

# THE WINDSOR CHAIRMAKER

Newsletter of The Windsor Workshop

November 2011



It has been far too long since my last newsletter! I hope that this bumper edition will make up for the long gap. Autumn is truly here and I am receiving more and more enquiries about courses over the winter as woodworkers start to spend more time in their workshops.

A new website, new shapes to the spokeshaves, an award, new chairs beyond those featured below, and materials finally ordered for a pole lathe – there's lots going on at The Windsor Workshop!

If you haven't yet come on a course, why not sign up for one now, or given that Christmas is fast approaching why not leave the newsletter open at the suitable place for someone to see? Almost half my students receive their course as a gift.

I'm sure you'll find something of interest to read.

James Mursell

## Courses

Here is a list of courses for the remainder of the year and also for the start of 2012, including a weekend stool course. The latter is a great way of seeing whether you like making Windsor chairs without the cost of a week's course or need to take time off work.

Whether you are an experienced woodworker, or a novice, you will have an action-packed 5 days (for a chair) learning a host of new techniques. My ambition is to give you an enjoyable time and for you to take home a quality chair, with the knowledge to make more at home if you wish.

Click here for choice of chair: <http://thewindsorworkshop.co.uk/courses-at-the-windsor-workshop/choice-of-chair-at-the-windsor-workshop>

November 7 – 11	Introductory
November 21 – 25	Intermediate
December 12 – 16	Introductory
<b>2012</b>	
January 9 – 13	Intermediate
January 28/29	Weekend Stool Course
February 6 – 10	Introductory
February 20 – 24	Introductory
March 12 – 16	Advanced

<b>Course Prices</b>	£
Introductory	470
Intermediate	495
Advanced	575
Stool	200

The course fee is fully inclusive of materials, use of tools and generous food and drink throughout the day. There are no extras!

If you wish to book a course please check with me first that there is a vacancy [james@thewindsorworkshop.co.uk](mailto:james@thewindsorworkshop.co.uk) or 01798 815 925. A deposit of £150 will secure a place on the course and it can be paid via the website (card or PayPal) or by sending a cheque to The Windsor Workshop. All payments will be promptly acknowledged.

## Double-bow Chair Update



In a recent newsletter I wrote about a new armchair that I was making. This turned out to be a prototype and has led to two more chairs since.

After making 15 changes (mainly small) to the prototype this large double-bow chair was the result. It is a synthesis of all that I love about Windsor chairs from both the English and American traditions. The chair has an English combination of woods with an elm seat and everything else made of ash. The thick bow and turned spindles are both 'English' while the splayed legs and the through-tenons of all the spindles is decidedly American. The seat-shape and turning-patterns are from neither tradition.

One of the main changes between the prototype and the final chair was the shape of the top bow. The bow of the former was based on a circle while the final chair had a slightly 'squashed' shape based on an oval instead. The latter was a far more pleasing shape to my eyes and confirms my opinion that circles have few places in traditional Windsor chairmaking. The only exceptions that I know being in the American bow-back and continuous-arm chairs. The oval shape is definitely an English trait.

*To see the chair from all angles click the link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25RChlpZXjY&feature=youtu.be>*

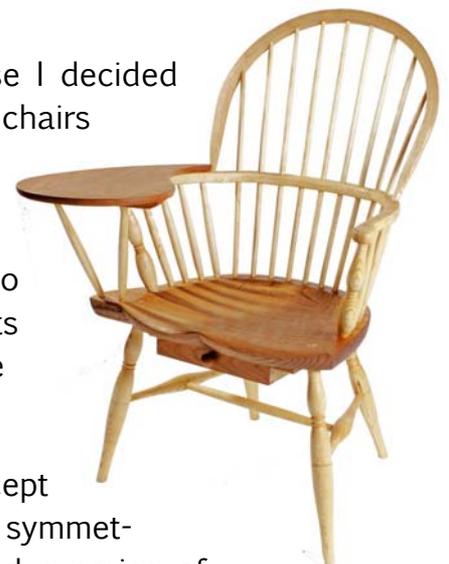
This chair will be the basis of the **2012 Advanced course 12 – 16 March**. This course is open to anyone that has previously completed two courses at The Windsor Workshop. It will be an intensive 5 days as there is a lot of work to fit in. The chair will be in ash with an elm seat. The cost will be £575. Please get in touch if you are interested!

## Writing-arm chair

With the armchair completed and receiving a favourable response I decided to create my first writing-arm chair. The tradition of writing-arm chairs dates back to the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in America where they were very popular.

