his particular style of carving, known as flat carving (Photo.1), is commonly found decorating furniture from the Jacobean period (1603–1688). The designs are varied and although sometimes of a simplistic appearance, can be used for many applications.

The style of carving suits both traditional and contemporary designs and I have chosen it for our first carving project because results can be achieved quickly.

Importantly, this project will help to drum in the Significant Six Techniques outlined in the first article in this series, in AWW #170. You can also view a video tutorial on the Significant Six Techniques online at the Record Power website, www.recordpower.com.au.

**Flat Carving**

Flat carving could be used for many applications, e.g., to decorate the rails of furniture or as a feature on a panel or lid for a box.

The objective of this carving style is to reduce the background of the timber to expose the design, leaving the top surface completely flat.

The final appearance of the carving is enhanced if the top surface remains clean, with crisp edges to the outline. Aim for the perimeter cuts to be set in at 90° to the timber’s surface. Avoid rounding over the edges—which is easier if you don’t have an inside bevel on the tools.

Make sure your lines flow without awkward elbows (i.e., kinks in the line) and remove all fragments of timber from the carving as you proceed.

**Photo.2: Creating a stencil makes transferring the pattern easier**

The reason for enlarging the design to a set size (20mm square grid) is that the patterns shown here (Figs.1, 3 & 4) have been chosen so that you can readily carve them with the tool profiles (Fig.2) I will be using throughout this series.

**Step.1 — The Drawing**

Enlarge the diagram in Fig.1 so that each square of the grid measures 20mm. Achieve this by scanning in the image and enlarging the design using a computer.

Alternatively, enlarge the drawing with a photocopier or simply employ the old fashioned method of putting pencil to paper, using the grid as a guide.

A handy tip is to draw the design onto stiff card or trace it using carbon or Saral paper. Cut away the background areas to create a stencil (Photo.2). The stencil is useful for marking repetitive designs onto your timber.

Remember that the resulting carving will only be as good as your drawing. If your drawing is an inaccurate sketch, your carving will be the same. It is, therefore, worth taking time to get your drawing as accurate as possible.

You may find it helpful to shade the material you intend to remove. This will prevent you from removing the wrong parts of the design.
Step 2 — Timber Preparation

A common timber for this early style of carving was Oak, but any carving timber will do. Suitable native species include Jelutong, Huon Pine, NSW Rosewood, Queensland Maple and White Beech.

Whichever species you choose, ensure that it is planed flat and sanded smooth before you mark the design onto the surface.

Step 3 — First Cuts

Set in vertical cuts which follow the lines of the design. Each cut should be at 90° to the timber’s surface.

Make use of the various profiles from your tool set (Fig.2) to set in the design. Hold each tool in the Pinch position (p.68 AWW #170). Make sure you anchor your arm or hand (pp.68-69 AWW #170) to the workpiece and set in the cut with a gentle tap from your mallet.

If the profiles of the tools do not fit the line precisely, you can adapt them by making several cuts to follow the outline.

When using the inside of the blade to form the shape, note how the tool is held vertically to the timber (Photo.3).

For most cuts, have the bevel on the waste side of the line, i.e., use the inside of the blade to set in the cut. However, if you need to use the outside of the blade to set in a cut, angle the tool so that the bevel angle is 90° to the timber’s surface (Photo.4).

Step 4 — Exposing the Design

When the entire outline has been set in, begin to bring the design to life by removing the waste material from the pattern.

Use the various tools from your kit to cut towards the setting-in cuts, at a 45° angle or less (Photo.5). If you need a firmer grip on the tool, try the Fist position (p.69 AWW #170) and remember to slide the tool as you cut towards the set-in cut. Always check that you are carving on the correct side of the line, in the shaded area of the design.

Throughout the whole pattern, try to carve at a consistent angle towards the set-in cuts. This creates uniformity.

In the areas where your angled cuts meet back-to-back, a ridge line will form. Sometimes this will be below the surface.

An example is in the scroll areas (Photo.6). To remove the waste in this instance, first carve towards the tip of the...
Photo.3: Setting in a cut using the inside of the blade — the tool is held vertically in the Pinch Position

Photo.4: Setting in a cut using the outside of the blade — the tool is angled so that the bevel side of the blade is vertical

Photo.5: Exposing the pattern by carving towards the set-in cuts

Photo.6: Removing the waste from small areas

Photo.7: Creating the dish shape around one of the small circles

Photo.8: Using tool #5 to form the ornament in each of the central leaves
leaf with tool #3 forming a scoop. Then work around the rest of the area with tool #1 (see Fig.2 for tool profiles).

After completing the outer parts of the design, proceed with the inner details.

With tool #3, set in the four circles, ensuring that the cut is vertical to the timber’s surface. Then, at an angle of 45° or less, create a uniform dish shape around the outside of the circle (photo.7).

For the crescent shaped decoration located on the side leaves of each fleur-de-lis, use tool #4 to set in a 90° cut, following the same lines as the scroll shapes.

Make a second cut at an angle towards the set-in cut to remove a segment of wood cleanly.

For the ornament outlined in red on each of the central leaves (Fig.1), make two angled incisions with tool #5 so as to form a valley with a straight line in the centre (Photo.8). Use the tips of the blade in a slicing action to create a clean central cut in the valley. This is a good example of why it is important to keep the tips of the cutting edges sharp and intact.

Form the small holes in the centre of the border motif. Note that a drill bit can often pull fibres from the timber’s surface. An alternative is to make a simple tool that will give you a smooth burnished hole.

Select a nail with the desired diameter and round over the point using a bench grinder. Cut off the head and put the nail into a drill chuck. Running the drill at low speed, work up through the various grades of abrasive paper to create a polished dome shape to the tip.

You can now use the polished dome instead of a normal drill bit to form a shallow hole that will be smooth, clean and polished.

To finish the carving, wrap a fine grade abrasive paper around a sanding block and give the surface a light sanding to clean the work, ready for polishing.

Using the same techniques, you can have a go at the designs in Figs.3 & 4.

Next Issue: In the next issue we will develop the flat carving theme by adding shape and more dimension with a Guilloche design for rails and panels.

Photo.9: You can assemble your own starter set or avail yourself of the Record Power tool and DVD set specifically prepared to complement this carving series.

The Record Power 12 piece Carving Tool Set with bonus Woodcarving Foundation Skills DVD and booklet (RRP $132.00) is available from The Australian Woodworker Mail Order Bookshop, pp.82-90, Ph: 02 4759 2844, or from Record Power stockists.

Use the QR code to access information on the Carving Set and Education on your smartphone.