



NEWSLETTER No 152

Spring Edition

(February, March and April 2026)

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www.solentguildofwoodcarvers.org.uk

“Every block of wood is said to have a carving inside of it. It is up to the sculptor to find it” by Tim Curtis

Welcome to the Spring newsletter!

In this edition we'll take a look at some of the carvings that exist in Rosslyn chapel (as featured in the Dan Brown novel, and Tom Hanks film, *The Da Vinci Code*); have a brief report from the first demonstration of the year and take a look at some spoons that one of the members has recently completed. We'll have some wise words from our chairman and take the opportunity to reflect on Pat Kyari, following her recent passing.

Firstly though, have a look at this.

索伦特木雕师和雕塑家协会

It is something that I picked up from my interpreter during a recent trip to south west China. It actually says “Solent Guild of Woodcarvers and Sculptors” in Mandarin Chinese.

Anyone fluent in that particular language will recognise that it actually says “association” not “Guild”. This is because *association* is the closest word that the Chinese have for *Guild*. The first four characters that you can see is the literal, phonetic translation of “Solent”.

My plan is to get my knives out and see if I can chip-carve something that looks similar. The alternative (or maybe a second project) would be to carve it in relief ... although, at my present skill level, that does look like it might involve a lot of superglue. I'll keep you posted.

Whilst on the subject of all things Chinese I'm reminded of one of Confucius's quotes that always seems apt to my carving developmental journey: "*It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop*". I'll take that.

Chairman's Ramblings

As we move from weeks of wet and chilly weather into brighter, sunnier days, it certainly feels as though summer is on its way. With the better weather comes the start of our demonstration season, always an enjoyable and inspiring time in the club calendar. We look forward to welcoming our demonstrators who share their techniques, ideas and enthusiasm for woodcarving with visitors who come to look at our displays.

There are only a couple of Carve In sessions at the Grammar School remaining this season, so do make every effort to attend if you can, especially the AGM on 9th May. Included in the remaining programme are two important events: as previously mentioned, our AGM on 9th May, where we review the year and look ahead to the next, and of course the ever popular Frank Leach Competition. (Size limit for entries 8"x 8"). This is always a highlight, showcasing the talent and creativity within our group, and I encourage as many members as possible to take part.

So, with sunnier days ahead, let us make the most of the final gatherings of the season and enjoy all that our club has to offer.

Jess Jay

Chairman

Demonstrations

Sunday the 15th of March saw the first demonstration of the season and six members of the Guild descended upon Manor Farm, Hamble.



Our venue was the big barn which was a really good setting for our *carve-in-on-the-road*.

Whilst it was chilly (probably downright cold by the end of the day!) the footfall of visitors was fairly high – and interest in what the Guild does was equally encouraging. A couple of young children were particularly interested in the fact that Ray was carving a Father

Christmas head ... in March! They couldn't work out if Saint Nicholas was late for last year's festive season – or just very early for this year's. Ray was just happy that they recognised his work-in-progress as Santa!

The display table was full of examples of work by many members of the Guild and there was plenty more not-yet-finished pieces on show too – as well as maquettes and photographs of what the carvers are striving towards.



It was a great start to the demonstration period and the first of a few more days at Manor Farm this year.

Rosslyn Chapel

As is always the case, I'm grateful to members who submit articles or suggest topics for inclusion in these newsletters. In this edition I'm grateful to Jean for drawing my attention to an extremely significant source of carvings in a building just south of Edinburgh. If you've

ever read the Da Vinci Code, or watched the film, you'll be aware that it is a fictional story about the search for the Holy Grail. You'll also be aware that the conclusion of that search leads to Rosslyn Chapel in Scotland. Jean has long wanted to visit the chapel in person and, relatively recently, achieved that ambition – and she was not disappointed.

