



# WOODCRAFT MATTERS

THE NEWSLETTER OF WOODCRAFT MANNINGHAM

MAY 2026

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hello Woodcraft Manningham members, welcome to the May edition of our club newsletter. We've had a busy and successful couple of months, with great turnout at our community events and a lot of fantastic woodwork happening both in the club and at home. As we look forward to the cooler months, it's great to see the dedication and camaraderie that keeps Woodcraft Manningham thriving. Thank you all for your continued support and commitment to our craft.

### Past Events & Highlights

Warrandyte Festival March 28, 2026

Our presence at the Warrandyte Festival was a massive success! We had 13 wonderful helpers on the day who volunteered their time to demonstrate skills, sell timber projects, and manage the crowds. Together, we helped kids assemble a massive 150 bird boxes! There were plenty of smiling, happy kids walking around the festival, and admittedly, a few very tired club members by the end of the day. A huge thank you to everyone who pitched in to make it happen.

Bacchus Marsh Carve-In May 1–3, 2026

The first weekend of May marked the 29th annual Bacchus Marsh Carve-In. 27 participants gathered for a weekend dedicated to the craft, including one brand-new carver whom we were thrilled to welcome. The weekend was packed with excellent carving sessions, informative demonstrations, and great casual talks. Above all, the atmosphere was fantastic—it remains a staple event for a very good reason. Click [here](#) to see the video of the Carve-In

### Club Notices & Safety

Upcoming First Aid Course. We are currently organizing a First Aid Course to be conducted soon for our members. Keeping our skills sharp extends beyond the lathe and the workbench, so we highly encourage participation. The exact date will be announced shortly. Keep an eye on your inbox!

### Safety in the Workshop: Respiratory Health

A reminder to everyone about the invisible hazards of our hobby. While we have dust extraction at the club, at home we tend to create a lot of dust without thinking twice about it. I was recently informed by a member that their doctor discovered a mark on their lungs, likely caused by years of breathing in fine wood dust while woodworking. It is incredibly easy to get lax about masks and ventilation, but our actions today can cause serious health problems down the road.

It is never too late to start protecting your lungs. If you are looking to upgrade your home workshop setup, consider an overhead ambient air filter. For example, the larger model air filter from Timbecon is currently retailing for \$495 and does an excellent job of clearing fine, suspended dust from the air. See photo on Page 2.

Thank you again for your continued support and dedication to the club. Stay safe, wear your dust masks, and happy woodworking!

*John Paine President, Woodcraft Manningham*

## Woodcraft Manningham

[www.woodcraft-manningham.org.au](http://www.woodcraft-manningham.org.au)

Opposite 8 Anderson St, Templestowe  
Behind the Manningham/Templestowe Leisure Centre  
Clubroom Phone 9846 8148

**President:** John Paine 0411 451 234

**Treasurer** Bill Wood 0403 329 577

**Secretary** Trevor Jenkins 0407 825 474

### Committee Members

Allan Way 9459 9049

Phil Leach 0414 446 123

Bob Edwards 0417 230 026

Ernie Gmehling 0401 924 205

**Membership Secretary** Bill Wood

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**Newsletter:** Woodcraft Matters

**Editor** Mel Forbes 0417 104 197  
melvyn.forbes@gmail.com

Members' contributions to the Newsletter are always welcome. Please note that contributors are responsible for the accuracy of any information they send in for publication. The Editor takes no responsibility for correcting spelling and punctuation errors.

*Our clubhouse was once Templestowe Primary School, originally built in 1874. It is situated on the lands of the Wurundjeri people and we wish to acknowledge them as traditional owners. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.*

Front Page logo image: Valerie Forbes, 2016

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The air filter in the workshop of John Paine. Easy to install and maintain, and quite effective.



## CLUB ROOM EMERGENCY RESPONSE

**IF AN AMBULANCE IS CALLED TO THE CLUB ROOMS, QUOTE THIS LOCATION:**

**OPPOSITE 8 ANDERSON ST, TEMPLESTOWE, BEHIND THE MANNINGHAM/TEMPLESTOWE LEISURE CENTRE.**

**MAKE SURE SOMEONE IS WAITING AT THE STREET TO GUIDE THE AMBULANCE IN, AS THEY MAY MISS THE ENTRANCE. (These directions are also posted above the phone in the foyer of the club rooms)**

## DIY Carving Tools

I joined the Thursday afternoon carving group at the beginning of the year after an invite from my good friend Bob Thorpe.

