

SOLENT GUILD OF WOODCARVERS & SCULPTORS

Weekend Passions: the secret lives of everyday folk

by Steve Hughes – January/February 2017

We humans are a passionate, but complex bunch. For the most part, only our loved ones and close work colleagues gain any sort of insight into what makes us tick. Some of us go through our entire lives intentionally or unintentionally keeping our dreams, aspirations or wishes close to our chest. Maybe it's just something about being British. It's often only through our actions, perhaps in the form of a pastime, hobby or even a part-time job that these "passions" come to the surface.

All the people who have volunteered to take part in these photographic essays have a story to tell. I am extremely grateful for their time and co-operation and hope that, between us, we have captured a small part of who they are in the portraits and accompanying words.

The following is a photographic essay about the Solent Guild of Woodcarvers & Sculptors and some of its Members. There is an overview about the Guild followed by the work of individual Members in three parts.

Overview - Carving out a niche for everyone

by Steve Hughes - Saturday, January 21, 2017

<http://www.retinaphotography.co.uk/carving-out-a-niche-for-everyone/>

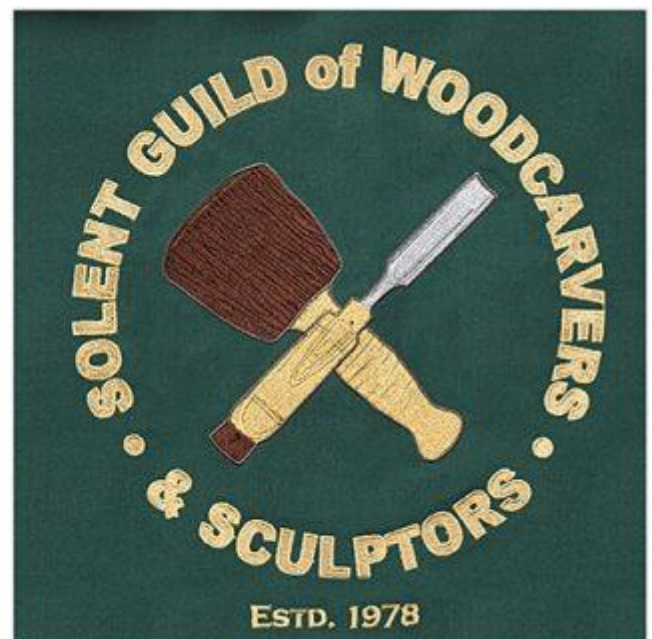
The Solent Guild of Woodcarvers and Sculptors is run entirely by volunteers and is aimed at anyone interested in all aspects of carving, whittling, sculpting and other wood related activities.



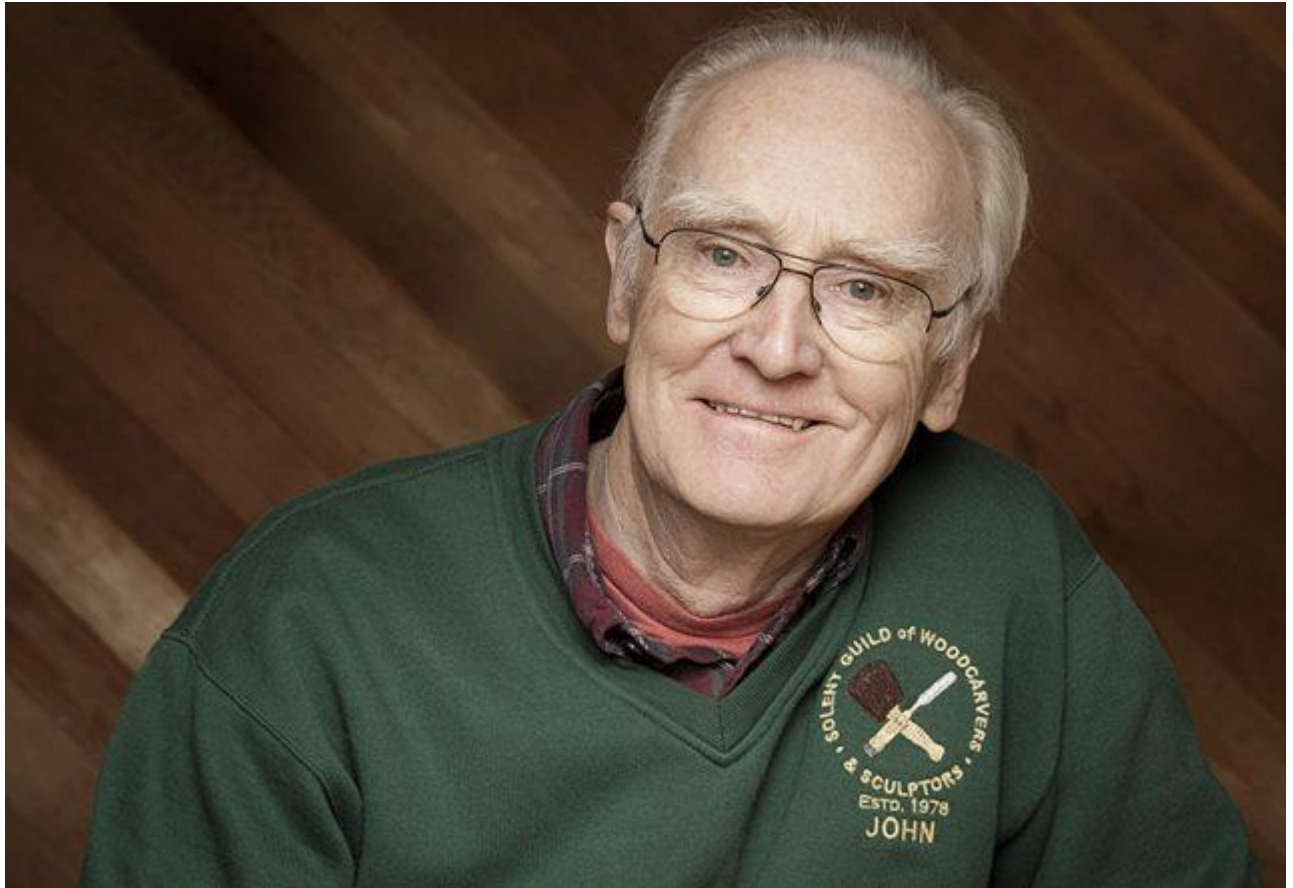
Group portrait of some of the members of the SGWC&S



