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### Saturday 4th January: Chipping Away with Adrian Finlay

For the first demo of 2020, the chuck, where the jig itself is screwed into a device on his wood carver's vice.

Adrian Finlay paid the Chapter a visit. A well-known teacher of wood carving and turning, Adrian set out to give us “a taste of wood carving” in order to help people starting out. He stressed at the outset that he would not be doing much carving in the demo – “it’s like watching paint dry”, he explained, and time was needed elsewhere for topics such as tools, types of wood, and marking out.

#### Holding Work.

Adrian started by showing various methods of holding work. If your piece is turned, then you may want to decorate it with some carving. The rim of a bowl can benefit from this and it is better to keep the bowl in the chuck if you can in case it needs to go back on the lathe for final finishing. Adrian mounts his chuck into a jig that screws into the female thread of



He had several other vices for holding non-turned items and for smaller items, such as a spoon, he would use a flat board with a rope passing through several strategically placed holes. The rope

is in a loop that passes over the work, through the holes, with tension applied to the loop holding the piece in place using downward pressure from his foot. Good for carving items in your lap.



His final holding device was pulled from his box (of tricks) and it was a bicycle wheel spindle with a quick-release mechanism on one end. He explained that the quick-release mechanism is no more than a cam, and if a large washer can be attached to the other end of the spindle, then it can secure a piece on a bench. Simple!

Before leaving this topic Adrian stressed that however you hold work, it should be at a height that is comfortable for the carver. Wood carving can be quite absorbing. But one should not spend too much time hunched over the work. His advice is to have the work at a height that keeps your back and shoulders as upright as possible.



### Knives and Chisels.

All tools should be sharp. However knives, once shaped and sharpened, should only need honing or stropping to keep an edge. Knives are only used by hand and their handle shapes are a personal choice. Chisels are used by hand or with a mallet. There are many chisels in a wood carver's toolbox and many of them have a

concave or fluted cross-section. They are numbered from 2 to 30+, but Adrian suggested that you could start out with a 3, 5, 7, 9, and an 11 to get you started.

He demonstrated the use of a medium curved gouge to make an almond-shaped scoop out of a piece of dark wood. He then made a complementary almond shape out of a piece of light wood.

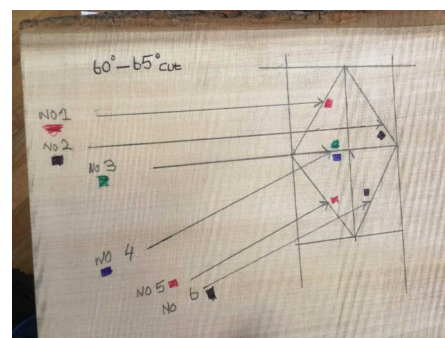
Putting the light into the dark scoop produced a pleasing leaf-branches effect. This is a simple method of inlaying leaves and branches.

Lastly on tools, Adrian produced a thin Japanese pull saw and explained that if it was no longer useful as a saw, then the teeth could be ground away and the blade used as an excellent scraper. When cut to shape with tin-snips, it was good for finishing rough end grain, and could be shaped to scape-finish delicate places that could not be reached with sandpaper.

At this point Adrian was asked which wood is good for carving. His reply was that almost all fruit woods can be used. They are generally straight-grained, with an even structure between the growth rings, fewer knots, and are the right softness. Others can be used, but some are troublesome. Pine is to be avoided; it is often not straight or close grained. The exception to this is Baltic pine. Traditionally, carvers use lime, and he advised that if you buy this in, or from America, then it is known as basswood.

### Chip Carving.

This type of carving is good for beginners and it is generally done of flat surfaces. It needs relatively shallow cuts to be made in order to give an impression of depth by the shadows produced. Adrian showed this using a simple diamond shape, which could be added to the rim or the outside of a bowl, with effect. The key is the marking out and he produced several diagrams to show the shape and the sequence of the cuts to make it in the wood – see the pictures, which include a layout around a platter rim. Cuts should



be at 60 degrees with a sharp knife and he advised that cut #1 be done for the entire pattern, then cut #2, then cut #3, etc.. This repetition improves the cut with minimal position change for the work or the carver.





Adrian then showed how to mark out a rosette using a pencil and compass. This required only two setting changes of the compass and he presented a carved example of the rosette.



For his final word on chip carving, he used a common beginner's subject – a cluster of leaves. In terms of marking out, he suggested cutting the leaf shapes from a piece of an aluminium drinks can. 7-Up is suitable. This can be repeatedly used to draw around for the outline, and then bent into different shapes to use as a model when carving each leaf. Also, if you want to mark out a few grapes, then use a coin to draw around. Several coins can be overlaid to give a cluster effect.