Initially I used the shared trays of gouges to start with, but then thought that with my fitting and turning background I would have a go at making my own. A selection of gouges in my collection so far is shown below.

They are created using hand tools, dremel, angle grinder



etc, along with my milling machine to machine the 'V' gouges. I use any heat treatable carbon steel I have lying around, such as old files, power hacksaw blades, coil springs heated and unwound and broken spade bits. They are heat treated and annealed as required using a propane torch. Sharpening is from a modified 6" bench grinder with hard felt disk on one end and a soft cotton mop on the other.



The handles are made from any hard wood I have, e.g. Ash, Cypress pine, Melaleuca tree branches etc. The small ones are an old broom handle left as round or planed with a hand plane to a profiled octagon shape. The larger handles are created initially by turning a round

blank approx. 32mm dia. with centers in each end. The blank is held in a basic profiling jig by tightening a pointed locking screw to firmly hold them and cut with a fine blade on my band saw, following the profiled jig base shape.

I use a square and a 45 deg. wedge to create the octagon shape, sand and seal as required, with a finished size of approximately 25 mm across the flats.



Most of the blades are glued into the handles with 5 minute Araldite. They are still under development to see how they hold up under a variety of operator usage.

A big thanks to all the Thursday afternoon group for their support.

*Ian Overend*

## 29th Bacchus Marsh Carve-In, 2026

The 29th Bacchus Marsh Carve-In was a great success, as usual. Here are some of the highlights, and for a video of the event, click [here](#). We're looking forward to celebrating our 30th year next year. (Photos courtesy of Thanh Duong)



Bacchus Marsh Carve-in May 2026



Friday night  
Show & Tell



Our Saturday presenters: Michael Carew, Carl Luz, Frank Duyker

## More Carve-In, 2026



Friday Night People's Choice Prize Winners



Carvings from the weekend



Sunday – 5 Group Leaders received special Timbecon vouchers

## Birdbox Door Archway

In the last newsletter I mentioned that I was going on a journey of research and development to design a jig to cut out the arched doorway in one process on the club bandsaw. I wasn't having a lot of success. But the wood people out there have a lot of collective knowledge!

I received an email from David at Latrobe Valley Woodturning and Woodworking club. After reading my story of cutting the arched doorway, he suggested I contact Jalor Tools in Knoxfield to ask about narrow bandsaw blades. I checked the club bandsaw manual, and the smallest width of blade is 3.2 mm (1/8 inch in the old system) .

I ordered two blades 3.2 mm wide and 14 TPI because that is the only size the blade of this size came in. The blades needed to be fitted to the bandsaw and the jig tested. My thanks to Charles for his support with my endeavours. I think we did two or three blade changes in the end.

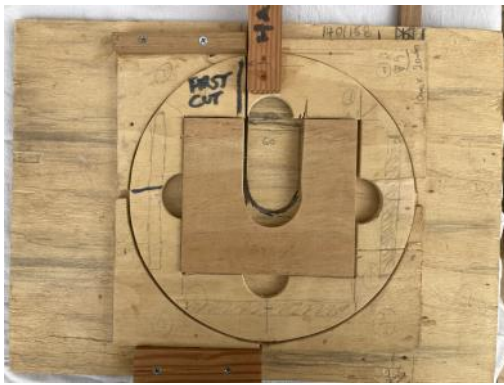
It worked! Photos of three completed cuts are shown on the next page. But it was very delicate. The size of the blades and the size of the blade guides are not optimum. I think smaller guide rollers may be better.

We now have options on birdbox wood cutting day. We have a jig that can cut the archway, but you would need to be careful/gentle, or continue with the 50mm Forstner bit and vertical cuts on the bandsaw.

*Phil Leach*

*Thursday Night Turners*

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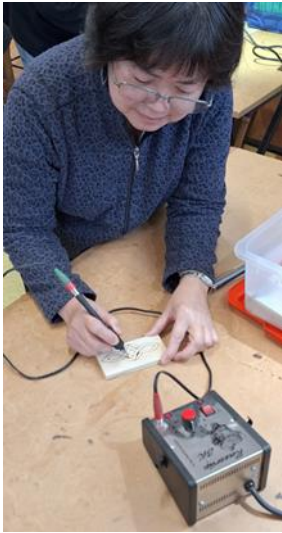
Phil Leach's birdbox-window-cutting jig on the job

## Visitor from Eltham & District Woodworkers Teaches us Pyrography

Maïke Pritchard is a member of Eltham & District Woodworkers, and along with members of a number of other woodworking clubs, regularly attends the annual Carve-In. Maïke is an accomplished artist in the medium of pyrography, and recently visited the Thursday carvers to give a demonstration and instruction in pyrography to some of our members.



