

SOLENT GUILD OF WOODCARVERS & SCULPTORS

TOOL SHARPENING GUIDELINES

The key to good carving is having very sharp tools. They should be sharpened and honed on a regular basis. That does not mean once a week or month but every hour or so depending on what you are carving. Some woods like oak may need tools to be sharpened every fifteen minutes. Blunt tools lead to accidents. So what equipment is required? The following is considered to be the basic:

1. A combination oil stone that can be found in almost all tool shops and often at car-boot sales. The combination should be a coarse and fine grit stone. Alternative to this is a 'continuous diamond stone' again of two grits. (Avoid diamond stones which have gaps, which may be filled with plastic, in the surface as the gouge may dig-in and damage the edge).
2. A small slip stone for the inner edge of the gouge.
3. A small can of oil for the oil stone; water is used with the diamond stone.
4. An offcut of a piece of leather obtainable from an old style shoe repairers or an old belt. This should be glued to a piece of wood with the rough side (of the leather) up.
5. Some metal polishing paste.

There are many alternatives, e.g. ceramics or even very fine (1000+ grit) 'wet and dry' paper.

On how to use these items carvers should consult other carvers, woodcarving books, Woodcarving magazine and sometimes manufacturers provide information in their catalogues. There are numerous ways and like the choice of tools ask ten carvers and you get ten different answers.

If money is no problem then buying an electrical system with a grinder and buffing wheel is the answer.