### Sharpening.

Adrian is not rigorous on sharpening angles. His advice is to sharpen to the angle that you carve at. If it is a gouge, then sharpen it

by drawing it back and forth rotating it as you do so, making sure that the edge is straight across the section.

### Carving Detail.

Adrian then moved on to carving some detail on a turned cylinder. It could have been a candle stick stem or any type of pedestal. A repeated pattern is generally required here, so he firstly showed us an easy way to mark out the repeating area of any pattern around the stem. Assuming that lathe indexing is not available, you can take a strip of paper, or tape, wrap it around the circumference of the stem, marking the point of overlap. Then laying the paper out flat, divide the distance between the beginning and the mark into the required number of repetitions. This gives the size of each pattern repetition that can be transferred or marked off around the stem with a ruler or dividers. Marking the repeating areas along the stem is best done on the lathe, where the toolrest can be used to support a pencil when drawing longitudinal lines. If you suffer



from pencil-wobble when doing this, then make yourself a wooden toolrest that has a broad rest. This holds the pencil steady. The detailed pattern can then be drawn

within each repeating area and carving can begin.

### Carving a Face.

Adrian's first advice here is to study the human face and appreciate its proportions. Notice the relative positions of the eyes, ears and mouth. The cheeks fall away on each side of the face at 45 degrees, so use the corner of a square piece of wood to position



the centre-line of the face. That way, some of your removal work is already done. Start cutting and establish the eye-brows, the nose and the chin in relation to each other on the corner. Then go back and add in the relevant detail. Avoid a flat face by deepening the eyes. Adrian suggested that if you have difficulty carving a mouth and chin, then try a wood-spirit style face. That way a beard covers that detail.

This brought Adrian's demo to a conclusion. It was packed with information, tips and wit,

so what are you waiting for – get carving! Thanks Adrian.

Text by Mike Sims.

Photos by Rich Varney and Mike Sims

## Chapter Contacts.

**Chairman:** John Doran  
087 6393081  
DWT.Chair@gmail.com

**Secretary:** Tommy Hartnett  
086-8284178  
DWT.Secretary@gmail.com

**Treasurer:** Vincent Whelan  
087 760 4918  
DWT.Treasurer@gmail.com

**Vice-Chairman:** J. McCloughlin  
087 2610803

**Membership:** Mark Daly  
087 9484051  
DWT.Membership@gmail.com

**Competitions:** Brigie DeCourcy  
087 9258766  
DWT.Competitions@gmail.com

**Books & Video:** Frank Maguire  
01 8346854  
DWT.Library@gmail.com

**Exhibitions:** Paul Murtagh  
087 1331292

**Audio/Visual:** Tony Hartney

**Wednesday Demos:** Brendan Phelan

**Newsletter / Web Master:** Brendan Kelly  
086 3748183  
DWT.Newsletter@gmail.com

### Who were the winners in February 2010. Recognise any?



Advanced



Experienced



Beginners



As part of the Chapters continued support for the Alzheimer Society Cecil Barron presented Mary Mooney from Rose Cottage with two cheques.

(1) €1000 raised by Cecil from occasional sales of bits and pieces at our monthly meetings and also from a sale in Baldoyle library of wood turning items he made In the past year.

(2) €150 donated by Jack O'Rourke another club member who also sold items at the Baldoyle show.



The annual Seminar of the Dublin Woodturners will take place on Saturday 25th April 2020. The demonstrator for the day will be well known professional woodturner Donal Ryan. More details as they become available.

Here are the entries and results for the January competition.  
The subject was a Tea Light.

Advanced Section



1st Brendan Phelan



2nd Tony Hartney



3rd Tommy Hartnett



4th David Sweeney



5th Cecil Barron



6th Paddy Finn



7th Willie Edwards



8th Sean Duff



9th Frank Maguire

Experienced Section



1st Vincent Whelan



2nd Brendan Kelly

Beginners Section



1st John O Neill

Artistic Section



1st Brenda Phelan



2nd Colum Murphy



3rd Tommy Hartnett

Irish Daily Mail, Thursday,  
December 26th, 2019.

BOB GILBERT is the author of *Ghost trees: Nature and People in a London Parish* (Saraband, £14.99). by Bob Gilbert

WE NEED to preserve what we have left of the natural world. If we are to do so, and preserve ourselves along the way, it seems to me that we must start by learning to enjoy it more.

