

The Woodworkers' Association of NSW Incorporated

August 2021

From the Chair

COVID -19 has interrupted the usual workings of the Association. The newsletter is one way that we can keep our lines of communication open. In the pages that follow you will find some of the plans that we have laid to restart the activities of the Association once the lockdown lifts. There are details of future meetings and options for the reorganisation of our short courses. There are stories about the woodworking practices of some of our members. We hear about a member who creates, not rocking horses, but rocking kangaroos. There is a tribute to John Kirkwood a long-time stalwart of the Association. There is even an article from the 2001 archive about the people who initiated the Association in 1978. There is also a description of how to make a simple project, a folding stool. This has been adapted from the notes for the course that was meant to run the day the current lockdown started.



Chaco Chair [Helsinki Design Museum](#)

The covid pandemic had demonstrated the interconnectedness of us all. What began in one part of the world has spread around the globe. Transmission of the virus has grown exponentially where we humans congregate. We have co-operated in our efforts to develop protection from its deadly effects. Vaccines have been developed in record time. Social distancing measures and lockdown precautions have so far kept the infection rate low in Australia. Even so, our enforced isolation tests us all and affects some people much more than others. Some have lost their employment, some have had to close their businesses and some have lost friends and family.

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Our Association is a representation of much needed community. We are a community of Makers who share a common interest in the creation of beautiful and useful things from wood. We co-operate in many ways to share our knowledge, our skills and our experience. Through the newsletter we will continue the communication that will help to dispel some of the isolation caused by this virus. The lockdown provides us with an opportunity to consider what is important in our lives and to re-think our priorities. Looking on the bright side, it also provides us with plenty of time to work on projects or at least plan them.

Until we can meet again, I wish you and your families good health and well-being.

Phil Greenwood

WWA objectives

The objects of the Association are:

- to provide a forum for networking and to encourage camaraderie amongst all those who work in wood
- to promote public awareness and appreciation of fine woodwork
- to encourage creativity, design and development of skills and application by all woodworkers
- to represent professional woodworkers and promote sustainability of fine woodwork as a career
- to promote awareness of environmental issues including encouraging the judicious use of our precious native timber resources and use sustainable harvested, recycled and reclaimed timbers.

WWA Life Members

Richard Crosland

Phil Lake

Kim Larymore

Leon Sadubin

Richard Vaughan

News, News, News

Difficult Times

As happened last year the resurgence of COVID has curtailed many of the activities of the Association. The social distancing requirements has meant that the workshop has been closed, courses did not go ahead and the August monthly meeting could not be held.

We are endeavouring to keep as many of our services going as possible. This newsletter is one example. We have developed a plan to still run most of this year's planned courses. Lockdown permitting, we will hold our general meetings again. The October meeting is planned for Monday the 4th. The December meeting will be held on the evening of the 6th.

Newsletters take a team to put together. This edition has contributions from many members. Phil Greenwood as Chair of the Association has written the Introduction, Peter Dunn interviewed Bronwyn Voss for his regular Meet the Member segment. Steven Townsend wrote a tribute to John Kirkwood. Gordon Joseph and Phil Greenwood worked to prepare the article on the beginnings of the Association. As editor, I have contributed the Courses Update and the Folding Stool piece.

New Members

We are delighted to welcome the following new members who joined us over the last couple of months: Fiona Bullivant, Leanne Cummins, Warren Eadie, Jason Knox, Sian McGreal and Iona Silver

We look forward to your involvement in the activities of the Association and meeting you at our bi-monthly general meetings and at our Abbotsford workshop.

General Meetings

Our August meeting was cancelled due to COVID but, if the gods are kind to us, we will be having a meeting on October 4. Our two main speakers will be *Kevin Wallace* on restoring planes and *Henry Black* on furniture design, development, and refinement.