A couple of years ago I helped Thereza Macnamara to make two writing-arm sack-back (double-bow) chairs over a number of visits to the workshop. These worked out well so I decided to use the lessons learned on my chair.

The seat is extended on the paddle-side (writing surface) to accept additional spindles for support. In this case I kept the armposts symmetrical and added two spindles in front. Some historic chairs added a series of 'armposts' to support a much more substantial paddle which incorporated a drawer and perhaps two slides for inkwell and candle.





The presence of a drawer either incorporated in the paddle or below the seat was traditional, with some chairs having both. I settled for the simpler fashion of just a drawer under the seat. My thanks to Roger Smith for making the drawer with handcut dovetails.

This version of the Windsor is popular in the US but is little known in the UK. Having taken this chair to several I can report that it generated endless discussion about what the paddle should be used for. Many thought that there must be a USB socket somewhere for use with a laptop/i-pad. Others debated what would be kept in the drawer with the most sensible suggestion coming from a 10 year old girl – ‘chocolate’!

### Writing-arm Links:

1. Nancy Goyné Evan’s book *American Windsor Furniture: Specialised Forms* contains lots of information and photos:

[http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=hwWUjMBM11UC&pg=PA348dq=writing+arm+windsor&source=bl&ots=fQVv0D3b&sig=FMRB0W1mfqU7X7G9F1D0o1o&hl=en&ei=3M0Utp\\_xKwQc80IIWDe&as=3&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&cpname=3&ved=0C8:0K5&as=ADgK&as=onepage&as=writing%20arm%20windsor&f=false](http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=hwWUjMBM11UC&pg=PA348dq=writing+arm+windsor&source=bl&ots=fQVv0D3b&sig=FMRB0W1mfqU7X7G9F1D0o1o&hl=en&ei=3M0Utp_xKwQc80IIWDe&as=3&oi=book_result&ct=result&cpname=3&ved=0C8:0K5&as=ADgK&as=onepage&as=writing%20arm%20windsor&f=false)

2. Christies sold this chair for \$18,000

[http://www.christies.com/LotFinder/lot\\_details.aspx?intObjectID=4431578](http://www.christies.com/LotFinder/lot_details.aspx?intObjectID=4431578)

3. For a comprehensive article with photos download this PDF

<http://www.gregorylefever.com/pdfs/Writing%20Chair%202.pdf>

## Spokeshaves

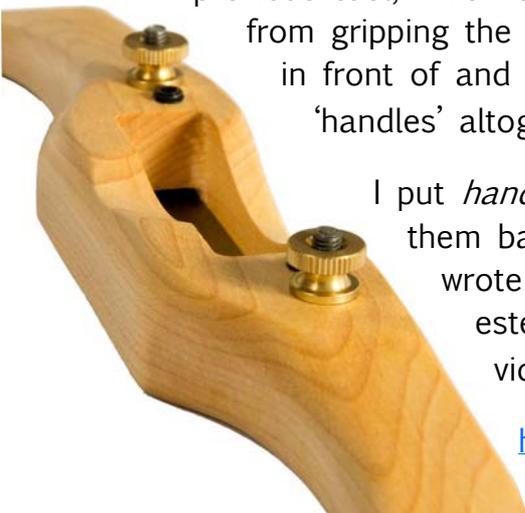
Since my last newsletter I have changed the shape of my spokeshaves. The body of the medium shave is now more traditional, while the small version remains similar but subtly changed.



I was conscious that many potential customers did not ‘get’ the shape of the previous tool, which came about from a conscious attempt to stop people from gripping the ‘handles’, rather than placing thumb and fingertips directly in front of and behind the blade. The old shape did away with the ‘handles’ altogether.

I put *handles* in parentheses because even though I have brought them back in the new design they are not there to be held! I wrote about this in a previous newsletter and if you are interested in the arcana of spokeshaves there is a short YouTube video illustrating the point.

