing of the outline is done by cutting in a vertical position with your straight along the straight edges and your gouges for the curves.

Ensure that you are cutting



The early stages of carving a village sign

Equipment

- Basic set of carving chisels offered by many tool suppliers for example:

- 16mm No1 chisel

- 4mm No 1 chisel

- 10mm No 3 gouge

- 6mm No 9 gouge

- 16mm No 5 gouge

- 6mm No 39 V tool

- plus possibly a fishtail

- Scalpel (Swan Morton) No 3 with 10A blades

- Short and a long skew chip knife (useful for awkward corners and for cleaning up)

- A carver's mallet (I favour a tapered type).

- A few G or F clamps - probably a 150mm minimum capacity will suffice. Quick release type clamps are also very handy as you tend to turn the timber round to ease cutting angles. A bench hold-fast clamp is very useful

- A workbench or sturdy table. I also use an easel type arrangement combined with clamps designed for use with workmate type benches. I also use a heavy pedestal type bench with a couple of vices mainly for sculpture work

- Sharpening equipment eg traditional oil stone plus a leather strop (mounted on a block of wood) and coated with jewellers' rouge. A better option is a diamond sharpening stone - medium and fine. Also a 100mm diameter compound wheel to fit most grinders. Felt profile wheels equate to a rotary strop. In most woodworking activities chisels and knives have to have a very keen edge and be regularly stropped to maintain a mirror finish (see page 62)

- I would suggest a piece of oak about 25mm by 100mm by 300mm as a suitable piece of timber to start with. A general rule of thumb on choice of timbers is that if it is fruit or nut bearing you will be all right. That also goes for yew and holly. The most popular woodcarvers' wood for centuries has of course been lime, but only for indoor applications such as plaques and sculptures

to the same depth as you are routing. To gain a nice smooth background surface you can scrape the surface with your chisel held vertically and go with the grain.

It can sometimes be fitting to have a tooled background or indeed a punch textured background.

There are several styles of carvers' punches available, not unlike nail punches.

I should add that you will find it easier to start relief lettering with the sans serif bold type style.

The applications for carved lettering are quite numerous. I have used it to village signs, house signs, dedications on benches and furniture, village and church notice boards plus finger posts in parks and villages.

I am sure there are many more applications.

Chip carving

From carving letters the natural progression is to move onto furniture decoration which calls for much the same tool technique as lettering.

This should be researched

by looking at already carved pieces of furniture for ideas.

The list of tools (see Equipment) will be adequate for most of the requirements but be aware that you will find it necessary to extend your gouge and chisel range.

This in the main will be in the smaller sizes to the ones in the list amounting to a further 12.

These will mainly be the smaller gouges such as 2mm, 4mm No 11 plus much the same of No 9.

They should also include a couple of fishtail 6mm No 6's.

Simply take a rubbing of a section and trace it. Extend it by using repeated applications until it is to the desired length and carbon copy it onto your table edge, bowl or whatever.

Start with the mallet and chisel, your previous lettering experience will have taught you the technique required.

A suitable application is to decorate items such as jewellery boxes.

It will be obvious that furniture decoration has a fair amount of repetition but the result will be rewarding.

The more demanding requirements such as making the ball and claw feet on furniture legs is more in the field of three dimensional work.

The element from chip carving is an inbetween field of carving and a natural progression to two dimensional carving.

Examples such as you will find on plaques, coats of arms (heraldry) and village signs which are visibly popular in the Norfolk area and the county I live in (Northamptonshire).

The first problem I can hear is that of someone only being able to draw a straight line and even that is with the aid of a ruler!

Well if you approach it in the same way as the lettering that shouldn't be a problem. That being to pick a subject matter that you can trace from a photograph or an illustration that has been enlarged to your required size.

