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## NEWSLETTER No 129

May, June, July, 2020 Summer Edition

Web site:

<http://www.solentguildofwoodcarvers.org.uk/>

### **EDITORIAL The Editor's thoughts by LP**

Dear Members, I hope this newsletter finds you in good health or as good as it can be. This quarters Newsletter, I thought was going to be a challenge but the good folks out there, have come up with some exceptional articles for me, to fill the blank pages and hence a great read, that's not to say the article that I've written about my inability to get on with wood carving isn't good, but I had this yearning urge to enlighten a few people with my excuses for not getting on with it, That's all I'm going to say about that. George has been very good sending out the emails to you all, and has had good responses from you, although I do have 1 or 2 people to thank, and that's for the emails from time to time especially PW, who is prolific with very funny emails and satirical pieces that he finds out there in the ether. Well please enjoy at your pleasure this newsletter. Lin.

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### **Chairman's musing by George Palmer**

Hello to you all. I hope that this finds you all in fine fettle I have heard and know that some of you have to that many members are getting along OK. Carving seems to have taken a back seat in many members' lives; I know it has with us. I finished the stag beetle etc and then had a form of carvers block; I didn't know what to do next. Fortunately both Lin and I are slowly getting back into it again. I know that many members like us have taken the opportunity to catch up with house or garden maintenance. I expect there are going to be many tales of makeovers undertaken indoors or out. The only members that I am aware of that have contracted covid have been Mike and his wife Caroline both of whom recovered well. In fact Mike popped by on his bike the other day to pick up a chisel he had bought off me. The other big gaps in our life besides missing meeting up with family has been the lack of social interaction whether it be at socials or carve-ins, also the lack of interactions with the public discussing our projects at events. It is so strange not to be attending shows but hopefully they will all be up and running for next year.

Life seems to be on hold despite modern technology. We all seem to have become socially isolated. I equate it to how it was before the advent of the railways. Then people, unless you were rich, stayed within a few miles of their village. Added to this we have had a lockdown not unlike that suffered by the village of Eyam in the plague of 1665, albeit theirs was self-imposed. I urge you all to keep in contact either by phone or by just dropping us a note email. Keep carving and let us know how you are getting on with your projects, remember we have a bumper competition coming next year.

## **REPORT FROM COMMITTEE MEETING**

Due to the coronavirus the Committee Meeting scheduled for 15<sup>th</sup> July was cancelled. We hope to have a meeting in October to start planning for 2021. However your Committee have not been sitting back as explained in George's email of 14<sup>th</sup> June. A summary of that email is as follows:

1. All socials and carve-ins will be cancelled until the end of the year at the earliest. Carve-Ins at PGS have been cancelled at no cost; likewise Socials at PCC.
2. Membership of the Guild for this year will be 'free'. All those that have already paid their subs have agreed to roll-over their subs to next year.
3. Hopefully we will start Carve-Ins again in the New Year. We will then ask members to pay £4 per session and receive a free raffle ticket until April when subs will due.
4. If we are able to get back together then it is suggested we have a New Year's celebration possibly in our first social slot in February.
5. We have withdrawn the Guild from all demonstrations this year. However some may still go-ahead (but without us). At the moment (13<sup>th</sup> July) those that MAY still go ahead are Rustic Sunday at the Rural Life Centre postponed to a date to be announced, Wests Wood Fair at a date to be announced, South Downs Green Fair at the Sustainability Centre on 6<sup>th</sup> September and the Autumn Countryside Show at the Weald and Downland Living Museum in October.
6. There will be no competition this year. Next year's competition will be open to all carvings completed in the previous three years, not the normal two year entries and have not gained a 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> place in a previous competition. The Bill Pinney competition will be decided at the AGM next year. This now gives you all a chance to complete those carvings ready for next year with no excuses.
7. The Chairman and Committee realise that many of you may be as disappointed with the decisions but hopefully you understand. Your health is important. It may be that we have to wait until a vaccine has been developed.

## **DEMONSTRATIONS** (John Vardon)

Members will see from the web site that although the Guild have currently withdrawn from all events where we planned to demonstrate have been cancelled. (See Report from Committee Meeting). Most 'other wood-related events' listed on the website have been cancelled. I will try and keep the website updated – see

<http://solentguildofwoodcarvers.org.uk/otherwoodrelatedevents.html>

## **SUBSCRIPTIONS and MEMBERSHIP**

Membership of the Guild for this year will be 'FREE'. All those that have already paid their subs have agreed to roll-over their subs to next year's sessions, and receive a free raffle ticket until April when subs will be due.

