



**Issued on the January 2023**  
**NEWSLETTER No 139**

**November, December, January 2023**

**Winter Edition**

**Web site:**

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

**Editor's thoughts** By Lin Palmer

Happy New Year and welcome to 2023, I hope you all had a wonderful Christmas with your families and friends. As you guessed George and I did, very quiet and pleasing with plenty to keep us amused the only trouble is, that Christmas goes so quickly, well let's hope that this year is going to be a better year, and now that everything is supposed to be resuming at a normal pace and that we can all be singing from the same song sheet of life and get on and enjoy it, does it make sense of course it does we are a happy Solent Guild of Wood carvers and Sculptors, just like a well-oiled machine we are revving to go, carving and socializing and giving the public our best performances yet we will soldier on to the best of our abilities as have done in the past. It is at this moment that I will be asking you for your stories again, even if it's just an opinion on a matter that's dear to you, just so that you don't end up having to read my ramblings all the time.!

**Sad News**

It is with sad news that I have to tell you Joan Baker one of our long-standing social members passed away on November 4<sup>th</sup> 2022. As we hadn't heard anything from Joan, it was at this point that John decided to visiting her home, it was then that he found out from Joan's son Ian of Joan's sad demise. John has passed on the Guild condolences to Ian and his family. She will be solely missed by all.

**CHAIRMANS BIT** George Palmer

I seem to have been forever writing these bits. Maybe one day someone else will like to take on the mantle?

We have seen a steady increase in the numbers attending the carve-ins as the month has progressed. It has been nice to see some faces returning, for instance Craig who designed the new updated pamphlet. It would also be nice to see some of our older members return to the fold in due course. Members are enjoying the chance not only to get together to carve but also to socialize, it is I believe an important part of the club alongside the carving and promoting the craft to others.

Hopefully as the year progresses, we can encourage more people to join us. In the meantime, happy carving.

## **REPORT FROM THE COMMITTEE**

Just a reminder the committee meetings now take place on a Saturday carve -in as this save's us having to hire a separate venue and petrol.

### **Committee Meeting** by the Chairman

After the usual pleasantries we discussed and finalised our yearly programme that had been put together by John.

We then discussed the need to find more local venues to display and demonstrate at. George stated that he had searched Portsmouth and contacted the Aspex gallery but to no avail. He will approach Portsmouth Museum and see if they could accommodate us for a weekend in the summer.

Posters advertising us will be pushed out within our local area including men's sheds. Alwyn stated that the Guild's funds remain in a healthy state and that he will promulgate details about subscriptions and payment methods.

Having the meeting at a carve-in is proving to be successful and we continue with this for the foreseeable future.

Minutes of the meeting will be available at the next carve-in.

### **Message from the Treasurer**

Just a reminder that the membership fees become due for the next year 2023/24 on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2023

They remain at the current rates of £21 for full members and £7 for social member's.

There are again 3 ways of making a payment.

- a) By cash payment
- b) By cheque payment NB Cheques made out to SGWS or the full name of the Guild
- c) By bank transfer where payment details remain the same

The relevant details can be obtained by contacting the treasurer. if required.

## **CARVE-INS**

The year's carve ins resumed on Saturday the 7<sup>th</sup> of January where we had the first committee meeting of the year. The following carve-ins are on

4<sup>th</sup> of February and the 18<sup>th</sup> of February

4<sup>th</sup> of March and the 18<sup>th</sup> of March

1<sup>st</sup> of April and the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April

### **Bill Pinney Shield** Completion date 13<sup>th</sup> May.

The theme for the 2023 Frank Leach competition is 'vegetables' and to use your own interpretation. Please see Peter Hallam if you require any further information.

P.s if you use it as a vegetable then I am happy for you to include it e.g., tomatoes, cucumber, aubergine as examples are actually fruit but we cook or eat them as vegetables. George

## **SOCIALS** by George and Lin Palmer

The next Social will be the quiz and games night on the 8<sup>th</sup> of February at Portchester community centre starts at 7. 30 pm There will be the usual raffle and refreshment will be supplied as well.

## **SOCIAL REPORT** by Lin Palmer

The American supper this year again was very successful, but without your amazing support that you supply by the bucket loads and although you always thank me for organising it it's all its down to the fantastic food that you give us to indulge in and to Gillian for yet another Christmas quiz to occupy our grey matter as we enjoy ourselves.

It just makes for an amazing evening so from me a big thank you. Oh, by the way next year I will definitely make sure that there are plenty of photos, as this year it seems everybody thought that everybody was taking photos but it turned out that only George had taken one photo and it didn't show the full amount of things going on, so as not to disappoint everyone I will make a better effort to show case our American supper next year.