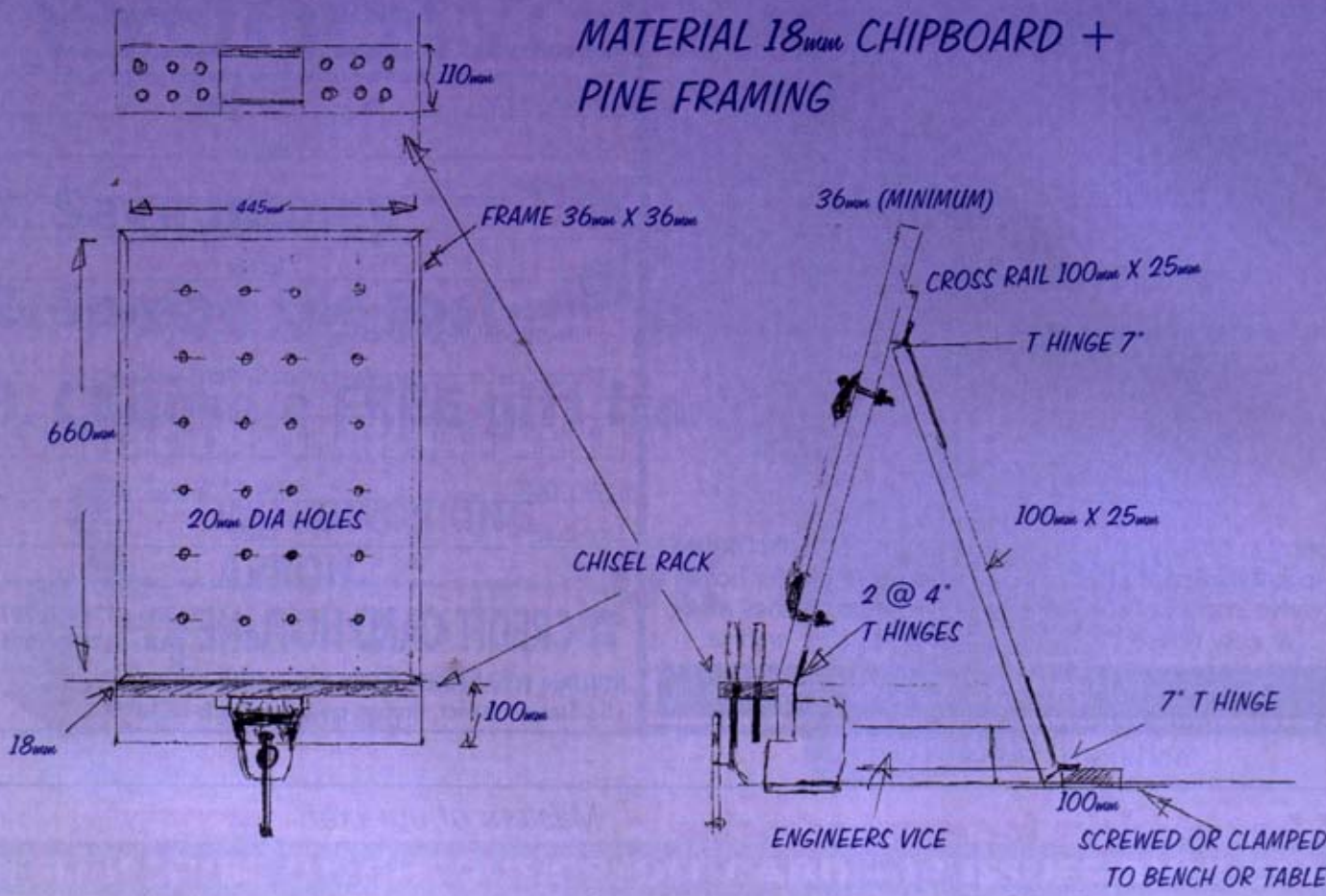
Then you simply transfer it to your piece of chosen timber and have a go with your mallet and gouge.

There you go, simple!