## **SOCIALS**

No socials are happening. If we are able to get back together then it is suggested we have a New Year's celebration, in our first social slot in February. 2021

## **AGM**

The reports normally presented at the AGM were prepared by the Committee to and emailed/sent to all Members for comment. Only one comment was received querying the accounts; this was addressed. Any comments received will be fed back to Members. Elections have been held over until next year. All those who were due for re-election have agreed to continue. Please note the position of Social Secretary is still vacant. If anyone wishes to volunteer to fill this vacancy please let the Secretary know.

## **PROGRAMME**

Although John has reissued the programme it shows no events for 2020! Once the world gets back to normal, or as normal as it can be the programme will be reissued.

## **ALEX JONES**

Alex would have been giving us a demonstration of his carving skills and work at a special days carving, but because it had to be cancelled twice now, George asked him if he would give us an article to put in the newsletter, and so he did. Below are two articles by him – Covid Carving and My Workshop.

### **Covid Carving** by Alex Jones

I started sculpting professionally over 30 years ago and have never been so thankful to be a wood carver than over the last 4 months. The refuge and escape that my tired old shed has given me over these trouble times has been immense.

A couple of sales at a contemporary art auction and two well timed commissions also help ease the usual worries that always hang just out of sight in an artist's mind. One of these has been the commission of a honey bee carved in oak. Into this I have inlaid lime wood, mahogany and black walnut compound eyes. The legs have a hinge so that the piece can work standing on the ground and suspended in the air. This will be achieved by a brass bar attached between the thorax and the abdomen. In the photos you will also see tooth pick bristles that have just been inserted (they still have to be trimmed a little) The next stage is to dismantle the beast again to ebonise certain parts of the oak (wire wool left to soak in vinegar for ten days creates a liquid that reacts with the tanin in the wood turning it black) Fine hairs can then be carved in this darkened wood showing the lighter wood underneath. The final stage will be a satin - matt varnish with a uv filter, I tend to use this now to give the wood natural colouring a bit of protection.

My next commission is a bust of a patron, one of favourite types of work!





## My Workshop by Alex Jones

Considering myself lucky to have a workshop in which I can work at any time, I thought I would share some pictures with you and hopefully we can make this a regular newsletter feature.

My whole family joined in erecting the shed in December 1993, yes that is me on the roof! With insulated and plywood clad interior, still hot in summer and cold in winter, but more comfortable than it would be without that insulation so well worth the effort.



Since then I have renewed the roof felt twice and replaced several tongue and groove boards due to wear and tear.

On the 'working' side of the shed, my bench is under the windows with a wall cupboard and chest of drawers for storing tools, books etc. The chest, with an old kitchen worktop, also serves as a suitable place for my sharpening machines.

The rest of the shed is general storage and tends to be a 'bit of a mess', which I keep telling myself I WILL tidy one day.



Whether you carve at the kitchen table or in a shed at the bottom of the garden and feel like sharing a few words - adding a photo or two so much the better - it would be interesting for us all.



### **THE VENERABLE YEW** by George Palmer

After doing some family history research we visited Priors Dean for a look around the area where some of my ancestors came from. We stopped by to have a look at the church but found it closed but in the grounds we saw this amazing Yew tree, *taxus baccata*.



The two of us and a tree

The notice board stated that this tree was over 2000 years old and the church only 820 years old. This shows the relationship between the church and the yew tree. I then decided to research these trees and found the website <https://www.ancient-yews.org> which is dedicated to these trees. As well as the information about the yew they also list all the ancient, those over 800 yrs. old, and the veteran, those over 500 plus years old, in Great Britain. It seems that there 978 ancient and veteran trees and of those nearly 200 are classed as Ancient. This is more than the rest of Europe put together. Due to wars Yew was sorely depleted in medieval England so much so that an import tax was established. All goods coming from Italy and Spain were taxed for example for every 10 barrels of Spanish wine 4 staves of yew suitable for longbows was demanded.

I then looked at the list of ancient and veteran yews within the Portsmouth diocese in SE Hampshire. There are in fact 10 ancient and 6 veteran yews in our area. Some of which you may already know of they are:-

**Ancient Yews** and which churchyards you can find them in

St Thomas Bedhampton

St Nicholas Boarhunt

Corhampton

Holy Cross Durley

St Peter & St Paul Fareham

St John Greatham

St Peter & St Paul Hambledon

Priorsdean

Thomas a Becket Warblington

St Mary Hayling Island

**Veteran Yews** and their associated churchyards

St Peter Froxfield green

St Peter & St Paul Hawkley

St Peter North Hayling

St James Southwick

All Saints Steep St

Peter West Liss.

Sadly these trees are not protected yet many of the younger churches who they grow up alongside them enjoy protected/ listed, status. So when you are out and about near these churches pop by and just take a moment to consider the history that has gone on around it during its long lifetime.

