

Dog's Head Walking Stick

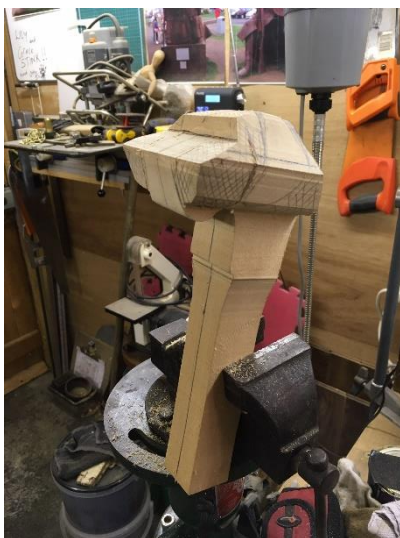
By Mick McCabe



My dog's head walking stick is modelled on Stig, my German Wirehaired Pointer who I lost last year aged two and a half due to a spinal condition.



A modeller's clay study is sculpted first, this is photographed from side and front and the images used to bandsaw out the lime wood blank .



The finished band sawn blank, not looking too much like a dog yet. The dogs head and handle of the stick are one piece of wood.



More waste Wood is removed from the band sawn blank using hand saws/ chisels. The carving is regularly checked against the model. With carving it's vital you do not take too much wood off as once it's gone it's gone and the project could be scrap.



Starting to look like a dog now after more waste wood is removed with carving gouges.



The carving is viewed from all angles constantly referring to the model for sizes. Lines are drawn on and a centre line maintained at all times for reference. The contrast in the wood colours here is the lighter sanded wood and the darker freshly cut with the gouges wood. It's given a light sand at each stage so it's easier to see the shape, when it's two tone like this it throws your eye off.



Starting to get the general likeness to the model now, it's viewed alongside the model from every angle and pencil marks sketched on where wood needs removed for the next round of carving.



Looking more refined. Once the basic dimensions and shape is reached it becomes a case of refining the form by eye more than measurements. Moving mainly from gouges Riffler files, rolled up sandpaper and small diamond files are used to keep reshaping the carving.



The same stage as last photo but rear view, still lots to do but becomes easier to see which bits still need more wood removed. The more wood is removed the more it looks like a German Wirehaired Pointer.



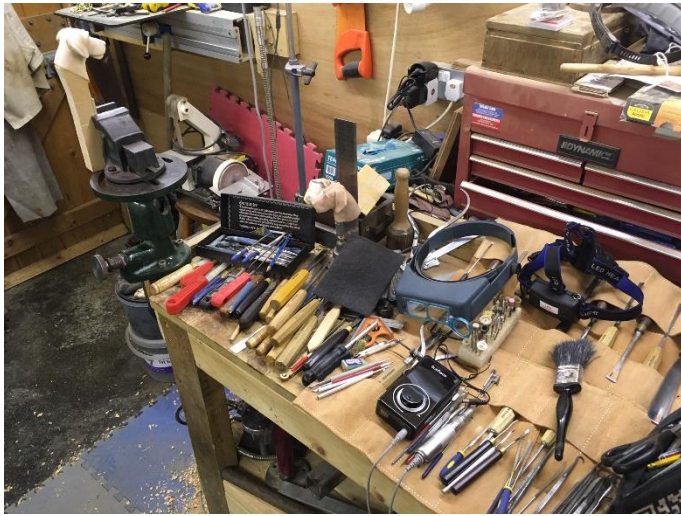
A tip for seeing the shape better and see if things like the eye sockets are looking even is to use a spotlight with the main light off to cast a heavy shadow. This shows the carving in a more 3D view to gauge the contours.



Probably the most difficult part of the carving is the eyes, these are so critical that any difference in size, shape or location from side to side could scrap the project. I had got some glass eyes which is the normal thing for sticks, but they looked wrong colour so decided to try carving them.



Next tricky bit is the nose but at least there is only one of them! This was done with a dremel type tool with burrs, small carving tools and riffler files. Getting the eyes and nose done give the carving more lifelike look.



It's hard to believe but I would say almost every tool on this bench has been used so far on this carving plus more carving tool initially that have been cleared away. Once I start a project things just get more messy until it's done.



More detail in the ears and generally refined the general shape. When doing these types of details the reference photos are constantly referred to and compared. The fact this dog is rough coated with eyebrows and beard make it harder to judge as enough wood must be left on for the most prominent areas of the eyebrows but lots of what you see here will still be taken away.