Kevin is President of the Hornsby Men's Shed and passionate about restoring planes. He's going to pass on all the skills needed to turn a rusty, knocked about old plane into a gleaming tool that will take perfect shavings from even the toughest wood.

Henry was an early member of the Woodworkers Group which became our Association. An apprentice patternmaker at the Navy's Garden Island dockyard, he worked for Leyland Australia and then the university of NSW. With an increasing interest in woodworking, he has developed designs for furniture for Parliament House. He has developed interesting designs for three-and four-legged chairs.

As well as our main speakers there will be others offering insights into woodworking as well as an auction of second-hand tools.

WWA Committee

2021

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If you would like to join or assist the Committee or be more involved in the Association, please call any Committee member.

Short Courses Update

The disruption caused by the COVID pandemic has many serious effects around the world. Put in that context our challenges in keeping the activities of the Association going seem minor. However in an effort to keep as many courses available as possible we have settled on a flexible response to the rolling lockdowns.

Courses Update as @ August 2021

This year we had hoped to run a program of fifteen short courses. So far, we have only been able to hold the first three courses plus the two open days. The remaining courses were heavily booked and we were looking forward to a busy program. Many members have paid to secure a place in their chosen course. The current COVID lockdown has prompted us to rethink this part of our operations. We have decided to try to salvage as much of this program as we can.

At the time of writing another three courses have been prevented from running. We attempted to reschedule these events but the new dates have also been overtaken. It now looks as though the lockdown in Sydney will continue till at least the end of August and possibly longer. We have made a number of contingency plans based on either a 6 week or a 10 week lockdown. These are described as Option 1 or 2 below. A final option allows for the indefinite continuation of the current restrictions.

What are the new arrangements?

Option 1 has now been put into effect. It assumes that the lockdown will end by at least mid September and presents a new schedule for 5 of the 6 affected courses. If the lockdown is lifted the courses timed to run after the 18th of September would take place on their originally advertised dates. Courses that were timetabled to run before that date have been rescheduled. The Leather Stitching, Lacing and Plaiting course had only one registration and so will be postponed till next year. The Introductory Woodworking No 2 course was fully booked and the resources for the participant's kits had been bought. This and the two Hand Cut Joints courses have been moved to December. Option 2 assumes that the lockdown will continue till the 10th of October. This pushes all the remaining courses into a much shorter time frame.

What happens if I have signed up to one of the courses?

It is important to note that members who have paid for a place in an affected course will need to be consulted. They will be asked if they wish to keep their place on the new date or if they would prefer a refund. Members who have booked but not yet paid will also be consulted. These choices may create new places and if so, these will be advertised. The process for requesting a refund is described below.

Securing a place in one of our courses is a two stage process. First members first email me, Phil Nanlohy, to check if a place is available. At that point they are 'penciled in' if a spot is free. They then need to pay the course fee to secure a spot. Places are filled in order of payments received.

The two tables on the next page summarise the new course dates for these two lockdown options.

Option 1: Courses Restart Mid-September

Course	Original Date/s	New Dates	Paid Places	Vacancies
Intro to Finishing	18&25/9/21	18&25/9/21	6	0
Hand Cut Joints No 1	10/7/21	27/9/21	6	0
Hand Cut Joints No 2	2/10/21	2/10/21	5	1
Router Introduction	28/8/21	9/10/21	3	1
Marquetry	19-23/7/21	18-22/10/21	5	1
Shaker Step Stool No 1	23/10/21	23/10/21	4	0
Shaker Step Stool No 2	30/10/21	30/10/21	5	0
Box Making	16-20/8/21	1-5/11/21	5	1
Domino Mortiser	13/11/21	13/11/21	0	6
Gifkin Dovetail Jig	27/11/21	27/11/21	2	4
Introductory WW No 2	26/6/21 &	4/12/21	6	0