George Palmer, Chairman of the SGWC&S



Guild secretary John Vardon tells us about the Guild and its history.



John Vardon, Secretary for the SGWC&S

When did the Guild start-up?

The Guild was founded in May 1978 by the late James Bell, in conjunction with three others – Vic Flower, Bill Judge and Stan Callan. At a meeting in Cosham on May 18th of that year, which was attended by twenty people, the Solent Guild of Woodcarvers and Sculptors was officially inaugurated. Several Members, those who joined during the first few years, are still Members of the Guild today.



Founder members of The Solent Woodworkers and Sculptors Guild
[image courtesy of SGWC&S]

Are you still based in Cosham?

These days, although we're centred on Portsmouth in Central Southern England, members, whose ages range from 16 to over 90 years, are mainly from the Solent area, but some come from as far as Petersfield and Selsey. Our club carving days are held in the Design & Technology workshops of The Portsmouth Grammar School.



Andy Banger, Philip Haskell, John Vardon



Keeping it in the family, Ros and Lin Palmer

Why was the Guild created?

The founder members were all keen to promote the craft of woodcarving. At that time, they felt that it wasn't really fully supported in the Solent region.

How are you organised?

As well as 'full members' we have social members and occasionally we may have a junior member who is under 18 years. We are 'managed' by a committee of our members.



Some of the SGWC&S committee members
L to R – Jean Cripps, Sandra Barnes, Doug Phillips, Lin Palmer, George Palmer

In 2016 the committee members were:

- Chairman: George Palmer
- Secretary: John Vardon
- Treasurer: Jean Cripps
- Newsletter Editor: Lin Palmer
- Social Secretary: Gill Sadler
- Ordinary Member: Sandra Barnes
- Ordinary Member: Doug Phillips

How many members do you have?

In the early days we grew to over one hundred, but at the moment we have around fifty members of both sexes, across a wide range of ages. Like other woodcarving clubs, we find it difficult to encourage young blood and convince the younger ones that carving and other wood related activities is for all ages, male and female alike. Membership is open to anyone interested in woodcarving, there are details of how to apply on our website.



