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Autumn Edition
Website**

<http://www.solentguildofwoodcarvers.org.uk>

Editor's thoughts By Lin Palmer

Hello and welcome to the latest newsletter. There has been a good amount of activity in the Guild throughout the summer in the way of shows and a couple of socials as well. We also have some more new members for which we are always pleased to welcome. I have been recently pursued with poor health I'm hoping that it will give me a break normally and it doesn't drag on for too long. Well fingers crossed really, I'm not feeling sorry for myself as I'm sure there are many others whose situations are much worse, so please be patient as I get on with your newsletter. There's a lot to come not to mention the dreaded Christmas word oops "sorry". I do hope this time your latest newsletter will be a good read, Lin.

Chairmans Report. by Jess Jay

It gives me great pleasure to report that the Solent guild of woodcarvers remains both financially sound and strong in membership. This year has seen continued enthusiasm and participation across all our activities, with steady attendance at meetings, workshops, and exhibitions, with an increase in new membership. Our finances are in sound order, thanks to prudent management by our treasurer Alwyn Brace. Membership numbers remain healthy, with several new members joining and long-standing members continuing to contribute their skills, time and creativity to the group. I extend my sincere thanks to the committee and all members for their contributions and teamwork, which ensures our group continues to thrive. Looking ahead, we can be confident in our direction and sustainability. With sound finances, strong membership, and shared passion for wood carving, the future of our guild looks bright.

Dates for your diary

Carving dates

Saturday the ~~8th~~ of November 2025

Saturday the 22nd of November 2025

Saturday the 6th of December 2025

Dates for 2026

Then start back Saturday January 10th 2026

Saturday the 10th of January and Saturday 24th of January 2026

Saturday the 7th of February and Saturday 21st of February 2026

Saturday the 7th of March and Saturday 21st of March 2026

Saturday the 11th of April and Saturday 25th of April 2026

The next Committee meeting will be on the 1st Saturday carve-in back
On the 10th of January

It has come to Johns notice that the Frank Leach competition that the next choice of subject wasn't mentioned in the last newsletter due to the fact that the decision was still on going by Gill who was the last winner. She has now chosen anything that lives under the sea and must not be bigger than 8 inches by 8 inches

Demonstration report from the Southdown show by Jess Jay and George Palmer

South Downs Show - Competition Day With a nice sunny day forecast we set up the tables for our Annual Competition, where members finished carvings a placed in their respective categories, and are voted for by the General public. With a large wad of voting slips already prepared, it was decided that we would run the competition from the opening of the show until midday. With the carvings set out in their categories by George and Craig, pencils and voting slips were then handed out to volunteer members. Our tents were set up directly opposite a display of Alpacas, and when the show opened this was a big attraction for the visitors, and whilst they were looking at the Alpacas in their compound, we were able to talk to them and encourage them to take part in the voting of our competition. When the visitors had voted they handed their voting slips and pencils to Dave Davis, so we were constantly going to him to replenish our pencil stocks. Trust me after two hours of explaining to the visitors our voting system, we were glad when twelve o'clock arrived. In that time, we had handed out 450 voting slips. My job then was to collect all the voting slips, carving entry slips and pencils for counting the following day. When I carried out this time consuming but rewarding task, there were only 9 spoilt voting slips, which only shows that the volunteer members made an excellent job when explaining the voting system. So a big thank you to the

carvers who entered the competition, who without there would be no competition. And a big thank you to all those who helped with the running of the competition. Overall, the competition was a great success and a credit of all who took part.

Day2 Southdown's show by George Palmer

After a hectic Day1 on the Saturday when the competition was on it was nice to have a more sedate Sunday. The weather was good and because there was only 5 of us we reduced to 2 gazebos as but left the third up as it was used as shade by the public and ambulance staff, we had plenty of interest and were able to slowly diminish the gazebos in the afternoon to put them away dry many thanks to ray, Sandra, lin and andy and myself



after a fantastic day of voting on the Saturday everybody was relieved that it was another year over again. May there be lots more carvings for next year.





Weald and Downland made by hand by George Palmer

The made by hand weekend saw us join the Daywood group, of which there are several members of the guild. We showed our work and chatted with a large crowd of people. This was due to the good weather over the weekend bringing the public in a lot, so 6 of us attended on Saturday and 4 on Sunday. We were based in the grid shell along with the signwriter, stained glass maker and Weaver. Many times, throughout the weekend we were inundated with people. In all it was a very productive time that involved many conversations with people from not only there but from around the world. Well done to those who attended along with me. On Saturday were Jess, Terry, Chris and Alwyn. And on Sunday there was Terry, Lin, Brian and me. GP

This was the Saturday Group



And this was the Sunday members having a quiet moment



Presentation Dinner at the Forge, Shedfield on

Wednesday the 8th of October 2025 by Jess Jay

Our Annual Presentation Dinner was held at the Forge, Shedfield the same as last year, with 24 members coming together for an evening of good food great company and plenty of laughter. The atmosphere was warm and relaxed as celebrated another successful year for the guild. The winner's runner ups who were presented with their trophies and certificates to recognise their achievements in our annual competitions. It was lovely to see so many familiar faces sharing stories and enjoying the evening together. I was also sad that two of our stalwart members, Lin Palmer who does so much for the Guild and John Vardon who also does much for the guild prepared the presentation Certificates, were unable to attend due to illness and personal circumstances.

A big thank you goes to all who helped with organisation of the event and to the Forge staff for looking after us so well. It was a wonderful evening to round off the year – and a reminder of what a talented and friendly group we have.