Option 2: Courses Restart Mid-October

Course	Original Date/s	New Dates	Paid Places	Vacancies
Marquetry	19-23/7/21	18-22/10/21	5	1
Shaker Step Stool No 1	23/10/21	23/10/21	4	0
Shaker Step Stool No 2	30/10/21	30/10/21	5	0
Box Making	16-20/8/21	1-5/11/21	5	1
Router Introduction	28/8/21	6/11/21	3	1
Intro to Finishing	18&25/9/21	Not Available	6	0
Domino Mortiser	13/11/21	13/11/21	0	6
Gifkin Dovetail Jig	27/11/21	27/11/21	2	4
Introductory WW No 2	26/6/21	4/12/21	6	0
Hand Cut Joints No 1	10/7/21	11/12/21	5	1
Hand Cut Joints No 2	2/10/21	18/12/21	5	1

What will happen if there are more lockdowns this year?

Option 3 is based on the possibility that the lockdown will continue to roll on. Under this scenario courses would simply be cancelled after each lockdown extension is announced and refunds made to members. This is our least favoured option. There is no guarantee that after the current restrictions are lifted that there will not be other occasions when so called 'snap lockdowns' might be necessary. Because of the likely short time frames of such lockdowns there would not be time to reschedule any affected course.

How will any refunds be organised?

The committee has put into place a process for refunding fees. Members who have booked a place in a course will be contacted individually. The process will be as follows.

1. Phil Nanlohy emails registered participants and asks them to confirm if they wish to keep their place in the new date for their course or to nominate for a refund. Members requesting a refund will be asked to provide their account details. If Option 3 eventuates refunds will be made to all members who have paid.
2. Phil will pass these details on to the Treasurer. He will need to know the member's name, the course name, the amount of refund and the member's bank details.
3. The Treasurer issues a credit by bank transfer to each affected member.

Meet a Member - Bronwyn Vost

Peter Dunn.

Hi all, this time you are going to meet a member who specialises in carving wood and although regards herself as not being a professional woodworker has amassed an impressive number of completed time consuming jobs. Meet Bronwyn Vost.

Q. Thanks Bronwyn for sharing your story with us. Where did you grow up?

A. I grew up in Leeton in New South Wales and worked in Sydney for a year before I went to Wagga Wagga Teachers college from 1971 to 1972 and my first posting was Broken Hill where I taught for 3 years. I married and resigned to have my three children.

Q. When did you first realise that you wanted to work with wood?

A. In 1970, whilst I was working in Sydney for the year, I did a Sculpture course with an artist of some renown, Mitzi Finey. The course was of 6 weeks duration and was held at the Willoughby Arts Centre. I was told by Mitzi to buy some chisels and a lump of wood. Mitzi's course made me realise that I have a passion for carving wood.

Q. So is that what started you carving the rocking kangaroos?

A. No that was some time later. In 1980, whilst living in Broken Hill, I went to a night school class at Broken Hill TAFE with the idea of making a rocking horse for my kids. It was there that the teacher told me to make the sections of the rocker by laminating 8"x 2" lengths of wood. I still use that method to make the kangaroos.

Q. What materials do you use to make the rockers?

A. Initially I used radiata pine which was not a good wood for carving and eventually changed to silky oak and still use it today. I use a PVA glue and finish with polyurethane. The ears of the kangaroo are made of leather.

Q. What then?

A. I moved back to Sydney in 1984 and I joined the Association in 1985. I met a member named Micheal Gill, he was actually the person who designed the Association's logo, the hands holding the planes, the one that is still being used now. I did various wood carving courses with him, he is responsible for really opening my eyes to the wonderful world of woodworking.

Q. Is the rocking kangaroo your own design?

A. All the rockers are my own design and I thought up the basic design for the kangaroo about 1985 and it has slowly evolved since then.

Q. And production of the rocking Kangaroos?

A. From 1984 onwards I was working from my garage making various rockers, elephants, camels, giraffes and yes, kangaroos. At some stage in the early 90's my membership of the Association lapsed until I re-joined in 2018.