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Finally—a recent artwork by Meicke



**Thanh Duong**  
**Thursday AM Carvers**

## REPORTS FROM THE GROUPS

### THURSDAY CARVERS



Mel completed an Easter bunny for his grandson in record time (four days)



Phillip with his completed bandicoot



Carved wooden chain by Thanh, a wonderful example of patience and dedication to detail



Two carvings by John Paine completed on reclaimed cypress pine. These carvings were displayed at the Blairgowrie Sailing Club



John's carving of a friend's dog, from the recent Carve-In

Highland Warrior, by John Paine the Elder. Jelutong, finished with two fine coats of Scandinavian oil and two coats of carnauba wax.



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## Reminiscences on a Life of Woodcarving

by Charles Castle

In July 1973 Pauline and I were walking along George Street in Sydney past a hardware store, Nock and Kirby's, in the Queen Victoria Building. As we walked past, we saw a set of wood carving chisels and similar equipment in the window. I said to Pauline "I would like to do that". Pauline said "let's buy it." So we went in and bought a set of 12 Marples gouges and a carving hammer. The salesperson asked us what I was going to do. I replied I didn't know. he said "Well get some soap and practice on that." I later did get some soap suitably sized to carve, but never actually did carving on it. I still have that woodcarving box and the mallet.

With the pressure of work as an intern, then a resident, and then having 2 young children, I did not have any opportunity to do anything about woodcarving.

A few years later I worked in a general practice in Stirling in Adelaide. I had a little time to spare, still with young children and studying for postgraduate exams. I found that Marlestone TAFE in Adelaide had a woodcarving course and I arranged to do a term. The tutor was very good but he was interested in furniture carving and I did not want to do that.

One of the very good things about that term was that one of the men was going to England. He said he could buy sets of carving tools in England for much cheaper than we could get them in Australia. He showed us some of the ranges of kits of tools, including a 15 piece set. I gave him the money and in due course he brought me back a 15 piece set of Henry Taylor gouges, chisels and a mallet.

So I had two sets of carving tools, one Marples and one Henry Taylor.

As part of that course I completed a mirror frame which I brought in our move to Melbourne. It had not been not helped by the fact that my mother-in-law sat on it and broke it. In Melbourne I found somebody who could help me put the pieces back together. I then attended a course at the Melbourne CAE on gilding and gilded the mirror frame.

I found a mirror shop and had a mirror cut to size. This mirror now sits in the vestibule of our house. One time someone sprayed some glass cleaner on the mirror to clean it. Unfortunately some of the cleaner got onto the gilding and some of the gilding came off. However, that has made the mirror look much older than it is.

I was fortunate that the English Woodworker Magazine had a pattern for a carving bench. I had a friend who knew much more about woodwork than I did, and he helped me to make this portable carving bench. A good thing was one of the

woodwork suppliers in Adelaide brought out a Record woodcarving vice which I fitted to the end of my bench. I have been using that workbench and woodcarving vice ever since.

In Melbourne I went to an exhibition at the Exhibition Buildings, where I saw a stand by Woodcraft Manningham promoting woodcarving, and from then I started to come to woodcarving at Manningham. At first I came on Friday mornings to do a session with Greg Williams and Pat Burder, then changed into office clothes and went to work. It is now just under thirty years that I have been coming to woodcarving at Manningham. After Bryan Thompson I think I am the longest serving carving member.

Greg taught me a lot about woodcarving. Bryan Thompson has taught me much more, about woodcarving and woodwork generally.

The first carving I did was to make a carving of a boat, which I still have. After I finished that I came across a pattern for a cheese board in *Australian Woodworker*. I photocopied the pattern, then got a piece of Kauri pine from Australian Furniture Timbers. At that time they were in Port Melbourne. They had a big range of all sorts of wood, but I only wanted one small piece. It took me a long time to carve that cheese board. One side was blank to have a tile fitted. The other side was a carving of a Tudor Rose. I still have that piece too.

I can't remember the next piece that I did but I continued to get very good advice from Greg Williams and Pat Burder, and I did a few more carvings.

I heard about Neil Ellis who in those days was doing woodcarving courses at Newstead, and I went there for a weekend. Neil taught me how to sharpen my chisels and gouges. I did a test piece of various styles of relief carving of different types of edging, different types of letters, and a few other things.