## **The Pinwill Sisters** by George Palmer

I decided to investigate woodcarvers and ended up looking at a link to the Pinwill sisters. I then wondered if anyone had heard of them and their accomplishments. Then given that march is international women's month that this would make a good subject.

At a time when women weren't allowed to enter the professions especially the woodcarving profession. Although they were allowed to do amateur carving or teach others to carve, they weren't expected or allowed to turn professional.

I have learnt a lot from Helen Wilson who has done in-depth research into them and produced an excellent book on them. Information about the book etc can be accessed from her website at [www.pinwillsisters.org.uk](http://www.pinwillsisters.org.uk) .

They were three of five daughters to Rev Edmund Pinwill of Ermington church and his wife Elizabeth. He became its vicar in 1880. It was then that he found that the church was in a state of disrepair. It and another church at Holbeton came under the purview of local landowner Henry Mildmay. When looking to spend money on repairs he favoured Holbeton since it was nearest to his manor in Flete. He employed the architect John D Sedding, who was a pivotal person in the arts and Crafts movement, to take on the restoration. After funds were eventually found to finally restore Ermington church, John gave the job of architect to his nephew Edmund. When the team of craftsmen stonemasons, carvers and joiners were assembled Elizabeth approached the head woodcarver, William Giles, to teach her daughters woodcarving in the evenings. The three daughters that were the keenest woodcarvers were Mary, Annie known as Ethel and Violet. The other daughters went on to flourish in the musical world. With Constance becoming an acclaimed violinist, Grace and accomplished pianist, Bertha and Ruth teaching both violin and piano. The three girls also received help and support from the architect Edmund Sedding. This link was to be a long-standing collaboration for them. The three girls and William Giles went on to carve the reredos and the pulpit in the picture's below in 1889.

In 1890 Mary set herself up in a workshop in Plymouth advertising woodcarving lessons. By 1891 she and her two sisters set themselves up as Rashleigh, Pinwill & Co Ecclesiastical woodcarvers, their architect was Edmund Sedding. Their workshop was based in Ermington

although their head office was in Plymouth. They eventually went on to set up their main workshops in Plymouth due to the need for larger premises. Mary married in 1900 to the Rev Henry Chapter and moved to Lancashire giving up woodcarving. Ethel left the Ermington workshop to set up business on her own in Kingston on Thames as a professional woodcarver. This left Violet to reshape the business in her name. Despite its ups and downs including a devastating fire in their workshop the firm carried on until Violet fell ill in her workshop on Dec 29<sup>th</sup>, 1956, and died in Jan 1957 at the age of 82. She had a remarkable career in woodcarving given that she had run the firm alone from 1911 until her death nearly 46 years later.

In the lifetime of the firm, they completed carvings in both wood and stone in over 180 churches across Devon and Cornwall and 18 churches elsewhere.

The book is a must as is a visit to some of the churches. Their work was both strong and delicate and when restoring woodwork, they aimed to use as much of the original as they could find. Any replacement wood was left bare, in the arts and crafts style, to differentiate between the original and replaced timber.



*The Pinwill sisters in 1889 with completed reredos for Chilthorne Domer, Somerset and the pulpit for Ermington church Devon. Left to right: Edmund H. Sedding, designer, Ethel Pinwill, William Giles, carver and tutor, Harry Flashman, joiner, and Mary and Violet Pinwill. Photo's courtesy of Helen Wilson and Ermington Church.*

### **The Guilds web site** by John Vardon

The menu structure of the Guild's website has been updated. I have deleted the For Sale/Wanted pages. This allows the pages for Latest News, Newsletters and Programme to be brought to the top level of the menu which allows easier access to this information. Pages for Guild Articles and Committee are now under the Activities page; this was necessary as the menu bar was too long. For those who access the site from a mobile I have brought all pages to the top level to allow easier access on these small devices. In addition I have now included the Guild History written in 2018 under the Activities/Guild Articles tabs. There may be further (minor) changes to make the site simpler to maintain. If anyone has any suggestions for changes, improvements, etc. to the website please let John Vardon know.

## **Tree facts**

### **Black wood in some of its forms**

Is it natural or is it ebonized or even Japanned these are some of the descriptions given to wood that is black in colour and some of its treatments and uses.

There aren't many natural black woods other than Ebony or African Blackwood but then do you consider Bog oak to be natural. It is also black as a result of being submerged in a peat bog environment for long the length of time. In my view I would say that it is natural.