Conservation should always be an act of celebration; and a celebration that makes use of all our senses. Take our trees. When we first learn to recognise them, if we learn at all, it is through visual clues — the diverse forms of their leaves, perhaps; round or oblong, blunt or pointed, whole or toothed, deeply divided or lobed like the fingers on a hand.

After that may come an appreciation of the different patterns and textures of their bark, or their winter silhouettes. But, as the Mail's Be A Tree Angel campaign to plant thousands of trees goes from strength to strength, what if we could learn to recognise them not just by their physical characteristics but by the sounds they make; the wind in their leaves or the creaking and groaning of their branches?

Could it even be possible to distinguish species of tree on the basis of sound alone?

Thomas Hardy certainly thought so. No other English writer was so intimate with our woodlands as Hardy in his novel under *The*

**Thought birdsong was captivating? This author says listening to trees is even more enchanting (and swears he can tell one from another!)**

# The tree whisperer

*Greenwood Tree*, in which he describes firs as ‘sobbing and moaning’, the holly as ‘whistling’, the ash as ‘hissing’ and the beech as ‘rustling’.

‘To dwellers in a wood,’ he wrote, ‘almost every species of tree has its voice as well as its feature.’ The wonderful thing about trees, of course, is that you can encounter them anywhere. You need no equipment other than ears and no resource other than time. And you don’t even need much of that, as you can listen while walking to the station or coming back from the shops.

My own journey into tree song began with a plane tree in my backyard. While working on my book *Ghost Trees*, I spent a year observing it; its furlings and unfurlings, its aspect in every weather, its mood at different times of day.

Such close attention led me to listen to the sounds it made and I found, to my surprise, that they took me back to a childhood memory; of waves breaking on a shingle beach at the south coast resort where we had spent our summers. I could even hear the whoosh of the backwash receding through the pebbles.

It was this experience that gave me an idea of how I might begin to distinguish different trees. When I was first learning to recognise birdsong, I found the descriptions in books frustrating. How on earth was I to interpret a ‘nasal churring’, a ‘thin tsic’ or a ‘high-pitched tswee’?

Instead, I found it helpful to apply to each song some personal association. The most common call of the great tit, for example, resembled the squeaking of an old pram that I used to push when my

eldest boy was a baby, or the swinging to of an unopened garden gate. What if the same approach could be applied to tree sounds?

When the poet Julian May and I were making our recent Radio 4 programme 'The Susurrations of Trees', we collected all sorts of these personalised descriptions. The sound of aspens, we were told, was like 'the fizzing of carbonated water in a freshly opened bottle'; that of poplars reminiscent of 'the running of a young mountain stream' or 'the marching of feet in the treetops'. Oaks were 'papery', birches were 'sibilant' and pines were almost always 'whispering'.

It is a thoroughly mesmerising hobby — which I why I urge you to listen to trees for yourself. There will be no handbooks to guide you. You are going to be largely on your own, and all the better for it. There are some suggestions in the box above, but these are just starting points.

I cannot claim to be any great expert on tree sounds myself; just someone who has had a bit of a head start. Should you challenge me to a blind test on the matter, I cannot guarantee the outcomes. But the idea is just to do it — and enjoy it.

## **So what noise does each make?**

### **The Aspen**

One of the easiest tree sounds to recognise, as its leaves are almost perpetually in motion. Their sound is often likened to rainfall; a gentle summer shower, perhaps. Indeed,

the Romantic poet John Clare once described a young shepherd running for cover when he mistakes the sound of the aspen for the onset of rain.

### **The Poplar**

Poplars also shake their leaves in the slightest breeze. They are often described as 'shivering', while to me they sound like running stream water.

### **The Birch**

The birch has small, fine leaves on wispy, pendulous branches. The word 'sibilant', for a hissing noise, could have been invented to describe their sound.

### **The Fir**

Thomas Hardy describes them as 'sobbing and moaning' but the word usually applied to pines is 'whispering', as though they were passing on a secret from tree to tree.

### **The Beech**

Though soft when they emerge, beech leaves become drier and stiffer through the year and produce a distinctive rustling sound. Hardy described it as 'almost metallic' and like 'sheet-iron foliage'.

### **The Plane**

This common urban street tree reminds me of breakers on a shingle beach.

### **The Lime**

Another common street tree, with heart-shaped leaves that gather dirt as the year progresses. Their sound has been likened to someone flicking through a book.

### **The Ginkgo**

This beautiful Chinese tree is being increasingly planted on our streets. It has leaves shaped like a goose's foot, or a Chinese fan. The poet Julian May suggests they sound like the fluttering of oriental silk fans.