Doug Phillips and George Palmer





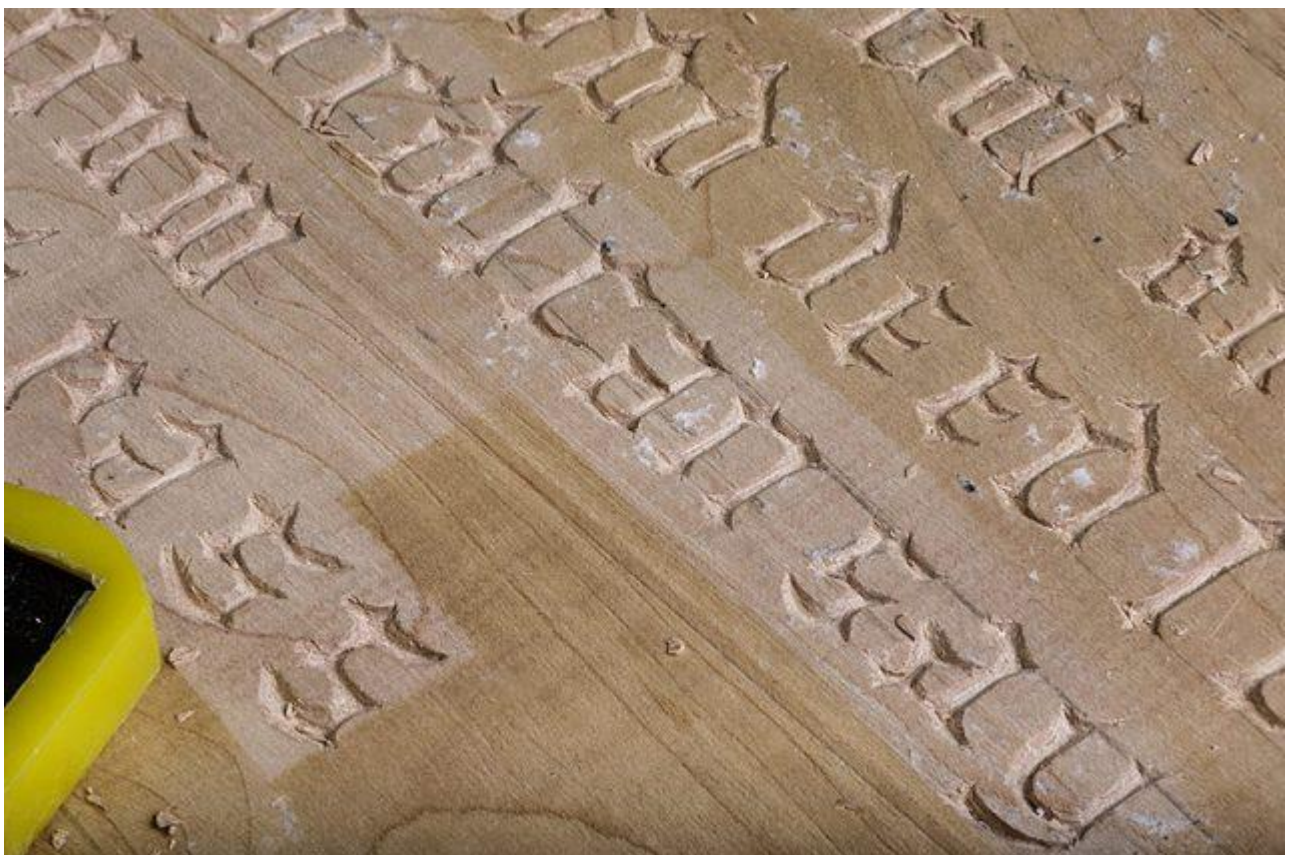


I guess you have quite a wide range of experience among your membership?

Indeed, our members are many and various; some are practically beginners and others have carved for most of their lives. The styles and methods are just as varied. The whole range of carvings is covered, with some members specialising in relief, some in 'human form', and others in birds, fish, etc. We're always delighted with this variety; every individual is important for their particular contribution, whether it be flair, experience, youth, exuberance or meticulous workmanship.



Alan Crockford



What's your raison d'être, so to speak?

Apart from enjoying all aspects of carving, whittling, sculpting and other wood related activities ourselves, we want to encourage newcomers to the craft. Male, female, young or old, everyone is welcome.



Marthita Chippendale





Philip Haskell





How do you spread the message about woodcarving?

We regularly hold carving sessions, exhibitions and demonstrations, competitions and, of course, social get-togethers. It's actually a really good social activity. We find that the relaxed atmosphere of our carving sessions is a great way to pass on skills. Although the Guild does not provide formal tuition, the more experienced members help and encourage others.

