

THE WINDSOR CHAIRMAKER

Newsletter of The Windsor Workshop

May 2008



Welcome to the first 'Windsor Chairmaker' of 2008. The year seems to be rushing by, although spring is taking for ever to arrive. Seven courses have already been run with a good take-up. This has been helped by the new (end '07) website which has been optimised, and now appears on page 1 of Google for most relevant searches.

The system of classifying courses as Introductory, Intermediate, and Advanced is working well. Most newcomers still tend to make the bow-back chair, although there is the choice of wheel-back and children's high-chair (make 2 per course) as well; and it's now common for double-bows (sack-backs) and continuous-arm chairs to be made on the same Intermediate course, with the child's armchair as another option.



Tool development continues with the new 'fishtail' spokeshave (see later). This small shave replaces the Chinese spokeshave that students have used until recently. Sadly the Chinese quality has deteriorated with softer wood and poorer steel. My new shave incorporates a high carbon A2 steel blade from Ron Hock, and is capable of excellent work on hardwood endgrain. Don't be misled by its size - it's a serious tool that will give great service for many years.

As I write I am preparing to 'take my workshop' down to West Dean for a week's chair making. I will be there again for the Hand Tool Weekend organised by Classic Hand Tools (see later). Do come and see me there - and try out the spokeshaves!

Simon Mould

Hand Tool Event at West Dean College 31 May - 1 June

Mike Hancock of Classic Hand Tools has organised what should be a fabulous weekend for hand-tool aficionados. Their full range of fine tools will be on show and available to try, and a wide range of demonstrators (including myself) will be taking part. The line-up of makers includes two big 'names' from the USA - Brian Boggs (ladder-back chairmaker from Kentucky) and Garret Hack (cabinetmaker from Vermont). Readers of Fine Woodworking will be aware of their reputations, and this will be a great opportunity to meet them and discuss tools and woodworking.

If you haven't ever been to West Dean this is a great opportunity to see this unique institution. Take in the prize-winning Victorian Gardens; and if you still have time the Weald & Downland Open Air Museum is less than a mile away.

Links:

www.classichandtools.co.uk

www.westdean.org

www.wealddown.co.uk

Batting for the Other Side!

Although I have always devoted myself to Windsor chairs, and believe them to be superior to most other forms(!), I will be taking a class with Brian Boggs at the beginning of June learning to make a ladder-back chair. I hope that I don't become hooked on this form of construction or I will have to change the name of my workshop, or open a second! However in time the occasional ladderback may creep into the course schedule. Watch this space....

New Spokeshave - 'The Fish Tail'



Up until now I haven't given names to my tools, but the shape of the handles of this new small shave just shouted 'Fish Tail'! This is the smallest shave in my range (7 1/2" long; 1 1/2" blade), made of hard maple and incorporating one of Ron Hock's excellent A2 steel blades. The setting of the blade can be micro-adjusted with an Allen key from above, without needing to remove the blade.

Adjustment of the wooden nose with a block plane, in front of the blade, can give different shaving characteristics. A very small angle between blade and nose is ideal for hardwoods, and a steeper angle is more suited to soft and green wood. They have been made with almost 1/4" of possible adjustment, so if you wish to change the angle, or just re-flatten the nose after lots of work, you have plenty of wood to play with. If you are not sure about this adjustment process see me at West Dean or any other of the shows that I am attending this year - see later.

Although the tools are set up for shaving hardwood, I use them mostly for shaping, cleaning-up and sizing spindles, and so use them with a more angled nose.

Price: £44.50 plus £2.50 p&p

Link:

www.hocktools.com

www.thewindsorworkshop.co.uk

"dedicated to Windsor chairmaking"

International Workshop



The workshop is becoming increasingly international, with students arriving from further and further afield. So far natives of the following countries have enrolled: England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, France, Denmark, USA, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. Although there's no point becoming too grand about it, The Windsor Workshop is playing a small part in keeping Windsor chairmaking going around the globe. Non-English-speakers could prove challenging.....



Father & Daughter

In February Robbie and Belinda Graham became the first father and daughter combination to attend a course. Robbie had been before (2005), but Belinda was quite new to the experience. What other family combinations can I expect in future? The first father and son was in 2005, but I look forward to a mother/daughter/son combination as a real blow to gender stereotyping!



Shows 2008

I will be at the following shows during the year, and look forward to meeting some of you. They are all great shows in their different ways.

W.L. West Wood Show, Selham, Nr. Petworth	2 - 3 May
Woodworking Hand Tool Event, West Dean Coll.	31 May - 1 June
Sussex Guild, Arundel Castle	28 - 29 June
Festival of the Tree, Westonbirt Arboretum, Glos.	22 - 25 August
Sussex Guild, Pashley Manor, East Sussex	30 - 31 August
Weald Wood Fair, Bentley, East Sussex	12 - 14 Sept.
Sussex Guild, Ditchling	15 - 16 Nov.
Sussex Guild, Midhurst	6 - 7 December

Illustrated Talks

In order to promote my chair-making courses in the south east I have begun to offer 40 minute illustrated talks to groups, covering the history of Windsors and their development up to the present. I was interviewed by the 140 members of the WI in March and received their approval! So if you know of an organisation in Sussex, Hampshire, Surrey or Kent that would be interested, please let me know.



Courses 2008

May	5 - 9 19 - 23	Introductory FULL Intermediate
June	9 - 13 23 - 27	Introductory Introductory
July	14 - 18	Intermediate
September	15 - 29 26 - 2 Oct.	Intermediate <i>Double-bow West Dean</i>
October	13 - 17 27 - 31	Introductory Introductory
November	3 - 7 17 - 21	Intermediate Introductory
December	1 - 5 15 - 19	Introductory Intermediate

Avoiding the Adze – I don't mean your ankles!



Last week Vincent Lavarenne attended the Advanced class (Low-back) and brought with him a Bordet carving machine to shape his elm seat. The 570 watt motor is hung from the ceiling and the gouge is fitted into the brass holder at the end of a heavy duty flexible shaft. Although the noise was fearsome, his sharp gouge cut through wych elm as a knife through butter (perhaps not as easily as a hot knife, but it was very impressive). Apparently they can also be used for carving stone and metal. The price may put you off at 1,068 Euro, with ten gouges for a further 297 Euro, all from Magma Tools. If you want an industrial carver that will take on anything, this is your tool. Personally I will stick to my adze (£44 from Axminster) thought I will enjoy experimenting with the Bordet until Vincent collects it in the summer!



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