The resorts

General -The James Bell trophy

1st Peter Hallam - music montage

2nd Alwyn Brace - Farmyard

3rd Craig Williams - Fruit Bowl

Relief the Vic flowers

1st John Vardon - Flowers

2nd Peter Hallam - Trytitch
Human Form the Harry Wareham trophy

1st Andy banger - Shepherd

2nd Ray Kewell - Hill Billies

3rd Graeme swain – Tango

Wildlife the John Vardon trophy

1st Craig Williams - Giraffe

2nd Peter Hallam - Bold Eagle

3rd Craig Williams – Snake



The prize winners Peter Hallam, Gill Sadler, and Craig Williams.

The next and last social event of the year on the 11th of December will be the American supper and this takes place at the Portchester Community Centre
Arrival for 1900hrs – 2200hrs



George and Lin will be wishing you all a very merry Christmas and a great new year. To all our members and friends

The choices of food will be, sent out in a separate email.

The next issue of the newsletter will be on January the 31st 2026
please submit any thing you wish to put in by the 25th of January

This is a special article provided by Tim Curtis about his travels in China

Carvings Along the Silk Road: From China to the West

When you think of the Silk Road you rarely think of Suffolk, but there is a link – and it is currently embodied in one of the carvings that George is working on. If you've have walked past his bench recently and seen the progress that he is making on his carving of the Sutton Hoo treasure belt buckle (found in Suffolk), you'll appreciate the craftsmanship that went into making the original gold version nearly 1500 years ago – and the skill that George is demonstrating recreating it in wood. To cut a long story short, research shows that the jewels that decorated many of the Sutton Hoo treasures travelled along some of the many Silk Road routes. Ironically this route may well have been one of the Silk Road *maritime* routes – on this occasion, from Sri Lanka.

This is the background to George's idea of me sharing some of my photos of wood carvings from the Silk Road. In the last two years I've been fortunate enough, through both work and play, to travel along sizable chunks of the Silk Road(s). Full disclosure: I am no historian – and, before Jess says it, I'm certainly no wood carver as yet. What I am though is somebody who, since joining the Guild about eighteen months ago, has begun to really recognise – and fully appreciate - the work that goes into even a fairly, small and rudimentary carving. The Silk Road(s), certainly from China's perspective, are said to start from Xi'an. Others will

argue that Beijing and/or Shanghai are the origins but, even if that was the case, the land routes from there converged at Xi'an and then headed West.

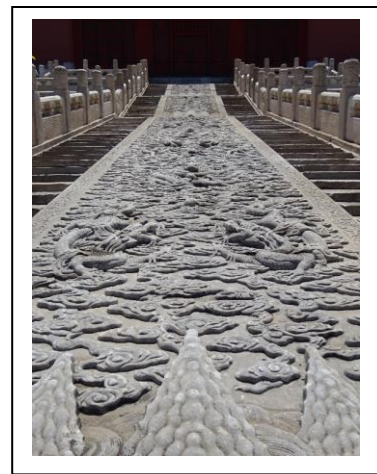
It is for this reason that the Silk Road sculpture is on the outskirts of the city. Okay, it's in stone but it seems an appropriate first carving.



The sculpture shows three Chinese men, three Persians, fourteen camels (although I couldn't find them all!), two horses and three dogs – much the same as our guild's current task of carving another nativity set!

Before I move on to the wood carvings, I briefly want to take you back to Beijing – where many (outside of Xi'an) would argue that the Silk Road

really started and finished. Here one of the largest, single-piece-of-stone carvings in the world is located. It is over fifty feet long and just over ten feet wide and is in the Forbidden City - and my photo of it here really doesn't do it justice.



Enough of stone (although we will see a carrot carving later on!) and onto wood.

Some very early wood carvings from the Silk Road are here. Said to be from about the year 202BC these 'human figurines' and 'dancing figurines' were found near a human burial site. I loved them – not least because I think that even I could achieve something similar. That said, I'm using 21st century chisels and knives and I think nearly two and half thousand years ago their tools were probably a bit different!



Even the carvings that haven't survived quite as well still showed how much decoration was important to the people of that era.



This piece even shows signs of early joint work on the end of what is thought to have been on a small beam.

And below, a door frame ...



Next stop was the Tibetan monastery in Labrang – and here there were some absolutely lovely carvings around the doors to the various faculties within the confines of this huge setting. Have a look at just a few – and I defy anybody not to want to be inspired by some of the dragons, characters and patterns that were on display.







Look again at the right-hand picture at the top of this page. Can you see the piece of string coming out of the dragon's nose? This string, blowing in the wind, gave a fairly passable impression of smoke coming from his nostril. Whilst the monastery has some very old examples of wood carvings, you come across some impressive (and occasionally some really simple) examples too. These next two pictures show a chair back from one restaurant I ate in – and the edge of picture frame from another.



The picture frame edge was just another example of dragon carvings. Dragons are everywhere in China as they have symbolic relevance. In the main, they represent power and wisdom but there are other meanings depending on where they appear. One of my favourites was at the site of the largest reclining Buddha in China (at the Dafo temple at Zhangye) ...



This temple was a great source of other carvings too. Look at the front entrance (below). The doors, the roof eaves, the wall and the huge carved sign above



The entrance were all beautiful.

Look at some of the detail in the sign ...

!see what I mean about dragons



As the Silk Road crosses China – and comes towards its western border with Kyrgyzstan – the architecture, the population’s appearance and the language changes. The religious influences also change, and Islam is far more evident. Mosques become more prevalent – and in those complexes you find many wooden columns. All carved. This trend continues across the border and into “the ‘Stans” (Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan etc, etc) – but more of that later. For now, let me show you what I mean.



To conclude: The carrot I promised you! The Chinese are so committed to carving that one dish that was served in a restaurant with a carrot carved into a Pagoda!



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