

# THE WINDSOR CHAIRMAKER

Newsletter of The Windsor Workshop

February 2012



Welcome to my first newsletter of 2012!

- Checkout the 2012 course brochure with a new chair to make and now a choice of wood for the seats.
- My spokeshaves have been significantly improved, but the price remains the same!
- Since the last newsletter I have developed a new family of Windsor chairs - details below.
- My new pole lathe works, but is overcomplicated! Room for improvement!
- Finally have you ever seen a Windsor chair with legs and spindles made from straw? Read about Isobel Goodacre's new chair.

Best wishes for a great year!

*James Mursell*

## Course Brochure 2012: new choices!

Even though we live in the age of the internet I continue to find it important to produce a course brochure each year – the 2012 edition is now available from the website. It will print out onto two sheets of A4 paper. Place them back to back and fold in half to produce the 4-page leaflet. **If you wish to save paper it will fit onto a single sheet of A4 paper, though you will have to print each page separately and turn over the paper in between.**

You can download it from:

<http://thewindsorworkshop.co.uk/courses-at-the-windsor-workshop/download-a-course-brochure>

The brochure has dates for the whole of 2012 so there should be no excuses for not finding a convenient course!

There is a new chair that can be made on the Introductory courses. It is a contemporary Windsor designed to be modern, small, elegant and comfortable. There is a small picture in the brochure and there is more about it, and its family, later in this newsletter.

Another improvement to the courses is a choice of seat wood. Until now I have offered tulipwood as the default wood, with students occasionally requesting an alternative. From now on I will attempt to always have cherry and elm seat blanks available for purchase. If you choose to have an elm seat then I will retain the option to rough it out for you with an Arbortech if adzing is too difficult!

In the current economic climate I have held my prices at 2011 levels, though I will almost certainly have to increase them next year.



## Stool Making Course – extra dates!

The weekend course that was announced in my last newsletter for January 28/29 filled in no time – thank you to all that signed on!

The next course is **March 24/25**. There are currently several places available. I am not planning any more of these courses before 2013 so if you are interested please get in touch.

Visit the website for further details:

<http://thewindsorworkshop.co.uk/courses-at-the-windsor-workshop/new-weekend-course-outline-stool>



## Contemporary Windsors: a new family!



It is enormously satisfying to design a new chair. Inspiration can come from anywhere and in this case it came from the shape of the seat. Looking back at my notebooks I found that the germ of the idea surfaced several years ago in doodles of chair seats. In odd moments the design has evolved to its current shape which is angular and highly sculpted.

The chair is deliberately modern with minimal ornamentation and it has a small footprint so that several will fit easily around a table. In a departure from my normal practice there is an even number of spindles in the back (i.e. no central spindle) and the central gap has been exaggerated slightly to leave space for the spine and to add interest to the design.



The side chair has received very positive responses whenever I have displayed it and so when I was asked to produce several bar stools I used it as the basis for the design. Two versions were produced, one more traditional than the other, and **either could in fact be made on an Introductory course**.

The bar stools (more traditional version) were well received and are now in a refurbished London home.



'Traditional' bar stools

'Minimalist' bar stool

## Contemporary Windsors (continued.....)



Not satisfied with these two versions alone, I was determined to produce an armchair to complete the family and most of the key features from the side chairs flow into this larger chair.

It is good to branch out from traditional forms now and again and this positive experience has refreshed my enthusiasm for making new chairs.



## Spokeshaves Improved: brass wear-plates now standard!

Over the past year most of my efforts towards my tools has been directed towards the travisher – for example my new website [www.travisher.com](http://www.travisher.com) announced in the last newsletter.

Now the balance has been redressed! I have always been proud of my spokeshaves and confident that purchasers will have an excellent tool that will serve them well – they have been used successfully in my workshop by hundreds of students (and myself!) over the past 6 – 7 years.

Initially the tools were not designed to be sold, but rather to give students tools that would work easily and effectively. This was achieved and they began to sell.

The only slight weakness in them was the absence of a brass wear-plate in front of the cutting edge. After heavy and prolonged use the wood began to wear down and form a hollow in front of the blade giving an uneven depth of blade along its length. The remedy for this was to plane down the nose every now and again to recreate the correct flat shape.



*Brass wear-plate in front of blade  
on the medium spokeshave*

From now on all spokeshaves from The Windsor Workshop will be fitted with a heavy brass wear plate to eliminate this weakness, and **the price will remain the same as before.**

These modified tools have been in use now for a good month and the effect of the brass plate is superb particularly on the Medium Spokeshave. The shaves are even easier to use than before and very fine and controlled shavings can be taken with and across the grain even on the hardest of woods.

The spokeshave kits now also include a pre-drilled and countersunk wear plate, making them a more attractive option than ever.

All the details and lots of photos (click on them for enlargements) are now on the website under spokeshaves:

<http://thewindsorworkshop.co.uk/tools-by-james-mursell-at-the-windsor-workshop/spokeshaves-available-from-the-windsor-workshop>



Medium spokeshave £69.95



Small spokeshave £59.95



Medium spokeshave kit £45.00

Small spokeshave kit £39.00

## Pole Lathe: progress but not there yet!

I have mentioned in previous newsletters my intention to make a pole lathe. Well, at last it is a reality! Inevitably I have overcomplicated the design (not being very good at following others' instructions) and there will now follow a process of simplification. I am full of ideas of modifications that I'd like to make eventually, but first I must walk successfully before running!

I hope to have a working tool in use for the Bodgers' Ball in May.



## Isobel Goodacre: Windsor with straw legs!

Shortly before Christmas I was approached by Isobel Goodacre, who is studying 3-D design at Brighton University, for help in producing the seat for a most unusual Windsor chair.

She ended up spending a day and a half at The Windsor Workshop during which she made her seat. We discussed all aspects of Windsor chair design and I hope this helped her towards a really fascinating chair.

The most unusual feature of the chair was the material for the legs and spindles - thatcher's straw. This straw was carefully selected for its length and resilience and when bound together made serviceable chair components.

The use of Jubilee clips and a tarry substance to bind them together made it even more unusual, but it worked in an unconventional way and satisfied the design brief of using unusual materials to make a useful product.

Judge for yourself by looking at Isobel's blog:

<file:///C:/Users/James%20Mursell/Desktop/Documents/Backup%20130910/The%20Windsor%20Workshop/MARKETING/2012/Newsletters/Feb%202012/Isobel%20Goodacre.htm>

I do not expect that Ercol will be rushing into production of straw-legged chairs, but that does not devalue the experiment. I commend Isobel on her imagination and her ability to convert it into reality.



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