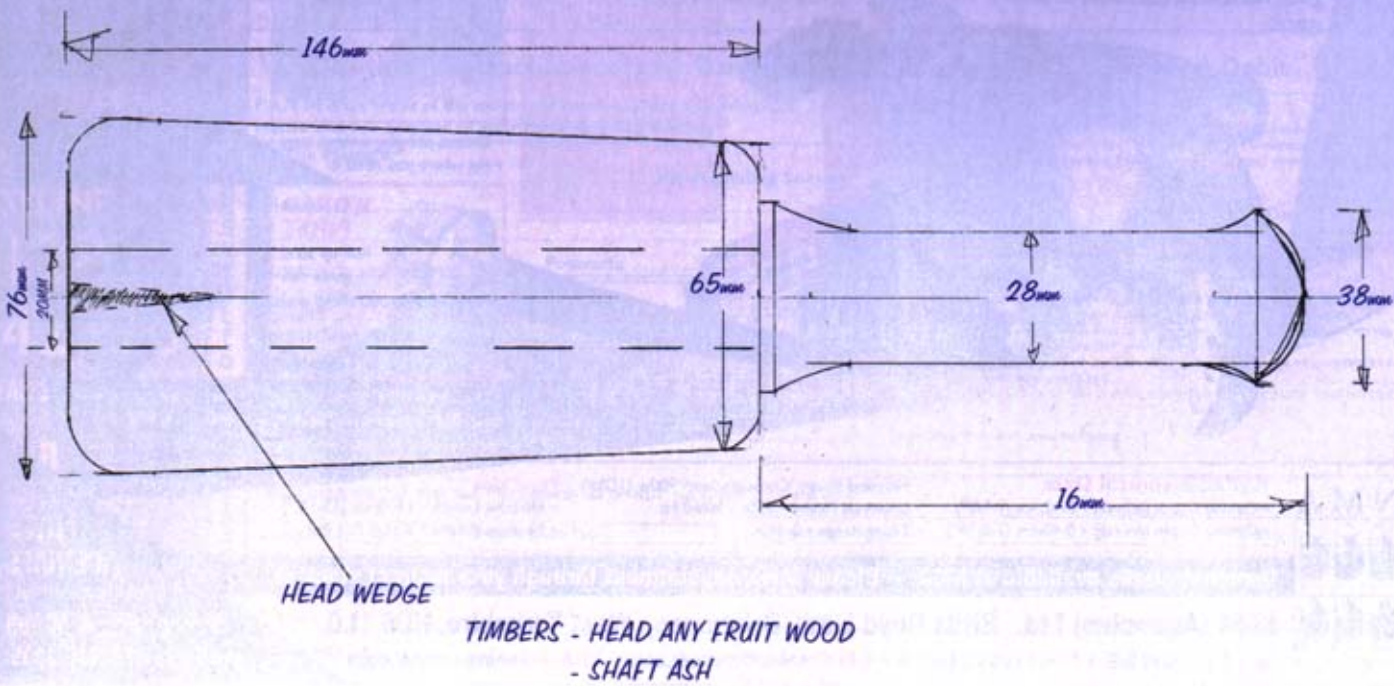


Example of three dimensional carving

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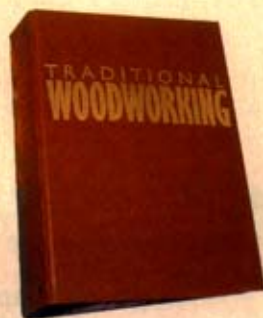
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Shropshire Association of Woodturners
Secretary: George Powell Tel: 01743 240661

6 September

Woodfinishing demonstration

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Boroughbridge Tel: 01423 322370.

6 September

Woodturning Demonstration

Yorks Woodcraft Supplies Tel: 01482 844200

6-7 September

Fangfest - Festival of Practical Arts

The Rocking Horse Shop
Fangfoss, York. Tel: 01759 368737

6-7 September

Hatfield Forest Wood Fair

Hatfield Forest, Takeley Tel: 01279 870 678

7-12 September

An introduction to making early woodwind instruments

West Dean College
Tel: 01243 811301 Tutor: Eric Moulder

7-12 September

An introduction to making traditional percussion instruments

West Dean College
Tel: 01243 811301 Tutor: Andy Butterworth

9-10 September

Powis Wood Fair

Powis Castle Estate Office, Welshpool
Tel: 01938 552554

11-13 September

Trend Machinery Demonstration

Grahams Machinery Sales, Chester
Tel: 01244 376764

12-13 September

Trend Machinery Demonstration

Alltools Ltd, Nottingham Tel: 0115 9881855

12-13 September

Worthing Woodcrafts Show

Northbrook College Theatre
Tel: 01903 216113

12-14 September

An introduction to woodturning

West Dean College
Tel: 01243 811301 Tutor: Eric Moulder

13 September

Woodturning demonstration

John Boddy's Fine Wood and Tools
Boroughbridge
Tel: 01423 322370.
Tutor: Tony Wilson