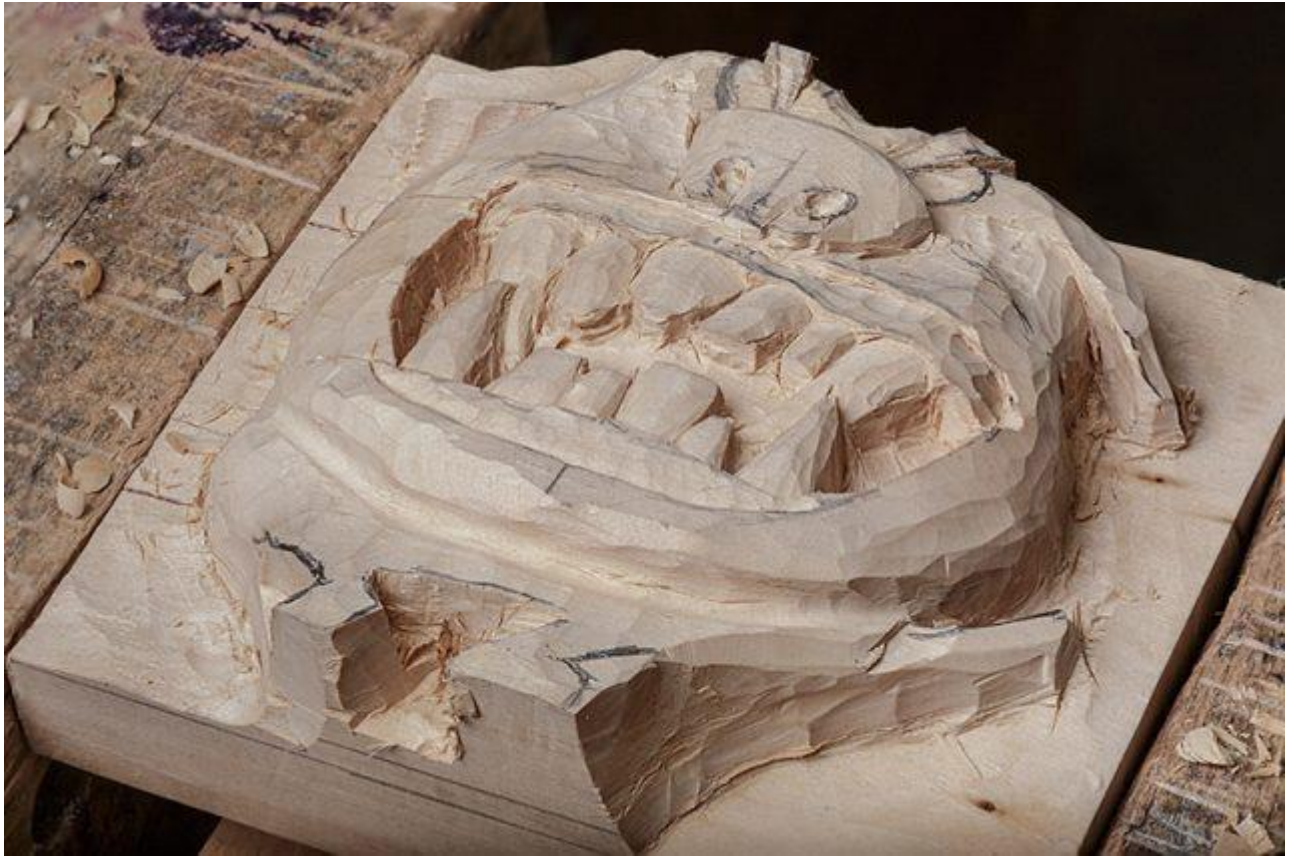


Awards for woodcarving
[image courtesy of SGWC&S]



John Vardon





Sandra Barnes



You mentioned the social side of things ...

The Guild is very active throughout the year. Our carving sessions are interspersed by monthly social evenings where a talk, not always related to woodcarving, is given, a quiz, skittles or other social event is held. In the spring and summer months, the Guild attend about eleven external events, e.g. arts trails, country park shows, wood-related shows and local, outdoor museums.



Typical events, shows and dinners for members of the Solent woodcarvers and sculptors guild.
[images courtesy of SGWC&S]

Is there any sort of rivalry between members?

Not as such but each year we hold two competitions – one is held at the Guild's AGM and the other is the Annual Competition. The AGM competition is for the Bill Pinney Trophy and, this year has the theme 'caricature in relief' and is judged by members. The Annual competition has various classes, including one for novices, and trophies are presented for each class. This competition is judged by members of the public at one of our demonstrations. Awards are made at the Annual dinner.