Q. At last, kangaroos, were you selling these and how?

A. Mostly they were sold from a woodcraft shop in Kangaroo Valley. The owner, Keith Learn, was selling them locally, intra and interstate and overseas. For a long time there was one of my rocking elephants on the front verandah of a shop in Berry, left there for the children to ride. The rocking kangaroo became my signature piece and has undergone changes, the original ones were knock down designed, then sold in a plywood box and shipped, they were in a number of pieces and had to be assembled by the purchaser..

Q. I know there was at least one unusual sale, tell us about that.

A. That was 1989, the Prime Minister's Department inquired about a rocking Kangaroo, purchased one, and Prime Minister Bob Hawke took it with him to Pakistan as Australia's gift for the son of Benazir Bhutto the then Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Q. Are you still selling the kangaroos?

A. I still make them as a gift for my family, grandchildren mainly and I still have some to make. There came a time, when for various reasons, I retrained as a librarian and did that for 13 years and retired 6 years ago.

Q. Have you kept a count of just how many rocking kangaroos you have made?

A. I have made well over 250 and also numerous of the other animals.

Well Bronwyn, I have seen the finished article, it is beautiful, and beautifully finished and I have to say that for such a time consuming task that is an amazing body of work. I am sure you have brought smiles, happiness and fond memories to many many children and adults. It is surely a creation that will be handed on and on. Thanks for sharing this with us.



Bronwyn made the frame for this Murray Cod at the Association workshop to protest the drying of the Murray Darling Basin.

The John Kirkwood Story

Many thanks to John Kirkwood by Steve Townsend

This Association works well because of the many helpful people who give their time, skills and even money so generously. One of those people who really stands out is John Kirkwood, now living in retirement in Adelaide.

John made a vast number of jigs and other useful items for our workshop. There is a superbly made Mortiser for our ½-inch Makita router. It's a highly functional piece of gear that fits into the vices on our benches. It has moveable fences that control the size of the mortice.

John had a passion for precision, no doubt this had served him so well as a professor of dentistry in an academic career that spanned several continents.

John did enormous work as a workshop supervisor and was tireless in giving advice and help to newcomers to the workshop. Once, two newcomers were struggling to remove a tenon which was stuck fast in a mortice. They tried pulling and tapping and wrenching, but nothing worked. John strolled over, took up a pair of pliers and with one deft tug had the tenon out. "Gee," said one of the impressed newcomers, "You should have been a dentist!"

John also made a "holey table" – what Festool sells at a very high price as a Multi-function Table. It is a sheet of MDF with holes drilled at exactly 96 mm centres in precise orthogonal rows and columns. It allows incredibly accurate positioning of rotary saw tracks and other tools. He provided it with a range of dogs, clamps, and hold-downs. Not only did he give us a stand-alone holey table but he made holey sections for one of our benches.

Hanging on our walls are a series of finger-jointing jigs that provide several thicknesses of fingers and excellent control over the tightness of the joints. At several points around the workshop, you will find shooting boards of various types, all made with great skill and accuracy by John.

Go to the table saw and you can use various sleds he made for us. There are 90-degree and 45-Sleds sleds both made with exceptional accuracy and designed for long-lasting stability.

The crosscut fence on the table saw used to give a lot of trouble because of sloppy fittings. John went to great lengths to solve the problem. He corresponded with Felder engineers and many Youtube contributors. Eventually he found parts that enable the fence to be set at precisely 90 degrees.

But John's crowning achievement for our workshop is surely the magnificent router table he built and gave to the association.

It's not just the table he has given us but also a brand new Triton Router, a dust deputy, a ShopVac and innumerable fence attachments, bits, tools and other items to make this a magnificent router working centre.



The table surface is huge: 1030 mm wide and 750 mm deep. It consists of 36 mm of birch ply surfaced with Formica. The Formica is super smooth with the addition of a little wax (supplied by John) and ensures even feeding of stock.