13 September

Woodturning demonstration

Robert Sorby, Turners Retreat,
Harworth, Notts Tel: 01302 744344

13 September

Woodturning demonstration

Robert Sorby, ASK, Wakefield Tel: 01924 440610

13 September

Woodturning demonstration

Bedford Saw & Tool Company
Tutor: Chris Stott, 9am-4pm Tel: 01234 359808

13 September

Woodfinishing demonstration

Keenleysides Mica Hardware
Tel: 01670 823133. Tutor: Stuart Mortimer

13-14 September

Annual Show

Shropshire Association of Woodturners
Dobbies Garden Centre Tel: 01743 240661

13-14 September

Woodturning Demonstration

Snainton Woodturning Centre
Barkers Lane, Snainton Tel: 01723 859545

13-14 September

Make your own pole lathe

Ashfield Woodworks Tel: 01728 685760

15 September

1-Day Routing Course

- Bill Powell
Isaac Lord Tel: 01494 835200

18 September

Ecological turning - Tony Caplin

Shropshire Association of Woodturners
Secretary: George Powell Tel: 01743 240661

19-20 September

Trend Machinery Demonstration

Lakedale Power Tools, Plumstead
Tel: 0208 8549894

19-20 September

Trend Machinery Demonstration

The Tool Store, 52-54 Bridge Street,
Christchurch, Dorset Tel: 01202 486240

19-21 September

Woodfair 2003

Bentley Wildfowl Centre Halland, Lewes,
Sussex Tel: 01825 840573

19-21 September

Fine furniture making, part 1 - an introductory course

West Dean College Tel: 01243 811301 Tutor:
Bernard Allen (must be booked with part
two which is being held on October 26-31)

20 September

Routing demonstration

John Boddy's Fine Wood and Tools
Boroughbridge Tel: 01423 322370.
Tutor: Ted Heathcote-Walker

20 September

Woodturning demonstration

Robert Sorby, WJT Woodcrafts, Alresford
Tel: 01963 735411

20-21 September

Pole lathe Turning - course

Country Chairs
Ferrers Centre for arts and crafts, Leics
Tel: 01332 864 529

20-21 September

Basket making - course

Country Chairs
Contact details as above

21-23 September

Buying and drying wood

West Dean College
Tel: 01243 811301 Tutor: Bernard Allen

22-26 September

5 Day chairmaking - course

Country Chairs
Contact details as 20 September

24 September

The Tool Shop - Auction

Cedars Hotel, Needham Road, Stowmarket
Tel: 01449 722992

24-26 September

Designing your own furniture

West Dean College
Tel: 01243 811301 Tutor: Bernard Allen

27 September

Woodturning demonstration

John Boddy's Fine Wood and Tools
Boroughbridge
Tel: 01423 322370. Tutor: Andy Lodge