<http://youtu.be/MvURhCTeQS4>

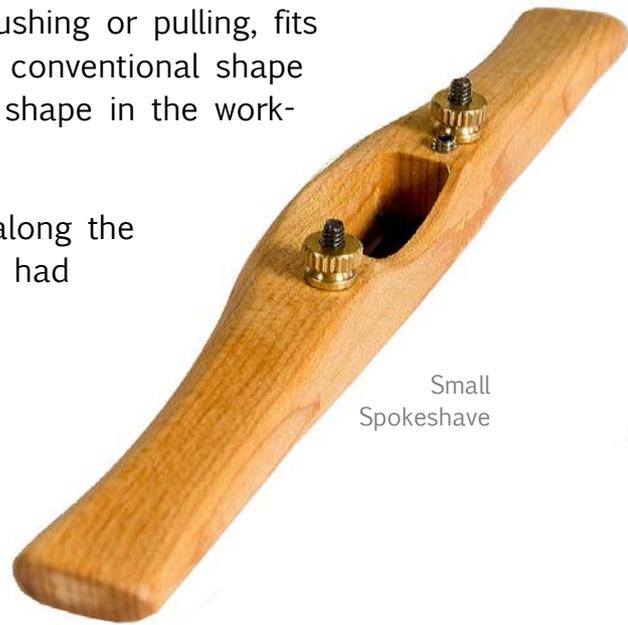


The new design is much more shapely and, whether pushing or pulling, fits comfortably in the hand,. It is my hope that this more conventional shape will prove popular though I will continue using the old shape in the workshop for some time to come.

The small spokeshave is a little longer and is flat all along the back edge of the body unlike the previous design that had 'fishtail' handles.

**Prices remain the same as before:**

Medium spokeshave	£69.95	(£58.29 plus £11.66 VAT)
Small spokeshave	£59.95	(£49.96 plus £9.99 VAT)



Small Spokeshave

Ian Fraser using a Windsor Workshop spokeshave at Temple Newsam

My thanks to Ian for purchasing a medium spokeshave (old style) and then for placing it so carefully in a photo in his blog! Read more about the fascinating restoration work that he is carrying out at Temple Newsam:

<http://secretlivesofobjects.blogspot.com/2011/09/getting-there.html>

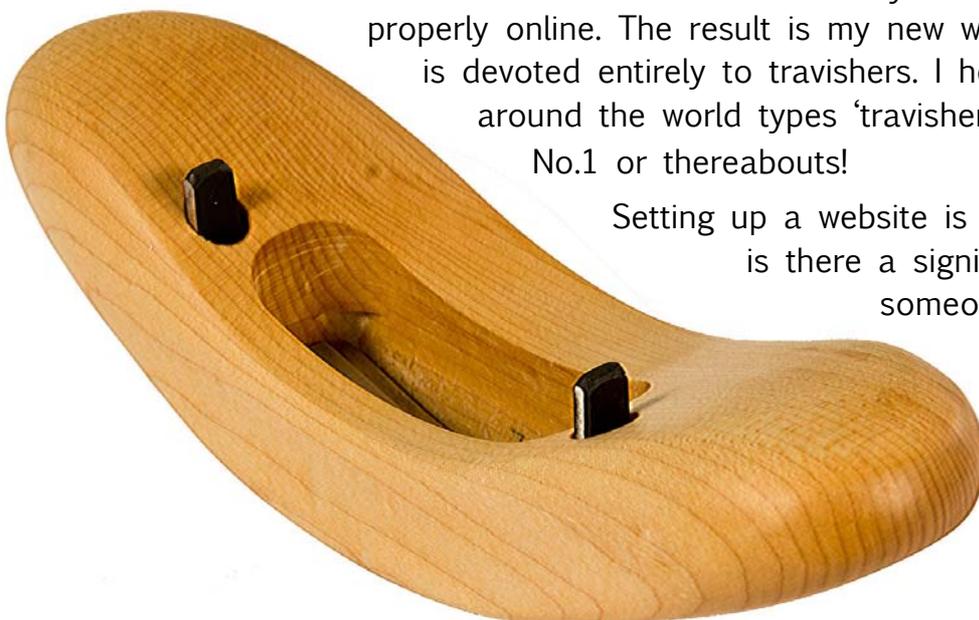
Travisher.com

Earlier in the year travishers were selling well, in spite of the travisher pages on [www.thewindsorworkshop.co.uk](http://www.thewindsorworkshop.co.uk) not ranking particularly highly on Google. About half of the sales were to the USA, with each sale involved several emails each way to complete.

I felt that it was time to take the bull by the horns and promote the tool properly online. The result is my new website [www.travisher.com](http://www.travisher.com) which is devoted entirely to travishers. I hope that if you, or anyone around the world types 'travisher' into Google this site will be No.1 or thereabouts!

Setting up a website is not a trivial exercise. Not only is there a significant cost in paying for someone to build it to a high standard, but it takes a surprising time to write all the words, take the photos, research postal costs and devise a suitable structure for the site.

**NEW WEBSITE!**



It was a gamble setting up a site for just one tool and it has been an interesting experience, resulting in usefully increased sales – so a success!

One of the key challenges was to have a site that could cope with VAT (or not), depending on destination, and the cost of postage for each item. It seems to be working well now that the initial bugs have been eliminated and I would value any constructive comments.