The table surface is mounted on massive 80 x 85 mm legs laminated out of pine. There are three large storage drawers packed full of tools and associated items including a large range of bits. There's even an articulated lamp to light the work area. John has thought of everything!

The 2400 watt Triton router is mounted to an excellent Woodpeckers router plate which John bought with 11 twist lock rings to accommodate all shapes and sizes of bits.

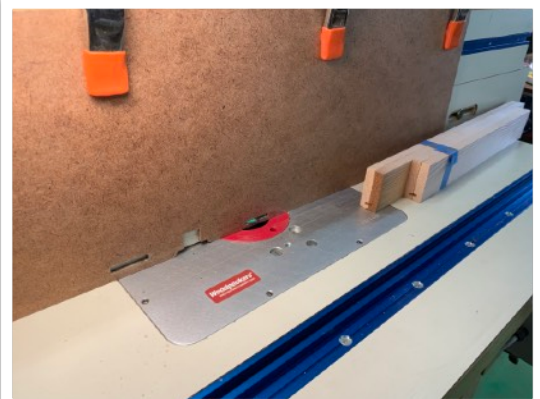
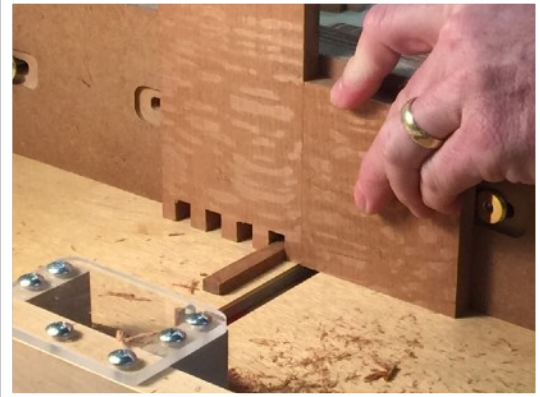
A large, perfectly perpendicular fence can be positioned quickly and easily anywhere on the table. The fence can also pivot allowing super-accurate and repeatable changes in position. The fence has changeable lower slides to change the opening around the bit and has easily positioned Kreg finger boards to prevent kickback. There is also a neatly crafted dust chute and finger guard.

The Triton Router can run at variable speeds ranging from 8,000 -21,000 rpm. It has a coarse adjustment wheel as well as a fine adjustment knob. Bit changes are made easy by having an automatic spindle lock when the switch is in the locked off position and the bit is raised to full height. This allows easy access to a single spanner for changing bits.

Each of the four legs is fitted with a lifting castor wheel so the table can be easily moved around the workshop.

John's router table is a very valuable addition to our workshop and is in regular use by members. Building it and supplying all the parts is an incredibly generous act on John's part and we are most grateful to him.

As we are for the myriad other pieces of equipment he has given us. Surely there is little that we do in the workshop that hasn't been affected in some way by John Kirkwood.



Making a Folding Stool

This article is an edited version of the notes written for the Introductory Woodworking No 2 course. This course has been postponed until the 4th of December. The Folding Stool design has been adapted from the article "DIY Folding Stool Build" by Eugene Thompson (<https://bestlife52.com/make/folding-stool/>).

Finding a Suitable Project

In preparing the introductory course we choose a project that would enable the participants to practice the skills we wanted to teach. We searched woodworking sites and magazines looking for inspiration. The project needed to be something useful, inexpensive, doable in 5 hours and a little challenging. We wanted to be able to use this project to teach the use of a range of hand and machine tools.

In addition it needed to be a vehicle for a discussion about the adaption of existing designs for original purposes. Ideally it would demonstrate the use of jigs and a number of construction processes. This Folding Stool project met our criteria. We only had to translate the measurements into metric units and build a prototype. This helped us to learn how to break the construction steps into a teachable learning sequence. These notes are a summary of that sequence.



