

THE WINDSOR CHAIRMAKER

Newsletter of The Windsor Workshop

Summer 2009



It has been far too long since my last newsletter and some of you will be thinking that I have dropped off the map! Far from it - the past six months have been very busy with courses, chair and tool making, and writing. My show season is about to start, and one reason to send you this now is to alert you to several events that you may wish to go to. The Classic Hand Tools show at West Dean (6/7 June) should absolutely not be missed if you like hand tools.

If you have ever considered taking a course but thought that you might not have the skills or even strength to make a chair, read the article by Pat and be reassured!

Spokeshave sales are beginning to take off. I have concluded that although almost everyone knows about the existence of wooden shaves, there is general amnesia about just how effective they are. Cheap metal shaves that nobody can get to work properly are to blame! I will be demonstrating the tools at most shows and hope that you will come and try them.

One of my next priorities is to adapt my website so that tools and courses can be paid for online. Up until now I developed the site on my own, but will have to bow to the inevitable and buy in some expertise. I will let you know when it is up and running and hope that it will be much more convenient for customers, who use cheques less and less these days.

The current economic climate, and the weaker Pound, makes travelling abroad less attractive. I look forward to 2009/10 being the years when many more people stay home and make a Windsor chair for the first time, and develop a hobby that will last the rest of their lives!

Have a great summer.

James Mursell

[Hand Tool Show at West Dean 6th/7th June 2009](#)

This is the second year for this show, and hopefully it will become a key fixture in the woodworker's calendar. Quality rather than quantity sums up the philosophy behind the show, though it will be bigger than last year. Most of Classic Hand Tools' range of delicious tools will be on display and available to try. Tool makers, such as myself, will be there to



 discuss their tools with you ; other makers will be exhibiting; and West Dean College will be promoting their courses (both long and short). Hope to see you there!

(Follow the links for more information)

Table

Although I am essentially a Windsor chair maker, I like to branch out occasionally with other pieces made using the same techniques. This oak trestle table uses spindles at complementary angles to support the top rigidly, and their



arrangement keeps them away from interfering with sitters' feet and legs.

There are a number of other designs in the pipeline that will be shown as they become available.

Price: £2,000 for oak table (2410 x 1000 mm)

New-Chairmaker's Column

A couple of years ago I regularly featured brief articles by past students but somehow this fell by the wayside. This piece by Pat is inspiring and was written after her first course in January this year. She returned last week for a second course which had been given to her by her husband for her 79th birthday.



Making a bow-back in January

"As a 78 year old grandmother, I enlisted for a novice's course of Windsor chair-making with James Mursell of West Chiltonington – crazy you might think! With no experience of joinery: never having used a lathe or adze, never having heard of a spokeshave, travisher or drawknife, I was nervous! There was no need!

There were just two of us learners (the other was a 30 something chap) who were at James' workshop for 5 days.

James was patient and calm itself, not to mention provider of excellent elevenses, lunch and tea! He helped, hands-on very occasionally and did the band-sawing of the seats (Health and Safety insists), but was ever present with watchful instruction and encouragement.

After 5 days of (fairly hard) work steaming and shaping the bow back, adzing and travishing the seat, spokeshaving the spindles, turning the legs and stretchers on the lathe and fitting, glueing and polishing the chair, I finished with a beautiful Windsor chair, admired by all and which my grandchildren say will be a family heirloom."



Pat with her stools last week

Tool News

Travishers

It has taken 18 months to sort out a new supply of travisher blades, but the process is now almost complete. The current trickle of blades should shortly become a steady flow. The new blades are of very high quality with each blade carefully hand forged to fit the tool body. The final step, which should be complete in roughly three weeks time, is to have the original blanks laser cut from steel plate. This will allow the blade maker to concentrate on the skilful job of forging the steel rather than wasting his time cutting metal.

I currently have a small number of travishers for sale but expect to have full availability by the end of August for The Festival of the Tree at Westonbirt.



