

# SOLENT GUILD OF WOODCARVERS & SCULPTORS

## WOODCARVING TIPS

The following are some useful tips which the carver may find useful.

1. Taking digital photographs of a 'finished' carving and homing-in to parts often highlights discrepancies in the carving.
2. Turn a carving upside down or looking at a carving in a mirror often show problems especially if the carving has any symmetry.
3. If your shavings don't curl as you carve then you may find your gouges are not sharp enough
4. Before you start carving think about where it is going to be placed. For example if it is a relief carving and hung above eye level then you must consider the parts of the carving, even the undercutting, you see when looking up.
5. If your carving, in particular relief, is too big for the vice, then glue or screw a small block of scrap wood on the back of the carving. Placing a sheet of newspaper between the block and the carving will make it easier to separate at the end.
6. If you are using a small block of wood to secure your carving consider making the block hexagonal or octagonal rather than just rectangular so you can turn your carving at different angles.
7. When 'marking' the outline of your carving use a U-shape – No.11 – gouge or a Veiner to scribe the outline, i.e. use the gouge as a 'sketching tool'. This is preferable to 'stabbing the outline' as the gouge effectively become a wedge and compress the fibres of the wood.
8. If you are not certain how to carve something, e.g. a face, practice on a scrap piece of wood first.
9. When applying a finish to a carving, carvers often use waxes or mineral oils, such as Danish oil, but there are many more available to you. Where a carving comes into contact with food, it is worth considering using a vegetable oil, e.g. sunflower oil, as mineral oils may have the effect of tainting the food. However, the disadvantage of this method is that vegetable oils do not provide the same hardness to the finish as mineral oils. Note any safety warnings especially with oils, and the cloth used to apply it, as they may be flammable.