### **CARVINGS** (John Vardon)

Over the past few months during 'lockdown' I have completed two carvings – 'Bishop's Writer' and a Crab.

The Bishop's Writer, my name for the carving, is based on a sculpture I (with Val) came across in Utrecht, Netherlands. It was in the Bishop's Garden next to the Dom Tower which has 465 steps to the top; I was determined to get to the top for the views but I was pretty knackered when I got there. It was difficult to get to the sculpture, which is only about 2 feet tall, but I managed to take several photos from different angles, none of which were in the same plane. I therefore had to make some guesses of dimensions with my carving. Initially I had no idea of the item on the left wrist but after some discussion with two or three carvers we concluded it was a holder for the quill and an ink well.





Sculpture in Bishop's Garden



Carving from the right



Carving from the left

Why did I start the crab! I thought it would be fairly easy following on from a tortoise I had carved. I wanted to do the carving in one piece but there would have been no way to safely hold the carving. However, at Philip's suggestion I did it in two halves – the top and bottom. Mike Painter, during his visit to the Guild and who has never carved a crab, looked at it soon after I started and suggested I carved the legs separately. I should have listened to him! Anyway I succeeded although the underside could have been improved. I had to make a maquette in order to get the correct orientation of the legs. You can never get pictures/photos of all the views you want. I even looked in several fishmongers but all had their legs removed; crab legs that is. Anyway I think I succeeded to my satisfaction.





The two halves



Front View



View of Underside



View of Top

### **PORTCHESTER CASTLE** (John Vardon)

What has this got to do with carving? The answer is nothing! I am sure many of you have been spending time looking at articles on the web site. One I came across, through the English Heritage web site, was on Portchester Castle and its history as a prison especially for ‘black prisoners’. I had no idea that the castle was used as a prison in the 18th century and found the article very interesting. I am high lighting this article not because of the current politics but because of the local interest. The link is given below. <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/portchester-castle/history-and-stories/blackprisoners-at-portchester/>

### **THE Psychology of a wood carving person, ME!** By Lin Palmer

For a long time now I have been fighting with my conscious over the ability to carve an object from its conception to its completion. I’m always enthusiastic about carving a project but, about half way through the enthusiasm would wane, and if anything else should grab my attention, then the need to get started on the new project would takes over. Anyway over the years from the first time I went to Jess Jays Evening carving classes at Crockhorn School, because George and his friend Doug used to go. I thought I would like to give it a try. I soon became addicted. I might not be as speedy as some but I do love the challenges and really did enjoy the classes and the other students there, but what I hadn’t noticed was this little problem. It was back then I started to notice that sometimes, I liked starting new projects but, before I had finished what I was already carving, I would then start to carry on with the next project and say I would finished previous carving later. This became a bit of a habit, I have finished the odd projects like my, Motte and Bailey Castle carving for Chichester’s Priory park celebrations, and my Green man project I started on a course with Michael Painter. And

a few smaller projects over time but I'm ashamed to say there are still 13 left to go, shame! Shame! The thing is during the early part of lockdown, I just didn't seem to be able to do any wood carving at all. It seemed like a mental block had set in, but that's not to say that I didn't do anything at all because I made curtains painted furniture about four pieces, my sewing machine was on overload, not to mention loads of gardening. But still no carving until it finally came to me, I have always carved in the company of others, so George set up our carving things down the garden and this was the results. "HOORAY!" anyway I have promised to finish the outstanding ones before I start the next project. George has been busy and carved this magnificent stag beetle, showing a real one in front of it.



**Mike Charlton**, Has been busy during lockdown







Mikes likes wooden automata as well as traditional style wood carving

### **EMAILS**

Obviously the Chairman and/or Secretary have been sending emails to Members providing latest information on the Guilds activities. However, as it appears that some Members have not received emails in the recent past, it is also important for you to check the Guild's web site for any latest information (as well as your Span folder).

Also for those who don't have a computer, you can receive a phone call or written word of information. Please ask John or George!

### **NEW MEMBER'S**

Although he has not formally joined, Mark Penfold is still keen to join us. He came along to the last Carve-In before 'lock-down' and started carving a leaf-shaped bowl. He has kept in touch with us and hopes to return when Carve-Ins re-commence.

### **SICKNESS**

Beryl Shepherd had an argument with her flower bed and broke her thigh bone. She was confined to indoors and having to use a Zimmer Frame to get around. She says "the flower bed fared better than me but revenge is sweet and it is in for some modification as soon as I and my son's angle grinder are able"! Hope you get well soon Beryl.

Next issue 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020 (Please make sure that any submissions for the newsletter are received by no later than the October 25<sup>th</sup> 2020) Lin Palmer.