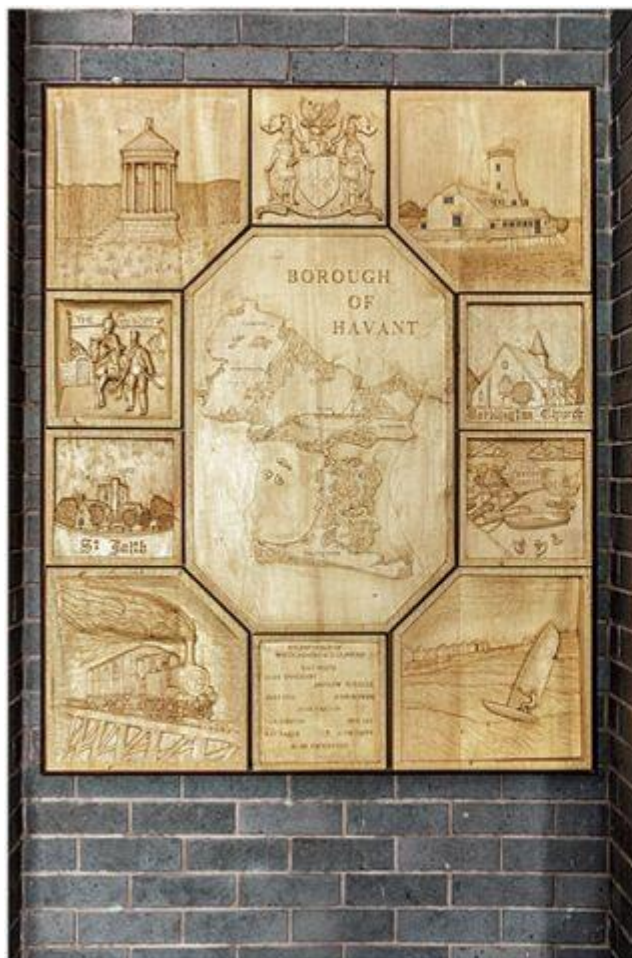
George Palmer

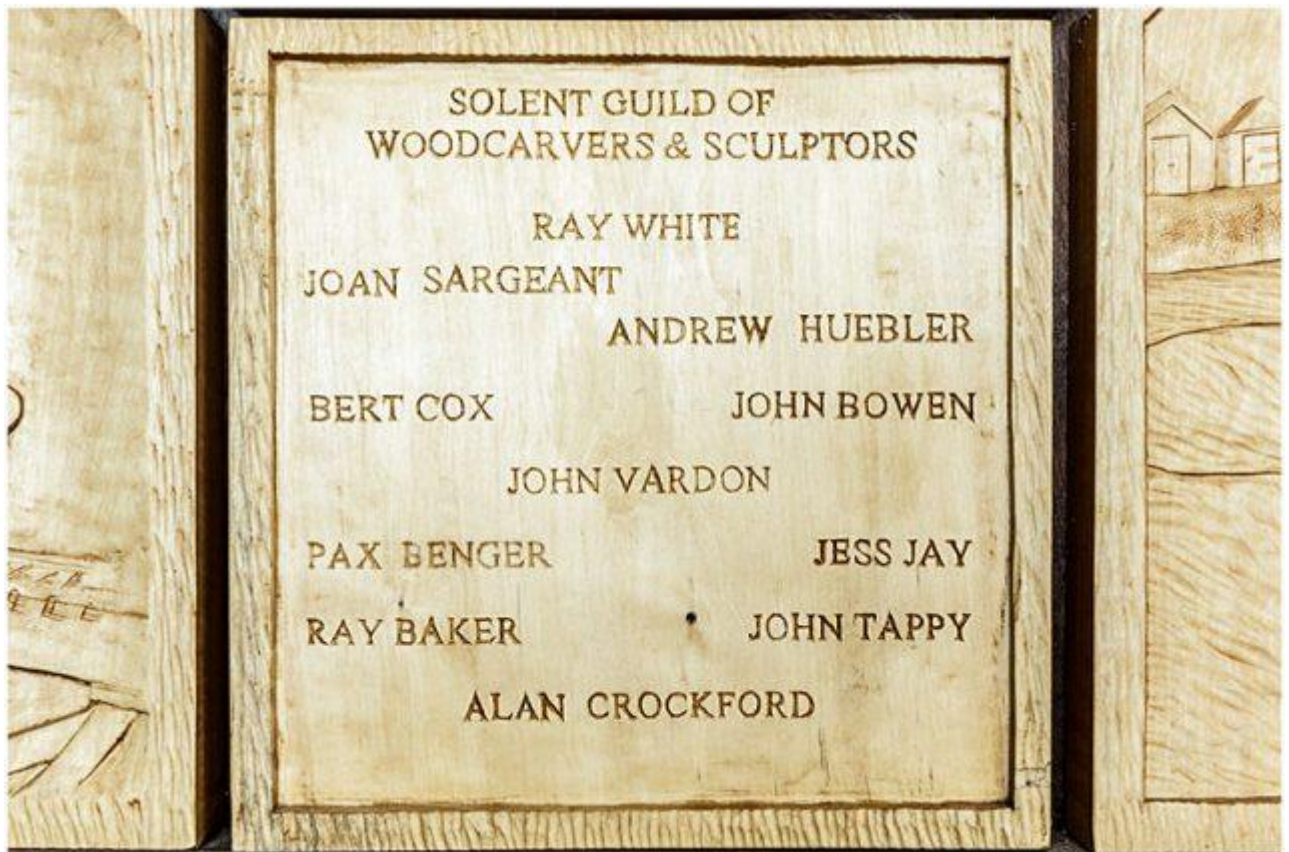


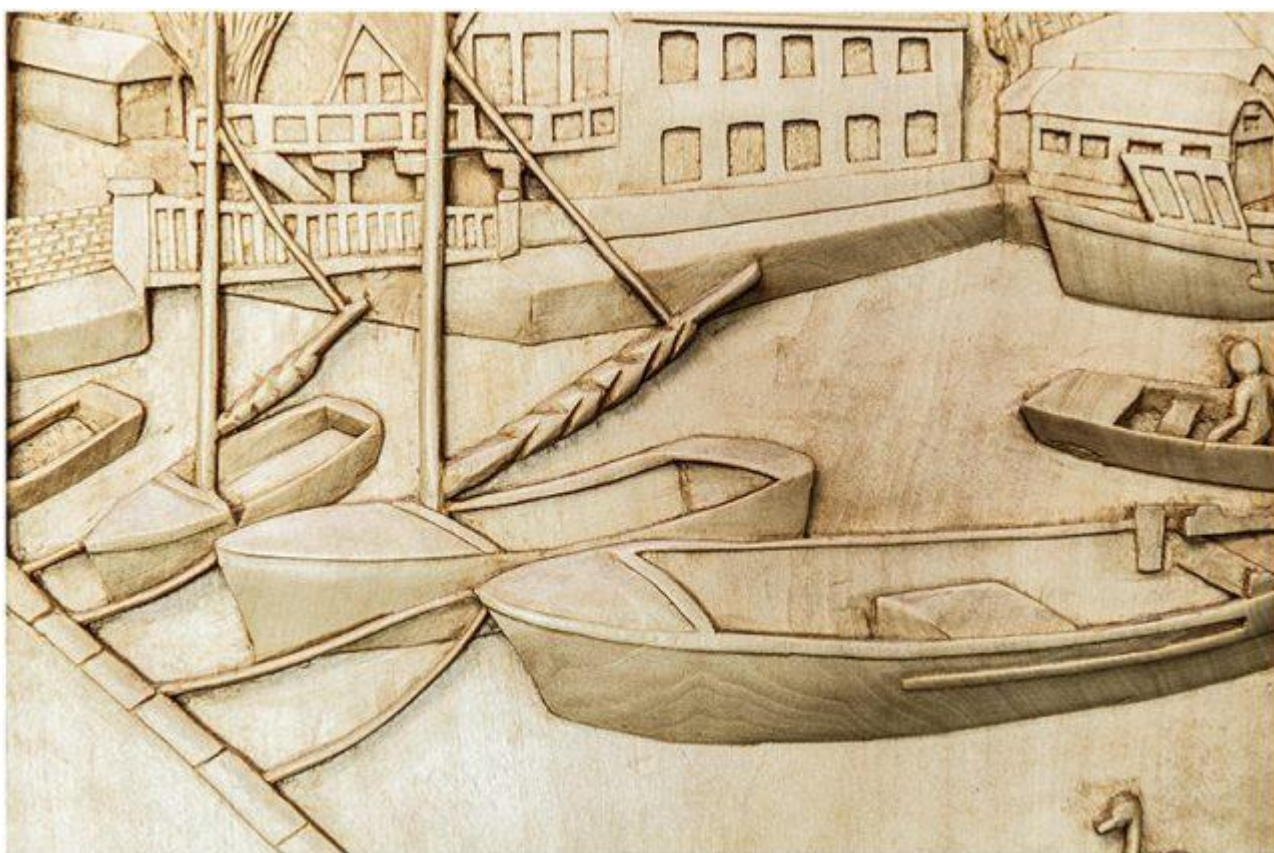


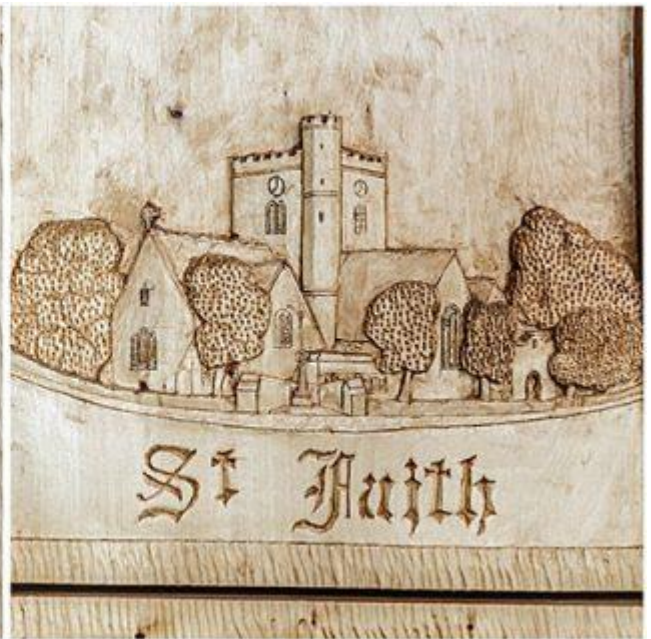
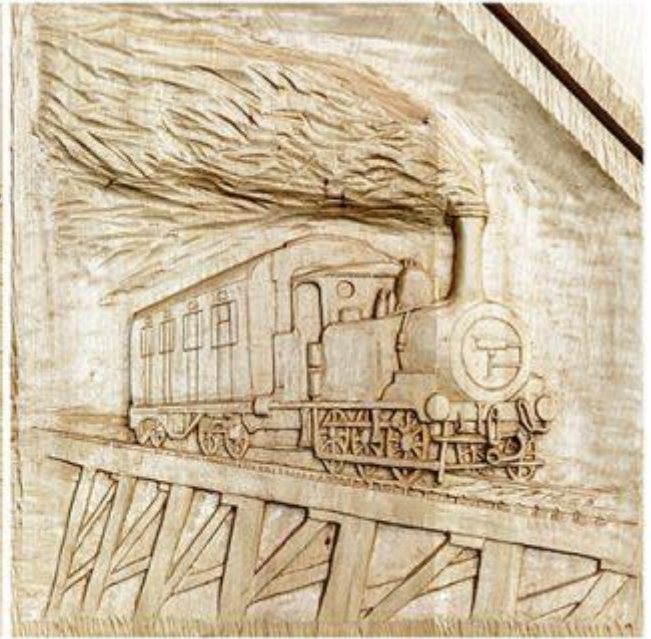