Started to carve the beard partly to practice how to do it while there is enough spare wood to learn what does not work and partly so I can get a better assessment of the overall carving as the block like beard was confusing the picture. The beard was done using small carving tools and a dremel type tool with a small disc like cutter, it will be further refined with pyrography too.



The carving is now at the stage the hair texture needs to be started to give the dog the rough coat appearance. Firstly the flow of the hair is drawn on with pencil referring to photos, if this is not done it's easy to start and end up going off the pattern and it's wrong to the eye very quickly. The pyrography pen will follow these lines in the next stage.



The deepest areas of the hair are carved in before the pyrography goes over to refine the detail. The pyrography tip I ended up using was like a miniature scalpel blade.



Started on the beard with the pyrography as it's the less fussy area to practice on the face and head will have to be much more precise to look right so getting the feel of it before moving to those areas. There will be lots of hours of this as every hair is burnt in!



Many hours later the job looks like this, the variation in light and dark is where the hair is finer and less burnt in. You have to try and ignore the shades and see the lines as it will be stained to make it all one shade later. This breed varies from really rough long hair to very fine short hair close together.



Now the task of burning in the hair texture on the whole carving, it's not too bad to do but can't be rushed and needs concentration the whole time not to mention a magnifying visor to see what you're doing.



It's always good to get things in day light once in a while as it shows up most mistakes or areas that need more work. Still undecided about what to do with the eyes at this point.



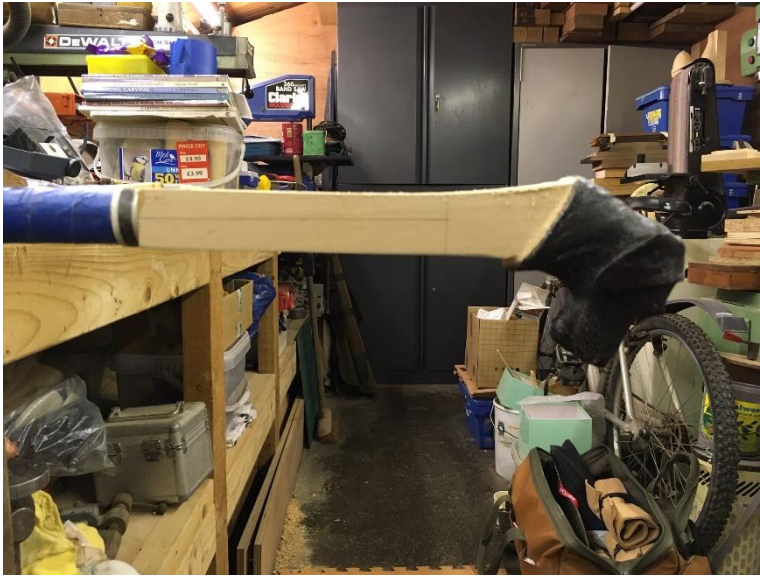
I got to the point I wanted to get it all one colour so I could judge the hair texture better. It's looking right but some bits need tinkered with. At this point I did not know if I could burn over the spirit stained wood again, it turns out you can but it's not as crisp as bare wood so try to get it right before stain was the lesson learnt.



This photo shows the short fine hair and the long rougher hair textures, the fine was tricky as I had to try and allow for few coats of stain and then satin lacquer to not be able to fill them in.



Finally decided on the eyes and carved out the pupils. Two reasons really one was the grain in the two eyes was different so one soaking the stain and and the other one not the same and I thought they eyes did not have the focussed look I wanted. They were carved out with ball tip diamond burr then burnt into the dimple with a ball ended burning tip.



The next bit was as hard as the carving, I had finished carving on roughly square shaft that tapered to the carved area and a stick to mount it on. The only way I could shape the handle was to mount it to the stick shaft then hold it by the shaft in the vice. Then just do it all by eye, shaping with rasps, files and sand paper without spoiling the stick or carving !



This is the finished result the top light handle part is the same bit of lime wood the head is carved out of, this tapers down and is separated from the holly shaft of the stick by a bone spacer then buffalo horn then another bone spacer and the handle and stick gloss lacquered but the head stain lacquered. The bottom was fitted with a brass ferrule.



The finished thing I think anyone with the breed would know it was a German Wirehaired pointer and has the focussed look they tend to have while seeing if there is any game about the area. The holly shaft of the stick is not really the best example but I cut it while out walking with Stig so seems more fitting to be on a stick carved like him. Plenty lessons learnt during the project and bits I think could be improved as always but overall happy with the way it turned out. Hope everyone has enjoyed seeing the process. Thanks Mick