Spokeshaves

Spokeshaves are now in stock and are available directly from myself and from Classic Hand Tools.

There have been a couple of mentions of my spokeshaves in *Furniture &*

Cabinet Making recently – in particular their use by students at the Barnsley workshop near Peterfield. They ended up

modifying the shape of the small shave to shave a deeply concave curve on a lamp base. While this shows the versatility of the tool, it was a very specialist use. I hope that in time they will use them for more straightforward shaping of wood. Next month's *Furniture & Cabinet Making* should include a full test of both shaves.

However much you read, there is no substitute for using them yourself – try them at one of my shows.



	£ (incl. VAT)	
Travisher	79.95	Post and packaging £3.95 in UK
Large Spokeshave	69.95	
Medium Spokeshave	69.95	
Small Spokeshave	59.95	

Book

Having been working on this project for the past nine months, the manuscript, photographs and drawings were all sent to my publisher on the deadline date of 15th April. What an undertaking! If you have written a book before (I haven't) my advice is not to rush into it. The writing was just a (major) part of the process. Taking the photos, commissioning drawings and coordinating them all with the text took a long time. At least the computer allowed me to organise everything digitally, and I wonder that books were ever produced at all when only a typewriter and traditional photos were available.



I am advised that it should be on sale by the end of November with a price of approximately £20. It will be printed in China, and two months of the time between now and then will be spent travelling back to this country by boat!

You will hear from me again as soon as it is available!

SHOWS 2009

These are the shows that I will be attending this year. Many have links attached for further information. I have decided to give the Weald Wood Fair at Bentley a miss this year in favour of a new show (The European Wood Show) in Suffolk as it will give me a boarder geographic range and it promises to be interesting.

Do come along and say hello!

Sussex Guild at Parham House, West Sussex	30 th /31 st May 2009	New venue for the Sussex Guild three miles from The Windsor Workshop
Hand Tool Show at West Dean College	6 th /7 th June 2009	See page 1 for more details
West's Wood Fair at East Dean	20 th /21 st June 2009	Celebration of 200 years of woodworking in one family
Wild Flower and Weed Show, Bignor W. Sussex	4 th /5 th July 2009	Local show with a countryside theme
The Retirement Show, Olympia London	17 th /18 th July	Large show aimed at the retired, and approaching retirement, population
Festival of the Tree, Westonbirt Glos.	28 th to 31 st August	The largest wood show in the UK. I'll be in the Classic Hand Tools marquee
European Wood Show, Suffolk	19 th /20 th September	New show - details in due course
Sussex Guild, Ditchling	21 st /22 nd November	Sussex Guild
Sussex Guild, Midhurst	5 th /6 th December	Sussex Guild



A Windsor Workout!

Over two courses five people made this year's advanced chair - an English comb back from c. 1760. Although the makers brought their turnings with them, the remaining work only just fitted into the five day course. It was hard work, but there were five great chairs at the end. I have yet to settle on next year's advanced chair so if you have any ideas please let me know.



Courses 2009

Here are the dates of the courses for the remainder of 2009. I will set dates for 2010 in the next month or so.

A course brochure can be downloaded from the [website \(click here\)](#).

June	7 - 12	Introductory (Full)
	29 - 3 July	Introductory
September	7 - 11	Introductory
	27 - 3 Oct	Double-bow at <i>W. Dean</i>
October	19 - 23	Introductory
November	9 - 13	Introductory
	30 - 4 Dec	Intermediate
December	14 - 18	Introductory



Prices:

Introductory	£450
Intermediate	£475

Introductory: bow-back, wheel-back, and child's high chair (2 per course)
 Intermediate: double-bow, continuous-arm, and child's armchair

The price includes all materials and generous food/drink during the day. There are no hidden extras.

James Mursell

The Windsor Workshop, Churchfield Farm, West Chiltington, Pulborough, West Sussex. RH20 2JW
 T: 01798 815 925 E: james@thewindsorworkshop.co.uk W: www.thewindsorworkshop.co.uk