



Woodcarving Starter Pack (CT6 – 6 Piece Set)

Project Instructions #1

Design & Instructions by Jeremy Williams

THE HENRY TAYLOR WOODCARVING EXPERIENCE

The carving of wood has become a popular pastime but to buy a set of standard tools can prove expensive. At Henry Taylor (Tools) Ltd, we recognise this and so to assist novices and those people who are unsure whether they will continue woodcarving, we have devised a set of carving tools smaller in size than the standard tools and less costly to buy, without compromising on quality. They are produced to the same fine standards as the professional carving tools which we have been making since 1834.

The Starter Pack Tools are:

No. 1 Flat Chisel 6mm

No. 3 Shallow Gouge 6mm

No. 5 Medium Gouge 8mm

No. 7 Fishtail Gouge 6mm

No. 8 Steep Cut Gouge 8mm

No. 39 V Tool 6mm

These tools are sharpened ready to use.

This selection is sufficient to produce a basic, yet satisfactory, piece of work. You could try your hand at a small sculpture, but better still start with a simple low relief carving.

With this in mind, we asked Jeremy Williams, a well-known instructor and carver, to suggest a suitable first-time piece of work. He recommended low relief carving which he used to teach to students of all ages. The design is reproduced in this leaflet along with Jeremy's step-by-step commentary.

We hope you will enjoy the experience of carving wood.

Jeremy Williams instructs:

Your first carving should be a pleasurable experience and you will stand a better chance of achieving this if you start with a design that is not too demanding. This is why I recommend a simple low relief carving which will be pleasing to look at when it is finished.

As you carve, you will learn a lot about the technique of woodcarving. It will show you how to create pleasing shapes and this will stand you in good stead when you do projects of your own, be they relief or sculpture.

This exercise teaches you the best timber to use for your first piece of work. It then takes you through applying a drawing to the wood, how to remove waste material and cut back to the design, how to visualise and create the contours you need to make the look of your work interesting, and lastly how to finish the carving. One more point – because the subject is stylised and not true to life, if you happen to make a mistake, it won't be a disaster.

So, let's get started...

CHOOSING THE RIGHT WOOD

- Use Lime or Basswood
- Avoid timber that's twisted, decayed, had knots or splits

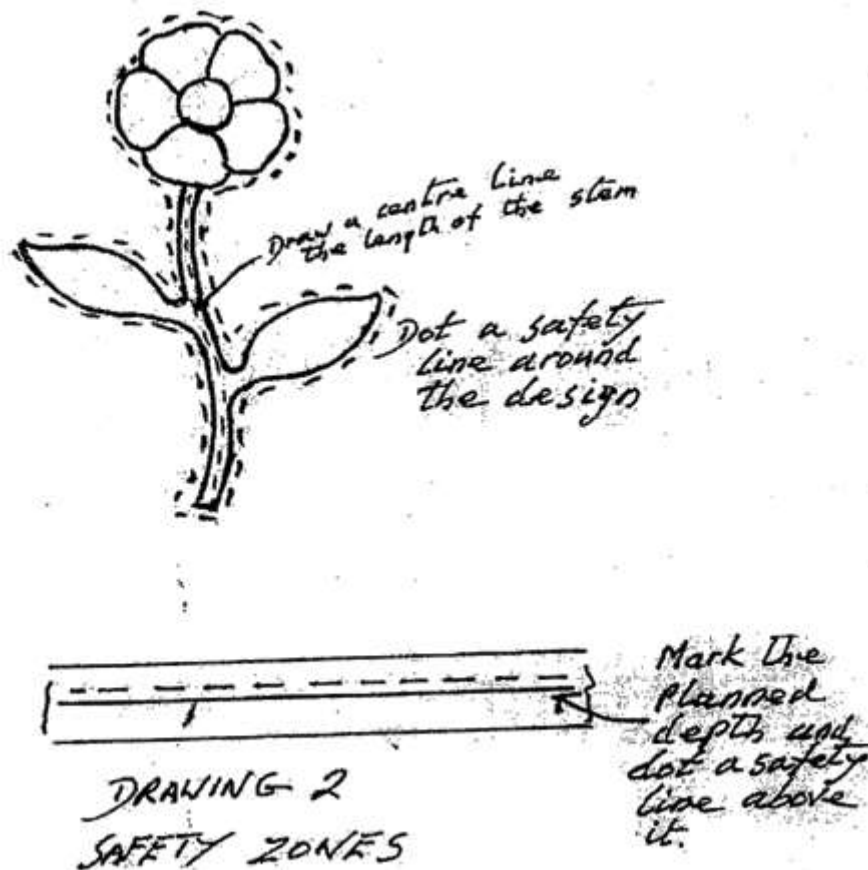
For this project you will need a piece of wood, when trimmed, 255mm (10") long, 180mm (7") wide and 25mm (1") thick. The surfaces should be planed, smooth and the sides squared.

