

Woodcarving by Numbers

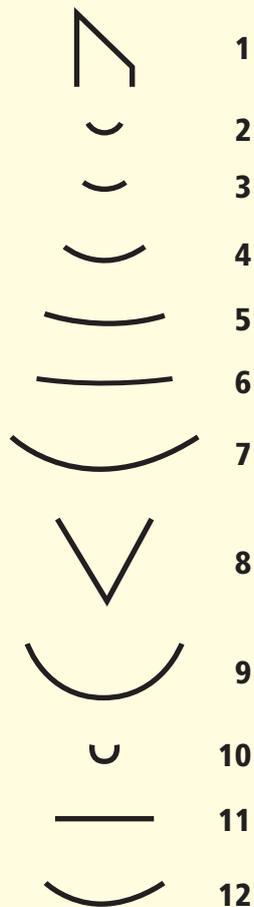
with Mike Davies

Simple Carved Decorations
for Woodturners



Woodcarving by Numbers is a simple to follow programme, that guides woodworkers of all skill levels to become competent woodcarvers. Available as a tool and DVD package, simply match your carving tools to the numbered profile chart, and follow the step by step guidance through each project. Watch and learn the Significant Six Carving techniques in the 'Woodcarving Foundation Skills' DVD and work through the various projects, graded in difficulty, designed to put your skills to the test. The ultimate goal is to create designs of your own to add a unique point of difference to your woodworking projects.

Sweep Profile Reference Chart



Please refer to the Significant Six Techniques tutorial or watch the Foundation Skills DVD for safety and guidance with your techniques.



Pic 1: A turning from Terry Scott's 'Overflowing series'

If you are a woodturner, woodcarving offers you a multitude of ways to embellish your work. In this tutorial we will explore how the repetition of some simple cuts can help to enhance the edge of a turned bowl or platter. When accompanied by colour and texture, the effect can be very eye catching.

I make no claims of being a proficient woodturner. However, the majority of my demonstrations, both at home and overseas, are to woodturning groups.

The challenge of transforming a spinning lump of timber into an aesthetically pleasing form, is a pursuit that many of us enjoy. Once mastered, the challenge continues with an infinite variety of ways to add a point of difference.

Many turners strive to develop a 'signature

style' that identifies the creator by their work. Woodcarving can offer this ability to create a point of difference and you can do this by using some relatively simple techniques.

New Zealand woodturners, Gordon Pembridge and Terry Scott, both create inspirational work. **Pics 1 & 2** demonstrate how piercing, carving, texture and colour can be used to transform finely turned objects into works of art.

Many more examples can be found on the websites of each artist - Gordon Pembridge at www.gordonpembridge.com and Terry Scott at www.timberly.co.nz.

The photographs of their work included in this article were provided by Gordon and Terry and have been published here with their permission.

Two Areas of Study

When learning how to carve there are two distinct areas of study. The first area is the Foundation Skills (techniques) and the second is the Subject.

The Foundation Skills are the starting point where an aspiring woodcarver must begin. You focus on how to hold the tools correctly and how to use them with control at all times. You must become a master of creating and maintaining a razor sharp edge, along with other essential skills.

With a sound knowledge of these skills, they can then be applied to any Subject.

The Subject is the creation itself and this offers an infinite field of possibilities.



Photo 3:
Shaping a sunflower from a turned form



Photo 5:
Turned and carved bowl with carved fruit - a staircase newel post decoration by Mike Davies

My specialty subject is classical ornamentation. This requires a study of classical architecture and furniture styles throughout the various periods in history.

Other carvers specialise in areas such as the study of anatomy, wildlife or in the case of this tutorial, woodturning. Regardless of the subject, the same foundation skills are required and this is where the Carving by Numbers system has found its niche.



Pic 2: 'Zebra's Rest' by
Gordon Pembridge



Photo 4: The finished sunflower (by Mike Davies) exhibits little of its original turned shape

In any of my carving seminars, I teach the Significant Six techniques.

Along with some proficiency in the techniques, you must also ensure that you have a razor sharp edge on your tools.

Carving with dull tools is a futile pursuit, one that can only lead to frustration. With a razor sharp cutting edge, your tools will glide through the timber with effortless sweeps.

These techniques can be found in dedicated tutorial or by watching the foundations skills dvd.

Planning a Carved/Turned Project

It is important to consider your desired outcome, prior to decorating a piece of turning with carving. The following offers examples of how carving can be incorporated into your turning:

- The turning can be used as a platform to showcase the carving (**Photo 5**).
- The turning can be the template for the carving but the turned form is essentially lost in the final carving (**Photos 3 & 4**). Here, the blank was turned to give the circular outer shape and centre of the sunflower, but the subsequent carving removed most of the original turned form.
- Carving can be used to highlight and define the beauty of the turned form (**Photos 6, 7 & 8**).

Simple Effects

The following are a few simple carving effects you can use to decorate the rim of a platter or other turned object. In **Photo 9**, I'm using tool #4 (refer to chart Fig 1) to take tiny scoops in a random formation. This effect is similar to a planished metal. By experimenting with colour you can achieve some interesting two tone finishes.

