

**W**oodcarvers are often perceived as lonely folk, carving away in isolation in their workshops. But that need not be so, as illustrated by the Solent Guild of Woodcarvers and Sculptors. The Guild, which was started in 1978 by just four men, this year celebrates its 21st anniversary with a membership of more than 70.

The idea for the guild was the inspiration of the late James Bell, one of the four, who believed more recognition and encouragement should be given to carving as an art form.

The men called a meeting at Cosham Park House, Portsmouth, Hampshire, in May 1978, and 20 people turned up to form the guild. A year later they held their first annual exhibition with more than 200 pieces on show. Membership was soon up to 50.

There are now some 70 members who recognise that carving one item leads inevitably to the determination to improve on the next. This impulse to create is fostered abundantly by group carve-ins, meetings with speakers, exhibitions, competitions and news letters.

Guest speakers have included a timber merchant, violin maker, Jack Whitehead on ships' figureheads, Duncan Johnson on 40 years of sculpture in lignum vitae, and Ian Brennan on heraldic carving.

#### Overseas visits

Visits have included ones to the late Dame Elizabeth Frink, the Edward Burnsley Educational Trust, letter cutter Richard Grasby, the Oxford Forestry Institute, Pierre Bataille in France and the Swiss Carving School in Brienz.

Members' work has included all types and styles of woodcarving, and two members have won awards at national woodworking exhibitions. Carving contributions have been made to highlight the work of endangered species at Marwell Zoo, the Parkinsons Disease Society and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust at Arundel.

There is so much to learn what amateurs can do with wood. The work of the great masters may be miles away from our capabilities, but any member of the guild will enthuse about the challenge and satisfaction of working in wood. ●

For information on the guild contact the secretary Pax Bengier, 17 Palmerston Way, Alverstoke, Gosport, Hampshire PO12 2LY. Tel: 01705 581845.

We also have our own web site with information about the guild and its activities on: [www.hants.gov.uk/solent\\_guild\\_woodcs/](http://www.hants.gov.uk/solent_guild_woodcs/)



Above Ray White talks to visitors at an exhibition and demonstration at Arundel in 1993.

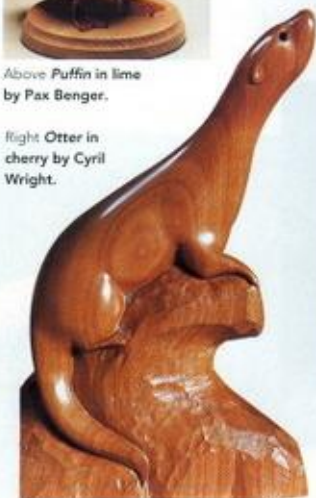


Above A guild exhibition and demonstration at Manor Farm, Bursledon, in 1994. Right My Sunday Best, hat, gloves and shoes in yew, laburnum and other woods by Betty Moore.



Above Puffin in lime by Pax Bengier.

Right Otter in cherry by Cyril Wright.



Above and Right Convolvulus, oak leaves, mallow and wild rose in lime by Derek Duff.



# COMING OF AGE



Above The Flower Seller, national award winning carving in lime by Charlie Perkins.



Right Members enjoy an outdoor carving session at Leigh Park Gardens.

Founder member John Duddell tells how the Solent Guild of Woodcarvers and Sculptors is celebrating 21 years of carving fellowship



Left Leaping Dolphins by Dennis Pert.