MAKING A DRAWING

- Always be sure that what you draw, you can carve with the tools you have. That may seem obvious but it is a fact easy to overlook. However, we have made it easy to get started. (see **Drawing 1** at the back)
- For your own project, you can draw your design freehand or use a photocopier.
- Line up the drawing on the wood and fix one side of the paper with tabs of masking tape to hold it in place; then put a sheet of carbon paper between the drawing and the wood and copy through using a ballpoint pen.
- If the imprint is not totally clear, go over it with a felt tip pen.

WITH THE DRAWING ON THE WOOD

DRAWING 2



- Next, dot a safety margin line outside the design and include a centre line through the length of the stem.
- Then, mark the planned depth of the carving. This has to be deep enough to allow sufficient contour variation within the design. Set the background at 10mm (3/8") deep. This will allow a maximum of 15mm for the relief. This is excessive for a normal low relief carving, but as this is your first carving it does give you plenty of wood for the detail.
- Draw a pencil line around the edges of the wood at that point and just above it, dot in another safety line.

You are now ready to start carving.

FIXING THE WOOD

- You need to have your wood safely secured. The best way is to use a backing board, larger in size than the carving panel, and clamp it to your bench or a worktable. Use small strips of 5mm thick, or less, plywood pinned to the backing board close to the sides of the carving wood to hold it secure.

FOR YOUR SAFETY

- With everything secured you can start removing the waste wood to lower the background but first, a safety warning. Remember your tools are very sharp, so handle them with care. **Always** cut away from yourself and keep your fingers behind the blade at all times.

WASTE REMOVAL

- There are various ways to remove the waste wood surrounding the design. You can do most with a handsaw or even use a router, but for this first carving try doing most of the waste removal with your gouges. It is good practice using the carving tools.
- Use the **No. 8 Steep Cut Gouge 8mm** and with light cuts pare away the wood you don't need. It is best to cut across the grain as this helps to prevent the wood splitting. Remove the wood down as far as the dotted safety line around the design. If you have difficulty cutting the narrow gaps where the leaves meet the main stem, you can leave them for the moment and cut them out when there is less deep wood.

- The next stage is to trim back to the main line of the design and to cut the background down to its final depth. For this work, you mainly need to use the 'flatter' 6mm & 8mm tools. The **No. 1 Flat Chisel 6mm** will help to refine the stem. The **No. 5 Medium Gouge 8mm** and the **No. 7 Fishtail Gouge 6mm** will shape the petals and the concave outline of the leaves. Use the **No. 1 Flat Chisel 6mm** for the rest of their shape. Cut back to the outline of the design with a series of vertical stab cuts, each followed by a shallow slicing cut. Avoid leaving cut marks on the surface of the background and avoid cutting inside the design line.
- Trim any remaining waste so that the width of the stem is equal along its length. You can give it a modest taper up to the flower if you wish. You have now completed the roughing out, or bosting in, stage as it is called. Take a break and think about the undulating shape, the contours you will next need to make your carving have added interest.

CONTOURS

At the moment your work is flat but for good effect, a relief carving needs variations of levels or depths to accentuate the reflection of light off the surface of the wood.

