

West Riding Woodcarvers' Association



May 2012
Newsletter Issue 206

Patron
Dr Ingrid M Roscoe
Lord Lieutenant of
West Yorkshire

Life members
Anne Hobson
Albert Hobson

Malcolm Cooper - Stickmaker and club member

The art of stick making isn't easy. There are angry, burly farmers to face when you're cutting down their blackthorn. There's the risk of a poisoned hand from one of the thorns. But worst of all, there's an extremely irate wife to pacify when you've just boiled up a few rams' horns and stunk out the entire house.

Malcolm Cooper's tales of stick making raised many a smile at the May meeting of the West Riding Woodcarvers.

But what was more awe inspiring was the sheer, dedicated craftsmanship and the wealth of experience that he shared with the audience. Malcolm reckons he's made about 350 sticks in the last ten years and now that he no longer shows the sticks, he singles them out with his own marker, a perfect, almost life-sized ladybird.

Malcolm explained in great detail how he selects and uses cows' horn for the handles of some of his sticks and, in particular, how he has learnt to choose and then straighten hazel or blackthorn for the stick itself.

Other stories about the shows, the people he has met and the way that trial and error has perfected his craft, kept the woodcarvers entertained.

He surely is a man of remarkable talent.

Anyway, despite the stick he gets from his wife (ouch!) he says she is his biggest fan. Aaah!

Janet F Smith, Assistant Secretary



Jubilee Handle



Note the club jumper and name badge - he's a credit to the club.

Shepley Meeting June 16th 2012. (Note not the second Saturday as normal)

We have the return of Michael Painter and the agreed programme is that he will demonstrate some form of carving, possibly a human hand, from when we start the meeting to about lunch time. Then, after a pie and pea lunch, he will take those interested through a practical carving workshop where Mike will demonstrate, for us to follow, how the 'Human Eye' is carved.

The photos alongside are an example of how the project should start and finish. Our usual technical guru, David Holt, will be on holiday but Margaret's husband, Jeff, has kindly stepped in to operate the video camera and projector.

Colin Pratley has very kindly taken on the task of locating some Jelutong and, after cutting out blanks of 4"x4"x3", he has band sawn out the blanks to the profile on the right and attached them to a 6" square MDF backboard to facilitate holding in a workmate. Our thanks to Colin for his time and Mike Painter for supplying the drawings.

We intend to again cover the whole floor with dust cloths before the meeting starts at 10:00am. It is suggested that members bring along with them their workmates and during the lunch interval we can set up for the afternoon session. A small number of chisels will obviously be needed to carve out the profile in the picture. We anticipate that the session will run until about 3:00pm.

Obviously, the Jelutong blanks, the pea and pie lunch and Michael's fee and transport costs don't come cheap, as we discussed at the last meeting but unanimously agreed that if we wanted top flight demonstrators and interesting meetings the cost is justifiable. With this in mind we shall again be charging £6 per member, and visitor, on the door for this extended meeting.

Could we please ask, as at previous extended meetings, that everybody rallies round and brings along items for the sweet course. I understand, from Adrian, that he has had a word with certain ladies so the kitchen should be fully manned.

I appreciate that we are in the holiday period but it would be nice to see a really good turn out for this meeting, although to be fair we usually do have a good response for every meeting irrespective of the content for that day.



July 14th: Mark Raby, who is a wood finishing demonstrator, possibly with Jo Sonja.
August 11th: Possibly a lady called Maria Blakeley who is a wild life photographer and a biologist. We are just trying to finalise details. (Introduced by Peter Keene.)

Carving classes. Everybody will agree that the life blood of the club is the classes that we provide for our members, and to help and encourage others who are interested in our craft. This is also the way we pick up the majority of our new members.

We are very fortunate that over the years we have run, very successfully, a number of these classes from school premises that are ideally equipped with wood working benches and related facilities. Regretfully, a couple of years ago, because of the CRB checking system, we were asked to leave our Huddersfield daytime base at All Saints School, Huddersfield and the class, organised and run through the officers of the Huddersfield U3A, re-located to the Birchencliffe Community Centre. Although grateful for their hospitality, the room and the lack of suitable benches and lighting make the premises far from suitable, which has now started to result in a serious downturn in student numbers.

Over the last few months, we have been in discussions with All Saints School regarding a return to our old classroom. Because of the relaxation of the CRB checking system, we have just been advised that they would be pleased to welcome our return to the school. A meeting has been arranged between Mike Hadfield, myself and the school Business Manager, Stephen Cooke, on the 19th June to discuss in more detail arrangements for the creation of a new class.