Are you involved with the local community at all?

Occasionally, members of the Guild carry out a major project for a particular local organisation. In 2002 the Guild completed a carving for Havant Borough Council. This carving is hung in the entrance hall to the Council chamber.









Carving out a niche for everyone – January/February 2017

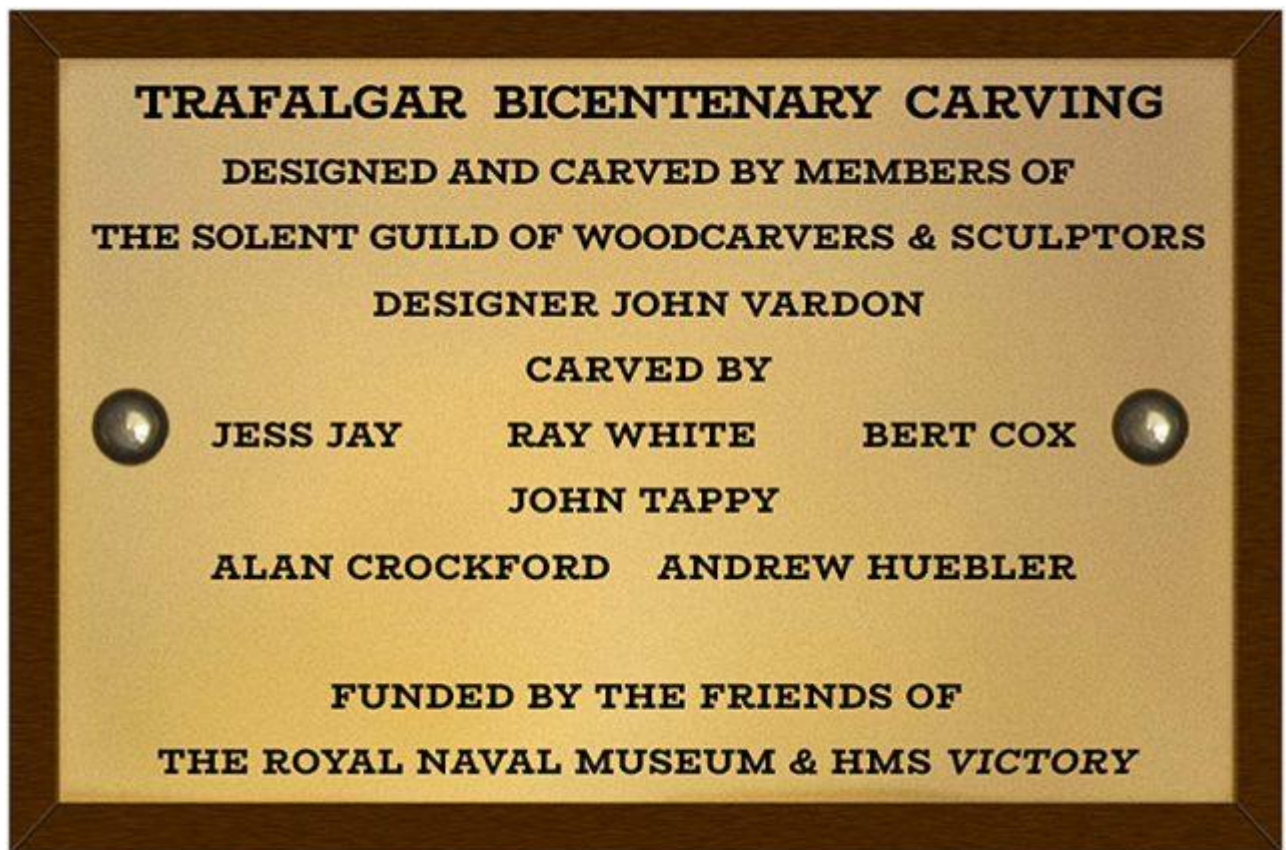
by Steve Hughes - Retina Photography - <http://www.retinaphotography.co.uk>