At a subsequent visit Neil had some wood which I think was mahogany, the remainder of some church pews. About that time I found my mother had an interest in mazes. Under Neal's tuition I carved a round maze. I still have that piece. Technically it is a labyrinth not a maze. When the piece was finished I then put a coating of some kind over the whole piece and sent it up to my mother. She was delighted. When she died I found the maze and brought it home.

There was a group in Melbourne called the Coles School of Woodcraft. I attended some classes there. The course leader was very interesting as he was an architect with a strong interest in design. His advice on design was enormously helpful. At that workshop I made a spoon which I gave to one of my granddaughters when she was very young.

I kept going to Woodcraft Manningham on Friday mornings. Initially I started coming to carving once a month, then going to work in the afternoon. This went on for some time, and I gradually decreased my work hours until I was coming to carving every week.

I then heard about the Carve-in from Greg, much later in the year after the first one had happened. Since then I have been to every Carve-in apart from the last two, so I will have been to twenty six of them. At some I have been a student, and at some a tutor.

One of the remarkable events at a Carve-in was a presentation of netsuke carving by Sue Wraight. She had the carvers and their partners spellbound for two hours. Sue later came around the carving areas and looked at what we were doing and made suggestions which improved our work. Later we had a visit to her workshop, arranged by Jeanette Ball. That was interesting and it was interesting to see the plasticine models that Sue used. Then I arranged for someone, I think it was Brian Thompson, to invite her to give us a weekend workshop. It was a fascinating weekend and I have a photograph of the dormouse that I did at that weekend. Sue was enormously helpful in telling us how to go about carving netsuke. I have since become very interested in netsuke and have now carved three and am on my next one. I have taught Netsuke at two of the Carve-ins. I find the whole art of netsuke fascinating and I hope to do quite a few more.

I went to another woodcarving course at the Victorian School of Woodwork which at that time was in the Meat Market building. That was very interesting because apart from showing us how to do sharpening, the tutor got us to do a small model in paper, of the piece that we were going to carve. The piece I was going to carve was a stool.

In 2010 the Oberammergau (Austria) Passion Play was on. Around that time I saw an ad in one of the woodwork magazines, I think it was ChitChat, which said that a woodcarving school Elbigenalp Austria (Geisler-Morode) was having a two week course in carving. This was an international course and the school make sure that the tutors could all speak good English. So I decided to combine culture and woodcarving, and booked in for both.

The Oberammergau Passion Play was one of the great life experiences of my life. It was also remarkable that in Oberammergau there were several woodcarving workshops, which we visited.

At the Geisler-Morode course the tutor I had for my class was Heide. We did some carvings for her on wood. She then looked at what we had done and assessed our abilities. She then let us choose what we wanted to do from completed samples. and assisted us with our projects. The project I chose was a model of two heads.

One of the interesting things about the Geisler Morode group was that after we had been there a little while we were shown how to sharpen gouges. After that we were expected to sharpen them ourselves. There were two sharpening stations set up in the room that we were using.

When I started carving there the tutor brought me a set of chisels. I picked a gouge which was about an 8 mm to start carving The tutor came up to me and said "you need to use big gouges" and got me using a 45 mm gouge. I had never used something like that and I didn't have one in my toolbox at home. When I came home I made sure that I ordered one and I now have it, although I don't use it very often. Another interesting part of the Elbigenalp experience was that we were expected to make clay models of what we're going to carve first and that proved to be a very interesting exercise. I am now sorry that I didn't start making plasticine models of what I was going to carve before I did one.

That year there were a number of us from Manningham who went to the International fortnight. Part of the event was that in the middle of the two weeks we were taken on a three-day tour of Austria and then back to Elbingalp. We saw several woodcarving schools in the town area, and they had a significant number of students. In Elbinalp at the Geisler Morode school at that time I think there were about forty-five students who were full-time apprentices. Remarkable. We came back from the tour and then spent the rest of the time carving.

Other highlights of my woodworking career are that I attended a weekend workshop at the Melbourne School of Fine Woodworking, on plane sharpening and tuning; I attended a French sculpture studio for a couple of days; and along the way I have gained several prizes at the Royal Melbourne show.

I now mainly carve comfort birds. I try to get an exceptionally fine finish on these and use abrasive paper up to 12,000 grit. I buy this paper from Koodak, a jewellers supplier in Swanston St.

I do have another netsuke in mind. When I have got the idea of that clear in my mind I will make up a model. Then I will transfer the pattern to the wood and start carving.

This is the story of my wood carving. I have made a lot of friends and seen carving in some other countries. It has been a great pleasure to me and I hope to keep doing it a lot longer.