Should our meeting be mutually beneficial, from a day, time and cost point of view, the suggestion is that we run the administration of the class, as we do with the evening classes at Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Wakefield, and the Brooksbank School, Elland, directly between the school and our club. Membership being limited to members of our club, with new students allowed a limited time to join.

I understand, from Mike Hadfield, that his class at Birchencliffe has already been offered to people in the new prospectus recently sent out by the Huddersfield U3A. The class run by Malcolm Till has not been advertised. Mike, quite rightly, has stressed that in no way do we wish to come into conflict with the officers of the U3A who invested quite a lot of money in the purchase of workmates at Birchencliffe. Should our meeting on the 19th June lead to a move back to All Saints discussions with the officers of the U3A must follow.

More detailed information will be forwarded to members after our meeting.

The Forget-Me-Not Children's Hospice Panel. We seem to have staggered backwards and forwards with this project and recently were advised that our grant application to the Community Foundation of Calderdale and Kirklees had been turned down. The main reason being that Kirklees didn't have the funds and Calderdale couldn't consider our application because the location of the finished panel was outside Calderdale. Although this is a nuisance it's not entirely unexpected and just means that we shall have to re-apply to such as the Lottery. There are sufficient funds in the club accounts to proceed with the purchase of the Lime so in no way will the project timetable be affected.

The other problem encountered was the initial refusal from such as Disney and Warner Bros to allow us to use images of, such as, Harry Potter and Disney characters. Although we have just been informed by Warner Bros that we can have limited use of their copyright images but they will not allow us to use them in a booklet, Disney have refused outright. The booklet is our main source of fundraising. We were also advised that, because of a previous and very expensive law suit, the Woodcarving magazine would not touch the story of this project if we included copyright material, irrespective of whether we were granted copyright permission or not.

What we should also have done, before we started this project, was to have a good look at the carvers we have available and work the number of individual panel carvings around this number. Now having addressed this we find that, because of illness, resignations, people leaving the district and regrettably deaths, we can reasonably call on some 35 carvers as opposed to the 53 we started with for the Royal Armouries panel.

With all of the above in mind it was decided, at a recent meeting of the sub-group, that we back track and, instead of re-inventing the wheel, we totally adopt the schematic that already exists for the Overgate Hospice panel and use this for our present project. With this step being agreed, a meeting was arranged on the 23rd May at the hospice and the whole panel was re-designed in a five hours resulting in the same layout as Overgate and a total of 40 individual carvings. All the pictures are now free from copyright. The moving ones are reduced to 8.

We are all aware that doubts had been expressed by some of our more senior carvers at a number of images in the original plan, the use again of theme areas and the small size of some of the images. All that has now been eliminated from the present model.

Hopefully with this newsletter should come a new list of all members. On your behalf, may I officially welcome to the club Shirley Wilson, wife of Mick who has sadly now resigned, Janet Smith, who has been a member of the Brooksbank class of a number of months and has kindly taken on the task of Assistant Secretary, and Jim Sutcliffe, who has attended the last few months' Shepley meetings and comes all the way from the wilds of the Bradford area.

Our membership has regrettably declined a little over the last couple of years because of illness and the passing on of some well-loved and respected members. But we still have a healthy 63 on the books and we usually pick up a few more lost souls as the year progresses.



Shirley, Janet and Jim

They always say that you never know what is round the next corner and how true this saying was the other day. Colin Pratley, Trevor Stanley and I went to see a very friendly elderly gentleman, 83, in Todmorden called John Ennis who had contacted me regarding some tools and timber he had for sale.

On being invited into his home, a small terrace house, we were absolutely blown away with the sight before us. He has spent the best part of 30 years replacing all the painted wood in the house with Mahogany, door surrounds, fire mantle piece, shelves, ceiling beams, lamp standards, coffee tables, chandeliers and much, much more and carving every inch with the most beautiful and skilled carvings. His talent was as good as the best carvers in our club, and we all know who they are, and the detail and precision in his finished items are amazing.

Just trying to describe it one would think immediately 'overkill' but somehow it all worked out beautifully and he was very appreciative of the comments from the three of us, especially Trevor who can't talk without his hands flapping all over the place. We asked him to come along and talk to everybody at a club meeting but unfortunately his health is not very good at the moment. We did say we would visit him again and this time take along a camera.

We did buy from him quite a lot of chisels, and other items, that have been priced up quite reasonably and will be offered for sale at the next meeting.