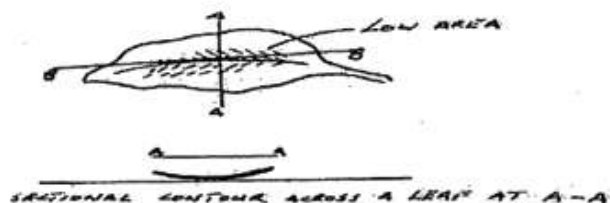
- Plot the high, medium and low areas. Use **red** chalk to mark the high parts, **blue** for the mid-range areas and **green** for the low-lying detail. For example, where the stem meets the flower, the level of the stem has to be low so mark it **green**. Mark the leaf stems **green** as well. You will need to have the centre of the flower set lower than the petals, so mark it as mid-range **blue**. Perhaps you will feel the centre areas of the leaves should be lower than the edges, so mark them according to how you want them.

- **Contour shaping** has to be accomplished within the 15mm of the depth you have allowed. It is a strange fact but if you start with the 'high's first, you can easily find there is not enough depth of wood left for the lowest areas to be developed so do the 'low's' (the **green** parts) first. Begin by lowering the stem immediately adjacent to the flower. Drop the level at this point to about 5-6mm above the background by using a series of stab and slicing cuts with the **No. 3 Shallow Gouge 6mm**. Then, 'flow' the depth of the main stem in a gentle rise back down its length past the leaves. Note: the stem does not have to rise to the original full thickness of the wood.
- Lower the leaf stems so that they blend into the main stem at about half the thickness of the stem at the point where they meet. Note: it is preferable to have the leaf stems close to the background rather than too thick.
- Be aware that the weakest parts of the carving are the tips of the leaves. This is because they lie across the run of the grain. Model the leaves so that their tips lie close to the background (see **Drawing 3**). Use the **No. 8 Steep Cut Gouge 8mm** to contour their surfaces (see section A-A). Cut leaf veins with the **No. 39 V Tool 6mm**.

DRAWING 3

LOOKING AT LEAVES

DRAWING 3



When the leaf falls on cross-grain it is best to dip the tip to the background to avoid it snapping off.

- Cut leaf veins with the V Tool

FORMING THE FLOWER

- Use the **No. 5 Medium Gouge 8mm** to shape the outline of the centre of the flower. Form a circle letting the shape of the tool determine its actual size.
- Use the **No. 7 Fishtail Gouge 6mm** to dip the petals down towards the centre. To incise the edges of the petals, use the **No. 3 Shallow Gouge 6mm** and the **No. 5 Medium Gouge 8mm**, turning the blade to make a wavy edge. Note: you can plot alternate petals on differing contour levels should you wish.
- Use the **No. 1 Flat Chisel 6mm** to dome the centre of the flower by making shallow slicing cuts. Raise the handle of the chisel as you cut to carry the stroke downwards. In the trough where the petals join the dome, it will be necessary to skew the cut by having the edge of the blade at an angle.
- Use either the **No. 1 Flat Chisel 6mm** or the **No. 3 Shallow Gouge 6mm** to round the stems. Bring the surface of the main stem in a curve to its highest point along the centre line.

FINISHING

- There are two ways to finish your carving. You can sand it smooth using 150, 220 and 300 grit abrasive papers. This is the easiest method but you will give the work more interest if you opt for a tooled finish in some areas. For example, after sanding make small cuts on the surfaces of the petals and leaves using the **No. 7 Fishtail Gouge 6mm**. Avoid dipping the blade too deep into the wood. Ripple-cut the background with the **No. 5 Medium Gouge 8mm**, even if you have to leave the main part of the carving plain. The choice is yours.
- Finally, you will need to seal the wood before it is polished. Use sanding sealer or matt acrylic varnish diluted 50% with water. Apply two coats allowing drying time between each coat. Lightly sand the first coat when dry before applying the second coat. Finally, wax and buff with a soft brush or cloth.

DRAWING 1