Overview of the construction process.

1. Examine your wood and create your Folding Stool kit.
2. Make the jigs
3. Cut all the pieces for the stool to size
4. Prepare each of the pieces of the stool
5. Assemble the Outside half of the stool
6. Assemble the Inside half of the stool
7. Join the Stool halves and apply a Finish.

Select the wood

Lay out the wood that you have for this project. Look at the cut list below to work out which pieces in the kit are intended to be made into which parts of the folding stool.

Look for the strengths and weaknesses of each piece of wood that you have. Decide which you will use for each part of the stool.

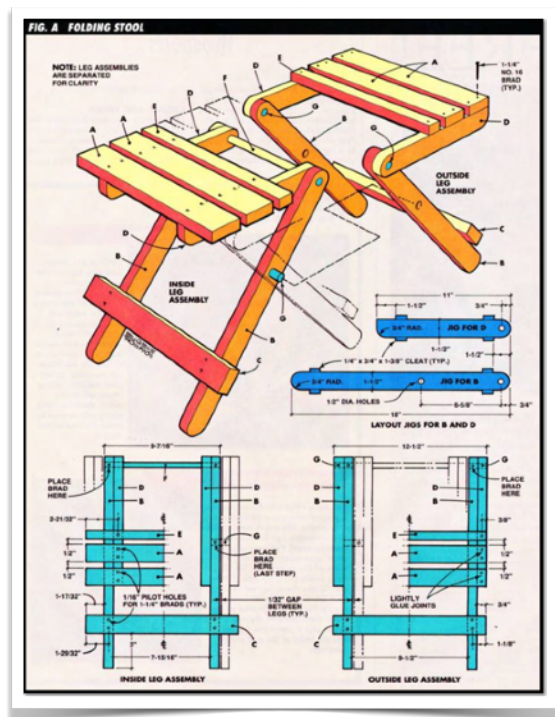
Look at the appearance of the wood and decide which parts should be seen on the outside of the stool.

Prepare the kit of pieces needed to make the Stool

Cut both the Leg and the Seat Support jig to length and round the ends as shown in blue in the Fig. A diagram.

Cut the Legs and Seat Supports a little longer than the final measurements to give enough material to trim to shape. Add 10 - 15 mm to the true length of each of these pieces.

Cut the Outer Seat Slats, the Inner Seat Slats and the Leg Braces to final size. Check that they are all the same length (320mm) and square.



For metric measurements please refer to the Cutlist.
Image from the [Bestlife52](https://bestlife52.com) site.

Making the Jigs.

Drill the nail holes in one end of the Seat Support and Leg jigs.

Make a second nail hole in the Leg jig about 1/3 of the length from the end with the other hole (approx 150 mm). Insert nails so they protrude 2 mm on the cleat overhang side of the jigs.

Add side cleats to help stabilise the jigs on the pieces of the project as you mark them out in turn.

Drilling the Dowel Holes

Use the Leg Jig (it's the long thin one) to mark the centres of the dowel holes and the rounded ends. Repeat this process with the (shorter) Seat Support Jig and mark the rounded ends. Check that the hole makers are correctly centred and adjust if necessary.

If available use the Drill Press and a bit the diameter of the doweling you intent to use (15 mm in our prototype) to drill the holes in one end of the 2 Seat Supports. Repeat in one end and in the second marked spot of the 4 Leg pieces.

Sand the inside and edges of the holes to remove imperfections and check that the dowels are a snug fit.

Rounding the Leg and Seat Support Ends

Use a Jig Saw, Coping Saw or Band Saw to round the ends of the Legs and Seat Supports following the lines you have marked out using the jigs.

Use a Disk Sander, Belt Sander, Rasp and/or Sandpaper to smooth the rounded ends. Place a dowel through the end holes to align all the pieces as you work. If using the Disk or Belt Sander please be sure to work carefully and gently as these machines will remove a lot of material very quickly.