#### Gaboon Ebony (Diospyros Crassiflora)

Gaboon Ebony is commonly known as African ebony, West African ebony, and Benin ebony. It is native to Equatorial West Africa. The heartwood of Gaboon is jet-black. Sometimes dark brown or greyish-brown streaks may be present. The body is the perfect combination of reds and browns, while brown is the most dominant colour in the species. The colour of the stripes ranges from black to dark brown. Ebony is hard and dense. In fact, ebony wood is one of the hardest woods on the planet.

Gaboon Ebony is very durable and hard (Janka Hardness is 3,080 LBF (13,700 N)) with good resistance to termites and other insects. It performs well in water and moisture.

**Uses:** Decorative objects, musical instrument parts, pool cues, carvings, and other small specialty items.

**Workability:** Can be difficult to work with hand tools due to their extremely high density. There are problems with interlocked or irregular grain while working with the planer.

#### Macassar Ebony (Diospyros Celebica)

Macassar Ebony is commonly known as **black ebony**, is native to Southeast Asia ([Sulawesi](#) in [Indonesia](#)). Heartwood is the dark brown striped appearance of dark brown and black and the sapwood is pale golden in colour.

The Macassar is rated as very durable. But it is more prone to insects and rot. It requires maintenance for outdoor uses. By the way, it is a very strong and durable wood, its Janka hardness is 3,220 LBF (14,140 N) and its dried weight is about 70 lbs/ft<sup>3</sup> (1,120 kg/m<sup>3</sup>).

**Uses:** Veneer, high-quality cabinetwork, billiard cues, musical instruments, and other small specialty items.

**Workability:** The workability of Macassar Ebony is not very good. Due to its hardness, there is a problem in working with tools.

## Malaysian Blackwood (Diospyros Ebonasea)

Malaysian Blackwood is native to Malaysia. Its heartwood ranges from a medium brown to nearly black and the sapwood is a pale yellow to tan colour with brown or reddish streaks.

It has a straight grain (Sometimes it can also be irregular), with a very fine even texture and good natural lustre. Malaysian Blackwood is very durable. It is not rated as rot resistant. It is not suitable for outdoor uses.

**Uses:** Acoustic guitars, turned objects, knife handles, and inlay.

**Workability:** Its workability is not very good. Its high density and irregular grain make it difficult to work with hand tools.

## Is Ebony toxic to humans?

Although serious reactions are fairly uncommon, some species of ebony are specifically reported to cause skin irritation. Such as Macassar Ebony (*Diospyros celebica*) and Brown Ebony, Guayacan (*Libidibia paraguariensis*). Some species may be responsible for eye, skin, and respiratory irritation.

So, safety first, if you are already dealing with the problem of skin allergy, then before working on ebony, use gloves for hands and glasses for eyes.

For this subject, Ebony, I am only giving you a taster of this tree as it is very wide and diverse subject I would have to write a book on it to enlighten you further.



You will see here some small items of ebony carved things the fact that they look very black and are quite difficult to carve as the wood is very dense and blunts your chisels easily



This little morning brooch is simply carved it was the sort of thing that it was used for. It was also used for salts and candlesticks and dressing table items such as hair brushes and manicure sets amongst other small personal items.



It was also extensively used for furniture panelling. I have here a panel possibly from a bed end to show you that ebony also has varying colour from black to brown to red and sometime a golden colour. This shows some of the rich brown colour almost black in this portion shown here in these pictures from the panel. On the back of this panel we found a carvers mark, it is quite unusual.



In the next newsletter I will talk about ebonised wood and the different processes that this brings to the wood.

This article was put together with some materials from the internet.

### **A bit of humour**

Many years ago, there was a dispute between two villages one in Hampshire and the other in Wiltshire. One day the villagers heard the cry, “one man from Hampshire. is stronger than one hundred Wiltshire men”.

The villagers in Wiltshire were furious and immediately sent their hundred strongest men to engage the enemy. Hey, listened, horrified by the screams and shouts. After hours of fighting all was quiet but none of the men returned

Later on the same voice shouted out, “is that the best you can do?”

This fired up the people from Wiltshire and they rallied round, getting a thousand men to do battle after days of the most frightful blood curdling sounds, one man emerged from the Battlefield barely able to speak, but with his last breath he managed to murmur, it’s a trap there’s only two of them.

### **Sickness**

Unfortunately, some of our members are unable to be with us as they have health issues, and it is because we care we wish them a speedy recovery and to get better soon. But if you are like

Peter Hallam, you have had an accident with some of your equipment and have seriously damaged your fingers not only do we want you to know that we are wishing you a speedy recovery and hoping that your digits will still be useable once they are better.

The next Newsletter will be issued on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 2023 (Please make sure any submissions are received before the 25<sup>th</sup> of April so that I can process them in time, thank you, the editor Lin Palmer