I'm also grateful to her for lending me her book: "The Secrets of Rosslyn" by Roddy Martine and a leaflet ("Welcome to Rosslyn Chapel") that she picked up during her visit that has to help me try and introduce to you some of what she saw.

Rosslyn Chapel is home to a whole host of carvings, inside and out, and I can, in no way, pay service to all them in this brief article. I'm going to therefore focus on of the primary examples that exist at the Chapel – both which impressed Jean during her visit. Firstly, the so-called "Apprentice Pillar"(also, in many places, referred the Princes Pillar).

Not only does this play a fairly major role in the Da Vici (no spoilers here!) but it is also steeped in history and stories surrounding its creation. The primary account there are subtly different versions even on this legend) that the Master-Carver was tasked to carve a column, like of which had never been seen before. In order to inspiration, he went to Rome (or Florence ... or Venice all of them, depending on which version you read).

Whilst he was away, his apprentice had a vision during his sleep of what the column could, and should, look like. The religious elders of the day considered this vision to be a message directly from God and so tasked the apprentice to carry out the work. On the master-carver's return, he saw the completed pillar and, in a bout of jealous rage, killed the apprentice, in the chapel, by striking him with his own mallet. The master-carver was found guilty of the murder and sentenced to death. But to ensure eternal damnation, a carving of his head was made on one of the walls that overlooks the pillar in order that he must look at the work of his apprentice for evermore.

The second, often referred to, carving(s) at the chapel is the green man. Actually, I should say, the Green men as there are over 100 off them dotted around both inside and outside of the building.



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Roddy Martine, in Jean's book, suggests more than 120 such carvings but even he doesn't specify an exact figure. This is for two reasons: firstly, some of the external carvings have been ravaged by the elements across the ages (the Chapel dating from 1446) and so contain insufficient detail to be definitively counted as a green man. Secondly, some of the depictions have just the smallest references to foliage that there is debate as to whether they were meant to be considered a green man or not. I guess the bottom line is, next time you are crossing the boarder and spending some time near Edinburgh, wander round the chapel and start counting!



Before we leave the Chapel, I'd like to show you a few images from the website: www.rosslynchapel.com/visit/things-to-do/explore-the-carvings which I recommend to you. Where else would you find carvings of "Lucifer", "An Angel Playing the Bagpipes" and "A Farmer's Wife Rescuing a Goose from the Jaws of a Fox" in such close proximity(see all three below)!



Finally, the "Musical Cubes", each one unique (often cited as a form of code – a theory exploited in the Da Vinci Code) are also worthy of note.



On a slightly different note, can I also thank Terry for giving me permission to show some of his recently completed spoons that he has been carving. I'm envious, as the newcomer to this craft that I am, about the finish that he has achieved. Something I'm still aspiring to accomplish.



Pat Kyari: RiP

I'd very much like to take this opportunity to remember Pat who, as many of you are already aware, sadly passed away earlier this month. I'm particularly grateful to John (Vardon) for giving me some wonderful pictures of Pat and her work (in both stone and wood). Many people spoke warmly of her at the last carve-in and I can see why her work was held in such high regard.



Carve-in Sessions

As is always the case, please check the Latest Information page of the guild's website for the most up-to-date details as arrangements can change at fairly short notice due to

circumstances often beyond our control. That said, at the time of going to press, the final three carve-in dates before the summer break are as follows:

May the 9th and 23rd and June the 6th.

As mentioned earlier, the demonstration season is up and running and Manor Farm will see a number of the Guild's members across the May Bank Holiday weekend of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th of May.

Manor Farm have also invited us to be back there again on June the 14th too.

June's demonstrations continue on the 20th and 21st at West's Wood Show (East Dean, near Chichester).

More demonstrations are planned for August and September – but more about those in the next newsletter.

The next issue will be circulated on or about the 31st of July 2026. If you've anything that you'd like to be included in that edition, please let me know before the 25th of that month. All articles and submissions, whether a couple of lines or a couple of pages, will be gratefully received.