In **Photo 10**, tool #3 has been used to create a series of flutes, radiating out from the centre. Try to keep each flute a consistent width and ensure that the high ridge line, which is formed between each flute, retains the shape of the turning. In other words, the ridge line maintains the thickness of the original turning.

A handy tip to ensure that the ridge lines radiate from the centre of the bowl, is to mark a series of lines at regular intervals around the bowl, using a rule that is positioned so that it passes through the centre of the turning. Note the pencil lines on either side of the carved area in **Photo 10**.

In **Photo 11** you can see how the 'V' profile of tool #8 creates an interesting pattern when used to form random lines. Once again it is important that the ridge lines maintain the thickness of the turning. Try not to allow the ridge lines to fall beneath the original surface of the timber.

You will need to ensure that you 'V' tool is razor sharp for this decoration due to cutting across the grain.



Photo 6:
Decorative platter by Terry Scott



Photo 7:
Close-up of carving detail to platter in Photo 6.

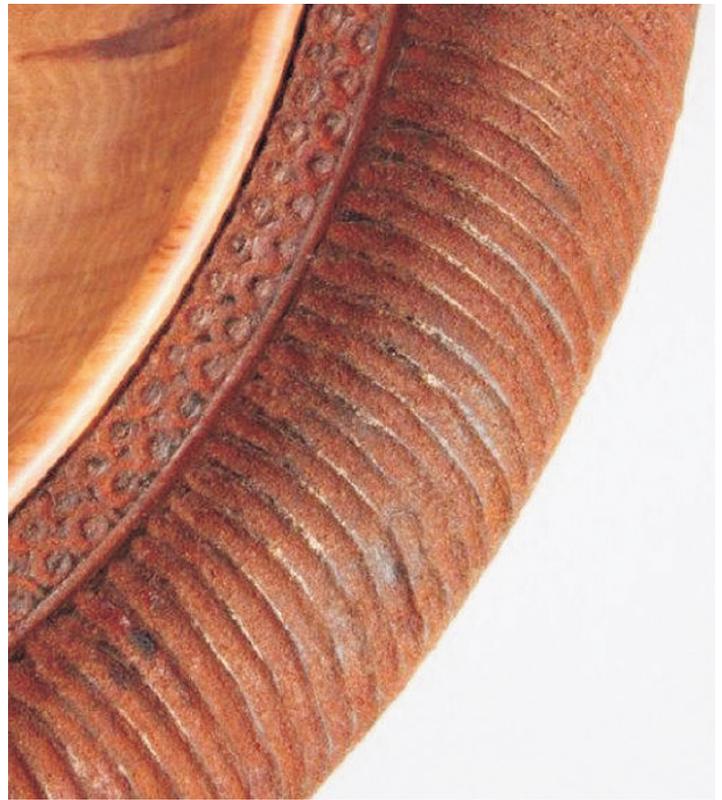


Photo 8:
Carving detail on another platter by Terry Scott



Photo 9:
Removing tiny scoops with #4 tool

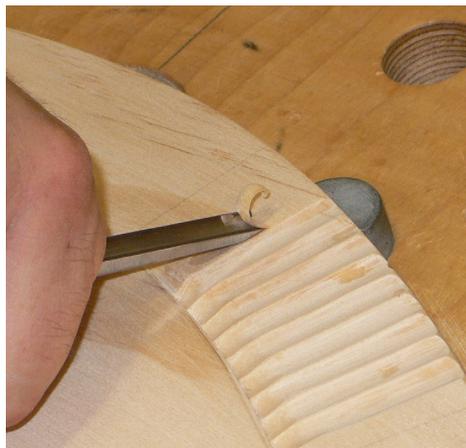


Photo 10:
Creating flutes with #3 tool



Photo 11:
Random V-grooves with tool #8

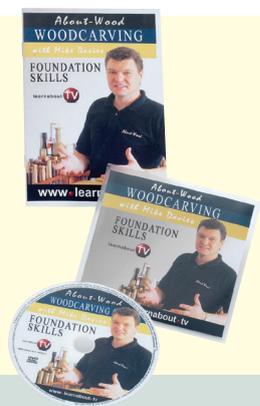
About the Author

Mike Davies is an accomplished craftsman, who has completed projects for royalty, national trusts and private collectors alike. He has surveyed and restored works by many of the great designers and carvers from the past.

As a qualified teacher, he originally developed his 'Woodcarving by Numbers' educational system in 1994. It was created to help woodworkers of all skill levels to master the art of woodcarving.

Since then, his system has been published in magazines and books. It has been televised and used to teach students in schools and colleges around the world.

The information contained within this document, forms part of a DVD and tool package, which has been developed in cooperation with many of the world's leading carving tool manufacturers.



Important Information and Disclaimers:

learnabout.TV and Mike Davies assume no responsibility or liability for injuries, accidents or damages resulting from the information conveyed herewith. The information or instructions are provided as general guidelines only and demonstrate woodworking activities performed by skilled and experienced craftspeople. These techniques can be dangerous. If you practice them, proceed carefully and at your own risk. The Sweep Profile Reference Chart is provided as a simple referencing system for this series of Woodcarving by Numbers tutorials. It does not refer to references used by the London Pattern Guide, Sheffield List or Continental System.

Please note that due to the printing process there may be variations between the sweep chart and actual tool profiles.