Hand sand all the pieces to remove any splinters, smooth the dowel holes and bevel the edges.

Smooth the curves, removing any pencil or machine marks ready for oiling

Assembly preparation

Decide if you wish to use nails or screws to assemble the Stool. Predrill all the holes in the Seat Slats and the Leg Braces.

If using nails, choose a drill bit that is slightly thinner than 35mm Bright head nails.

If assembling with screws use a drill bit that is appropriate for the gauge of screw you intend to use. A length of between 35 and 45 mm is suggested for the screws.

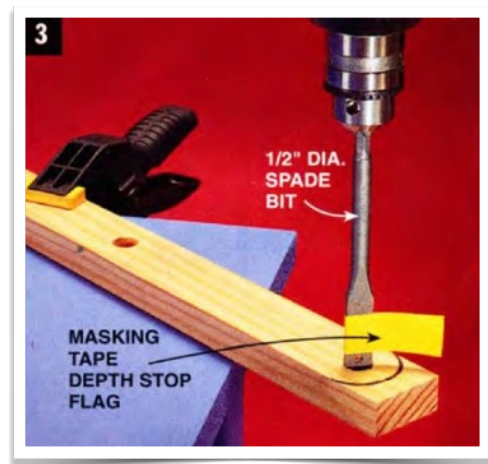
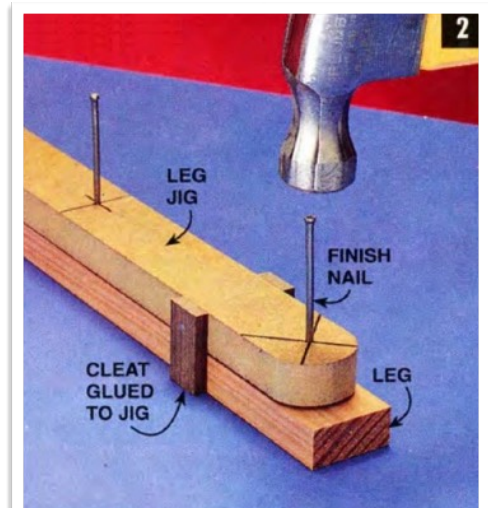
Mark out and centre punch all the holes before drilling. Drill two holes in each end of the Slats and Leg Braces. There are nearly 40 such holes to drill.

For the Slats on the outside half of the stool the holes are 9 mm in from the edge.

For the inside half the holes are 63 mm from the ends of the Slats.

The holes in the outside Leg Brace are 27 mm in from the end and on the inside Leg Brace 45 mm in.

If using screws, the holes should also be countersunk.



Assemble Outside Half of the Stool

Use the wide flat Assembly Jig to clamp two of the Seat Supports at the correct distance apart. Place the Seat Slats as shown in the image below. The ends should be flush with the outside of the Seat Supports.

The long edge of the first Slat should also be flush with the right-angled corner of the Seat Supports.

Glue and nail or screw in place. Remove from the assembly jig.

Align the end holes and place a 15 x 36 mm dowel Pivot Rod to join each Leg with a Seat Support.

Drill and nail through the end of each Leg and into the Pivot Rod and secure with a 25 mm brad nail.

Place, glue and nail or screw the Leg Brace about half way between the edge of the outside Slat and the bottom ends of the Legs. It should overhang either side of the legs by 18mm.



Assemble the Inside Half of the Stool

Push Two seat supports onto the ends of a 15 mm Dowel.