In 2005, we were asked by The Friends of the Royal Naval Museum and HMS Victory to design and carve a carving to celebrate the Bicentenary of Trafalgar. The carving, designed by myself, was based on the midship section of HMS Victory and comprised six individual carvings by Jess Jay, Ray White, Bert Cox, John Tappy, Alan Crockford and Andrew Huebler. One-half of the carving depicts the Navy in the days of Admiral Lord Nelson and the other half depicts the navy of today. The resulting carving was on display at The Royal Naval Museum but due to some refurbishment, it is currently in storage.





Carving designed and carved by members of the Solent Guild of Woodcarvers and Sculptors to celebrate the Bicentenary of Trafalgar
[images courtesy of SGWC&S]



Chris Phillips



Sandra Barnes & Chris Phillips



Our members are often asked to carry out projects for local schools, and some undertake commissions. One example is a Nature Trail Notice Board for Gomer Junior School; this was led by Darriell Platts. Year 4 pupils put forward ideas for the carving which were then transferred into appropriate images for carving. The wood was supplied by a local joiner. Darriell and Jean Cripps carved various animals and I carved the lettering. Other members were ready to carry out further carving if required. On completion, the trail was opened by Caroline Dinenage, the school's local MP.



Handover of the Gomer Junior School Nature Trail Sign.
Headteacher, at the time, Craig Williams, Caroline Dineage MP and Darriell Platts
[image courtesy of SGWC&S]



Andy Banger







Jean Cripps





What sort of demonstrations does the Guild give?

Some of our members are members of other groups, e.g. Selsey and Bentley. We also have members who have joined up with other carvers in the area and demonstrate once a month at the Weald & Downland Open Air Museum near Chichester. A fellow carver, Jess Jay, and myself providing tuition at a one and two-day course on basic woodcarving. Some of our members also use their carving knowledge to carve in stone or other non-wood material. Anything we can do to spread the word really.



Woodcarvers during demonstration day at Weald and Downland museum.



Jess Jay and John Vardon giving tuition at the Weald & Downland Open Air Museum near Chichester.
[images courtesy of SGWC&S]



David Owen





Lin Palmer





Ros Palmer



Dora Perry



Marthita Chippendale & Sandra Barnes



I'd like to say a big thank you to all the Guild members who have taken part and to say that I'm truly in awe of your skill and craftsmanship. A special thanks to John Vardon and George Palmer who corralled the members and gathered the information as necessary to support the story.

[Click here to read the background story of the Guild](#)

[Click here to meet the members Part 1](#)

[Click here to meet the members Part 2](#)

[Click here to meet the members Part 3](#)

Web Links and References of interest

SGWC&S: Solent Guild of Woodcarvers and Sculptors

Web: www.solentguildofwoodcarvers.org.uk

English Woodlands Timber

Web: / <http://www.englishwoodlandstimber.co.uk>

W.L West and Sons Ltd

Web: <http://www.wlwest.co.uk>

The West Sussex Woodturners

Web: <http://www.westsussexwoodturners.co.uk/>

Geisler-Moroder School [Austria]

Web: http://www.sc_hnitzschule.com

Portland Sculpture & Quarry Trust

Web: <http://learningstone.org>

Sussex Woodcraft Society

Web: <http://www.sussexwoodcraft.co.uk>

Forest of Bere Woodturners

Web: <http://www.forestofberewoodturners.org.uk>

Bentley Wildlife Carvers

Web: <http://bentleywildlifecarvers.weebly.com>

Selsey Wood Carvers

Web: <http://www.selseywoodcarvers.co.uk>

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