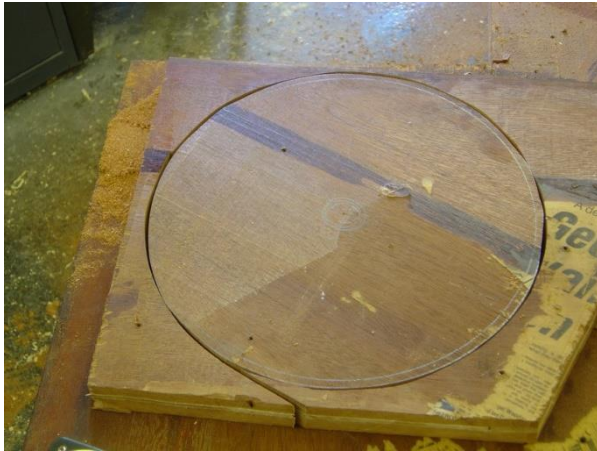
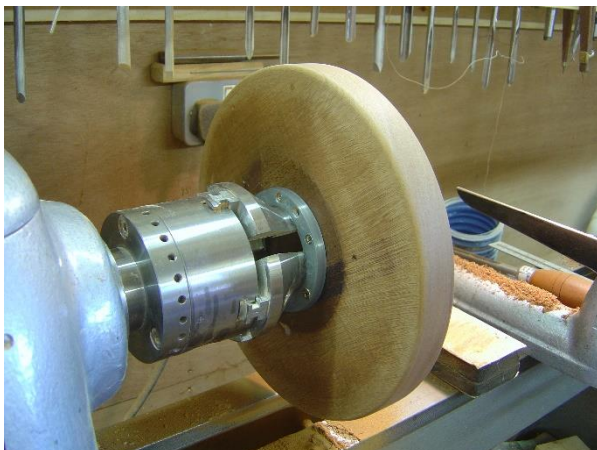


Door number Plaque from Mahogany

By Mick McCabe



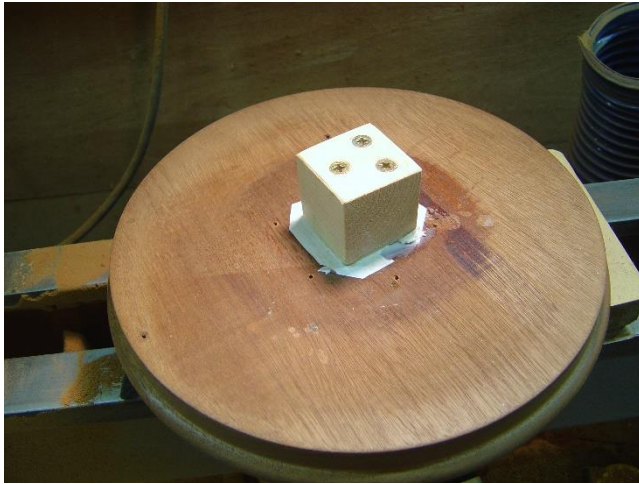
The project this time is to make a door number for a friend's house from a bit of recycled mahogany, the timber was an old bar counter from pub that was getting refurbished. The sign will have a bold incised carved number 81 that will be gold leafed, it will also have a rope effect carved around the edge. Step one to mark out and bandsaw it into a round blank.



The blank had the metal dovetail ring screwed to backside and held in the O'Donnell Jaws, the front and rim were trued up , what had been the bar counter top had lots of marks from the ribbed bases of bottles. The back already had some screw holes in it but will never be seen on the finished sign once its mounted on the wall.



The finished stage of turning, the rim has had the round section turned that will be carved to look like a rope wrapped around the edge of the sign.



Once the faceplate was removed, I screwed and glued with a paper joint a square block of wood to the back so there was a means of holding the plaque securely for the carving of the rope.

The number 81 was drawn onto tracing paper the right style and size, then a piece of carbon paper placed between the drawing and the wood so the number could be traced on the wood. It was just lined up by eye with trial and error until it looked right. I have found in the past trying to measure the edges of things and set them out in theory should work but in practice they always look wrong. So what looks right is right, even if the ruler says it is off.



The first stage of carving the numbers is to cut a centre line, this is so when you start to carve the 'V' of the numbers the wood will not split past this centre line and possibly run past the marked line on the other edge of the numeral.



Once the centre line is cut in you then carve in at the set angle a few millimetres from each side of the centre line and the waste wood chips out along the central cut. It will take probably five or six passes to get the full width and depth of the vee.

After a few passes from each side of the centre line the number starts to take shape, each pass works closer to the marked outlines of the numbers. If you have kept each side at an even incline as you carve in the bottom of the vee should meet in the centre of the number as the drawing. As you get closer you can see the areas that are not true and alter them back to the line by carving more from one side or altering the angle of the cut.



The almost finished numbers, there is still a bit of fine tuning to do but as I could still make a mess of the rope yet, I thought I would do the rope next and then do all the detail work together on the rope and numbers.



All of these carving gouges plus a couple of straight gouges were needed to get the various curves in the numbers carved. You can never have too many carving tools really. There are literally hundreds and hundreds of different tools. All these are old past down and used gouges, the one with the black handle in the middle is an Addis, a good old British make, some like this one can be dated very accurately by their stamped markings and this was something like 1864, still as good as the day it was bought but 156 years old.



The rope marked out, looks pretty simple eh! Don't be fooled this was a nightmare to mark out, trying to get the proportions of rope right and also fit around the edge is not as easy as you would think. All I can remember now as it was a while back when this was done, is it took me another professional carver and a sign writer about two hours to figure it out. Basically it all has to be done with radial lines from the centre as trying any angled lines at intervals around the edge just creeps up on itself and won't work.



A rare sight working outside in sunlight on a hot day but better for seeing the cuts. First pass is to lightly cut the marked lines in with a vee tool.

Once the lines were in then various sweep carving gouges take the edges off to start making it look like rope. The trouble with carving circular designs is you will hit the grain direction from all angles, some sections will carve lovely and some want to split, especially in the quite brittle old mahogany. It's starting to look a bit like rope anyway.



Due to the splitting issue and me not wanting to chip a section of the rope off I got to a point then moved to files and Abranet wrapped around a think lolly stick type piece of wood. This seemed to work fine and didn't have the risk of spoiling the job.



After many hours of sanding its almost there just a bit more tidy up of the rope and numbers and its ready for some finish.



What a difference a bit of lacquer makes, lovely piece of wood which would have been thrown on the builders bonfire if I had not rescued it.



This photo shows the 3D effect of the rope better, it needs the lacquer flatted down a more coats yet. The numbers are nice and deep so should stand out nicely on the finished sign.



The number gold leafed, the gold leaf was tricky to do and its sort of ended up a bit of an antiqued look to it which was not the plan but looks ok. I think in hindsight I should have sanded in the numbers to a better finish and painted the numbers with gesso, it's like a thick primer so the surface the leaf goes onto is perfectly smooth. The gold leaf is so fragile and fussy when you burnish it any imperfections get magnified



This photo shows the final rope edge and also the edge of the gold leaf, seemed impossible to get a razor-sharp edge along the numbers and its has the antiqued look. It had one more flat down and a final coat of Martin's lacquer.

One thing is for sure, you really would need to go to Specavers if you could not make out the door number on this house once this was fixed to the wall !
Turned out more or less as I had pictured it but took a lot more making than I thought, seems to be a common theme with me. I suppose it's a good project if anyone wants a project that is useful but involves both turning and carving.

Thanks, Mick.