### **The Elm**

Mature elm trees are now few and far between, and although young ones still sprout, they reach only 12 or 15ft before being reinfected with Dutch elm disease. If you are lucky enough to come across one, their sound is rather song-like. Thomas Hardy described it as a 'melancholic Georgian melody'.

### **The Ash**

The leaf of the ash is deeply divided into two rows of separate leaflets. The sound it makes is like that of an old man running his fingers through his hair.

### **The Holly**

Holly leaves are stiff and crisp, though the sharply pointed ones often grow only on the lower parts of a tree. They often make a whistling noise.

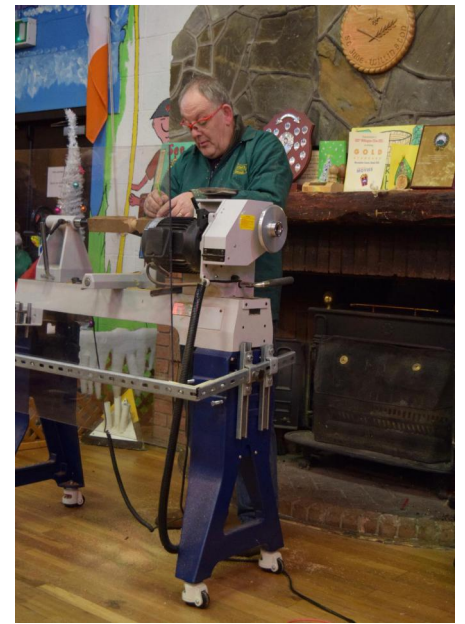
### **The Yew**

Yews are associated with a lack of sound, seeming to absorb all the noises around them. Stand beneath a yew and appreciate the silence of this ancient, historic and, sometimes, rather sinister tree.

Bob Gilbert



base of one handle to the other. The end result was a matching pair of door stops.



After tea break Vincent explained that he likes to buy old chisels and gouges as he feels that the steel is better in the older ones. However this generally means that the old handles are in poor condition and in some cases missing completely. He then demonstrated the making of a new handle by mounting a piece of 6x2x2 between centres.

**Wednesday 8th January 2020 with Vincent Whelan**

Vincent started by honing his gouges on a wet stone grinder he had bought recently but had not had a chance to try out. He then started the demonstration by mounting a 12x2x2 piece between centres on the lathe. The job in hand was to make a pair of door stops. He proceeded to mark out the dimensions required which

included a small handle at each end, the intention being to split the piece later to make two door stops.

Using a spindle gouge he turned one of the handles in the centre of the piece. Moving to the headstock end he turned another identical handle making good use of the callipers. Once both handles were completed he parted off the piece and then used a tenon saw to cut across it at a diagonal from the



He turned it to round with a roughing gouge and then using an



existing chisel copied out the shape of the handle on to the work piece. He went on the turn the new handle to the desired shape with a spindle gouge. Handles of course are very personal to every turner and we all have a particular shape of handle which we prefer. With a few minutes to spare Vinny mounted another piece in the lathe and quickly turned a garden dibber which he had promised to make for his father some time ago. A great demonstration of practical woodturning of everyday items. Many Thanks to Vinny



Demonstrators 2020		
	Staurday	Wednesday
Jan	Adrian Finlay	Paul Murtagh
Feb	Rich Varney	Vincent Whelan
Mar	Pat Walsh	Jonathan Wigham
Apr	Eugene Grimley	Pat Walsh
25th April	Seminar with Donal Ryan	Rich Varney
Jun	Tom McCosh	Colum Murphy
Jul	Peter Lyons	Tony Hartney
Aug	Christine Van Bussel	Tommy Hartnett
Sep	Frank Fitzpatrick	Brendan Kelly
Oct	Colum Murphy	Brendan Phelan
Nov	AGM	Cecil Barron
Dec	Joe O Neill	Joe O Neill

Competition Pieces 2020	
Jan	A Tea Light Holder
Feb	Off Centre Turning
Mar	Laminated Table Lamp
Apr	Cup and Saucer
25th Apr	A Plate (Advanced: two matching ) Seminar: Open
Jun	300x80x80
Jul	A Spinning Top
Aug	A Bowl
Sep	Fruit (Advanced: two pieces)
Oct	Wall Hanging with Texturing
Nov	AGM
Dec	A Christmas Item

The winners in February 2010 were.



Advanced: Sean Ryan



Experienced: Jack O Rourke



Beginners: Willie Raville