27-28 September

Hurdle making - course

Country Chairs
Contact details as 20 September

28 September - 1 October

Picture Framing - hand decorated frames and mounts

West Dean College
Tel: 01243 811301 Tutor: Fay Boon

29 September

1-Day Woodturning Course

- Mick Hanbury
Isaac Lords Tel: 01494 835200

29-30 September

Countryside and Woodland Fair

Kingston Maurward College, Dorchester.
Tel: 01305 264620

3-4 October

Woodturning demonstration

Robert Sorby, Norfolk Saw Tel: 01603 898695

4 October

Woodturning Demonstration

Yorks Woodcraft Supplies Tel: 01482 844200

demonstrations ▼ history

4 October Woodfinishing demonstration

John Boddy's Fine Wood and Tools
Tel: 01423 322370. Tutor: Jim Kitson

4-5 October Woodturning demonstration

Robert Sorby, Timberwold, Horsham
Tel: 01403 250552

10-11 October Woodturning demonstration

Robert Sorby, Timberman, Carmarthen
Tel: 01267 232621

10-13 October Picture framing for complete beginners

West Dean College
Tel: 01243 811301 Tutor: John Hill

11 October Woodturning demonstration

Robert Sorby, Turners Retreat, Harworth
Tel: 01302 744344

11 October Woodturning demonstration

John Boddy's Fine Wood and Tools
Boroughbridge Tel: 01423 322370

11 October DeWalt day

Isaac Lord Tel: 01494 835200

11 October Woodturning Day

Peter Crisp department store, Northants
Tel: 01993 356424 www.petercrisp.co.uk

11-12 October Cleft ash gate hurdle - course

Country Chairs
Contact details as 20 September

11-12 October Build a shaving horse

Ashfield Woodworks Tel: 01728 685760

12-17 October Fine furniture repair and refinishing

West Dean College Tel: 01243 811301

13 October 1-Day Woodturning Course - Mick Hanbury

Isaac Lords Tel: 01494 835200

14 October 1-Day Carving Course - Mick Atkins

Isaac Lords Tel: 01494 835200

14-26 October Chelsea Crafts Fair

Chelsea Old Town Hall Tel: 020 7278 7700

15-16 October Trend Machinery Demonstration

SIA Agencies, Belfast Tel: 028 90246461

16 October Trend Machinery Demonstration

Kent Blaxill, Colchester Tel: 01206 216000

16 October Ladder back chairs demonstration - Ann Hayes

Shropshire Association of Woodturners
Secretary: George Powell Tel: 01743 240661

17-19 October Woodworking and Woodturning Show

National Agricultural Centre, Stoneleigh
Tel: 01322 660070

17-19 October Woodturning for beginners

West Dean College
Tel: 01243 811301 Tutor: George Karon

18 October Woodcarving demonstration

John Boddy's Fine Wood and Tools
Tel: 01423 322370 Tutor: Peter Berry

21-24 October Woodcarving in relief - free interpretation of birds and animals

West Dean College
Tel: 01243 811301 Tutor: Nicola Henshaw

25 October Woodturning demonstration

Keenleysides Mica Hardware
Tel: 01670 823133. Tutor: Ian Forster

25 October Upholstery demonstration

John Boddy's Fine Wood and Tools
Tel: 01423 322370 Tutor: Pauline Keenoy

25-26 October Woodturning Demonstration

Robert Sorby, Elmers. Tel: 01473 623381

27 October 1-Day Routing Course - Bill Powell

Isaac Lords Tel: 01494 835200

28 October 1-Day Combination Machine Course

Isaac Lords Tel: 01494 835200

30-31 October Annual Woodworking Show

Toolfix Services
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 - Carvers' mallets
 - Alcock pelmet
 - Walnut & sycamore caskets
- Features:**
- Real world woodworking
 - Cabinet scrapers
 - Router knife moulding
 - Woodwork on wheels
 - Routers on test

No. 140 JANUARY 2002

- Free:**
- Power Tool Quarterly
- Projects:**
- Extended exterior door
 - Adjustable ivorite gauge
 - Restored corner cupboard
- Features:**
- Oneiras exhibition
 - Buying saws
 - Lap joints
 - No. 7 plans on test

No. 139 DECEMBER 2001

- Projects:**
- Pine chest of drawers
 - Cabinetmaker's bench (pt 2)
- Features:**
- Softwood finishes
 - Celebrating boxes
 - Buying marking tools
 - Cabinet fittings (pt 2)
 - Exhibiting your work
 - Circular saws & guide rails on test

No. 138 NOVEMBER 2001

- Projects:**
- Cabinetmaker's bench (pt 1)
 - Homemade gauges
 - Fixed cabinet
- Features:**
- Dismantling dovetail housing joints
 - Mobile milling profile
 - Cabinet fittings (pt 1)
 - Jim Kingshott's masterpiece: Buying chisels
 - Dovetail saws on test

No. 137 OCTOBER 2001

- Free:**
- Power Tool Guide
- Projects:**
- Coffee table
 - Futon base
 - Morris armchair
- Features:**
- The BFM show
 - Jim Kingshott's masterpiece: Buying planes
 - More saws on test

No. 136 SEPTEMBER 2001

- Projects:**
- Japanese clothing cabinet
 - Rocking chair
 - Office furniture
- Features:**
- Through barefoot housing joint
 - Jim Kingshott's masterpiece: Buying the right tools
 - Cordless drills on test