My thanks to Chris Halls of Mind's Eye Design for building the site for me. He is based in Cornwall but this has not been a problem in any way. I would recommend him highly if you are considering a new website:

<http://www.mindseyedesign.co.uk/>

## Wood Awards

In my last newsletter I wrote about an exciting rocking chair that I had been involved in making. Since then it has won a major national award winning the furniture category of The Wood Awards.

<http://www.woodawards.com/windsor-rocker/>

Katie Walker and I went to Coventry last month to the award ceremony. It was a great shame that Roger Smith, who created the amazing bow, was unable to attend. Katie received a trophy and we all received certificates.



Katie Walker's  
Windsor Rocker

If you do not know of the Wood Awards have a look on the website at the remarkable buildings that were entered and won. My favourite was the Brockholes Visitor Centre which floats on a flooded gravel pit!

<http://www.woodawards.com/brockholes-visitor-centre/>

## Students' Stories

I regularly feature past students in the newsletters in the hope that their enthusiasm rubs off on others. Michael Toomey came on a course last year and when he sent me photos of chairs that he had made at home I asked him to write about his experiences.



He has certainly had some fun and if you would like to read his story click on the following link: <http://thewindsorworkshop.co.uk/courses-at-the-windsor-workshop/students-stories>

John Fleming also sent this photo of his superb continuous-arm chair.

My thanks to Keith Claloner  
for sending me the following list of definitions:

**DRILL PRESS** : A tall upright machine useful for suddenly snatching flat metal bar stock out of your hands so that it smacks you in the chest and flings your beer across the room, denting the freshly-painted project which you had carefully set in the corner where nothing could get to it.

**WIRE WHEEL** : Cleans paint off bolts and then throws them somewhere under the workbench with the speed of light . Also removes fingerprints and hard-earned calluses from fingers in about the time it takes you to say, 'Oh sh--!'

**SKILL SAW** : A portable cutting tool used to make studs too short.

**PLIERS** : Used to round off bolt heads. Sometimes used in the creation of blood-blisters.

**BELT SANDER** : An electric sanding tool commonly used to convert minor touch-up jobs into major refinishing jobs.

**HACKSAW** : One of a family of cutting tools built on the Ouija board principle... It transforms human energy into a crooked, unpredictable motion, and the more you attempt to influence its course, the more dismal your future becomes.

**MOLE-GRIP** : Generally used after pliers to completely round off bolt heads. If nothing else is available, they can also be used to transfer intense welding heat to the palm of your hand.

**OXYACETYLENE TORCH** : Used almost entirely for lighting various flammable objects in your shop on fire. Also handy for igniting the grease inside the wheel hub out of which you want to remove a bearing race.

**TABLE SAW** : A large stationary power tool commonly used to launch wood projectiles for testing wall integrity.

**HYDRAULIC FLOOR JACK** : Used for lowering an automobile to the ground after you have installed your new

**BAND SAW** : A large stationary power saw primarily used by most shops to cut good aluminium sheet into smaller pieces that more easily fit into the rubbish bin after you cut on the inside of the line instead of the outside edge.

**TWO TON ENGINE HOIST** : A tool for testing the maximum tensile strength of everything you forgot to disconnect.

**PHILLIPS SCREWDRIVER** : Normally used to stab the vacuum seals under lids or for opening old-style paper-and-tin oil cans and splashing oil on your shirt; but can also be used, as the name implies, to strip out Phillips screw heads.

**STRAIGHT SCREWDRIVER** : A tool for opening paint cans. Sometimes used to convert common slotted screws into non-removable screws and butchering your palms.

**CROW BAR** : A tool used to crumple the metal surrounding that clip or bracket you needed to remove in order to replace a 50 cent part.

**HAMMER** : Originally employed as a weapon of war, the hammer nowadays is used as a kind of divining rod to locate the most expensive parts adjacent the object we are trying to hit.

**STANLEY KNIFE** : Used to open and slice through the contents of cardboard cartons delivered to your front door; works particularly well on contents such as seats, vinyl records, liquids in plastic bottles, collector magazines, refund checks, and rubber or plastic parts. Especially useful for slicing work clothes, but only while in use.

## Classic Hand Tool Competition

The winner was drawn during June and will soon be coming on his course. Sorry if you entered and did not win, but do keep a look out for future competitions on the Classic Hand Tools website: [www.classichandtools.com](http://www.classichandtools.com)

I was very sorry not to be able to make it to the European Woodworking Show a few weeks ago, but I hear from a number of sources that it was a terrific success. I'll be there next year!

James Mursell

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