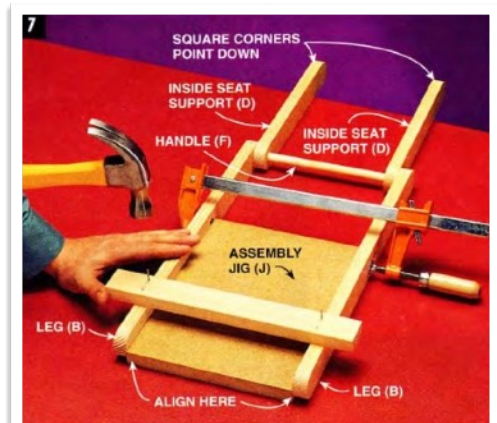
Next, slide the remaining two legs to the ends of the Dowel.

Adjust the inside of the Legs so they align with the edges of the shorter dimension of the flat Assembly Jig.

Clamp the Legs to the Assembly Jig

Swing the Seat Supports away from the legs and place with their Square Corners down

Glue and nail the Inside Leg Brace so that the ends overhang the outside of the legs by 36 mm.



Joining the Two Halves

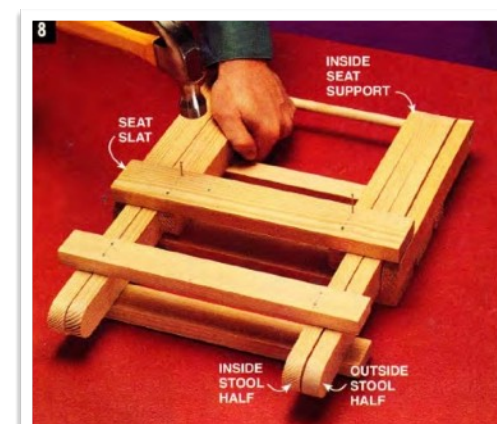
Place the Inside Half of the Stool on top of the upturned Outside Half of the Stool.

Align the middle holes of each pair of Legs and place a 15 x 36 mm dowel Pivot Rod to join them together.

Try to move the two halves of the stool to see if it can open and close without undue friction. Adjust as needed.

Whilst holding each Inside Seat Support onto its parallel Inside Leg glue and nail or screw the Slats to the Seat Support.

The Slats should overhang the Outside Leg on either side by 18 mm.



Finishing the Stool

Remove the Pivot Rods and separate the two halves of the Stool.

Sand any rough edges, fill any nail holes and sand smooth to at least 240 grit.

Finish with two coats of Danish oil and let dry.

Join the two halves of the Stool again and insert the Pivot rods

Drill a nail hold through the Inside Legs and into the Pivot Rods. Hammer in a 25 mm nail

What's next

This design can be varied to create different projects. By increasing the size of the components, the stool could become a table. By extending the legs on one side a stool can become a chair with a backrest. The process flows through stages of Dream, Draw, Design, Decide and Dimension and Make. What will you make next?



Phil Nanlohy

Cut List

Description	Size	Number
Outer Seat Slats	18 x 66 x 320 + 5 mm kerf	4
Legs	18 x 41 x 460 + 10-15 mm	4
Leg Braces	18 x 41 x 320 + 5 mm kerf	2
Seat Supports	18 x 41 x 280 + 10-15 mm	4
Inner Seat slats	18 x 27 x 320 + 5 mm kerf	2
Handle	15 x 240 mm	1
Pivot Rods	15 x 36 mm + 5 mm kerf	4
Leg Jig	18 x 41 x 460	1
Seat Support Jig	18 x 41 x 280	1
Assembly Jig	9 x 212 x 284	1

Reference

All illustrations, original design and assembly overview are from "DIY Folding Stool Build" by Eugene Thompson (<https://bestlife52.com/make/folding-stool>)



Canada Bay Club membership - Just \$3.30 pa or \$11 for 5 years

Benefits of membership include - reward points every time you swipe your membership card to purchase food, drinks and other services at the club, discounted food and drink benefits, free parking, birthday rewards, health and fitness classes, discounted holiday accommodation in NSW's beautiful Forster

Join at reception next time you visit the Club.

More details at <https://canadabayclub.com.au/membership.html>

From the Archive

When, Why and How was the Association established?

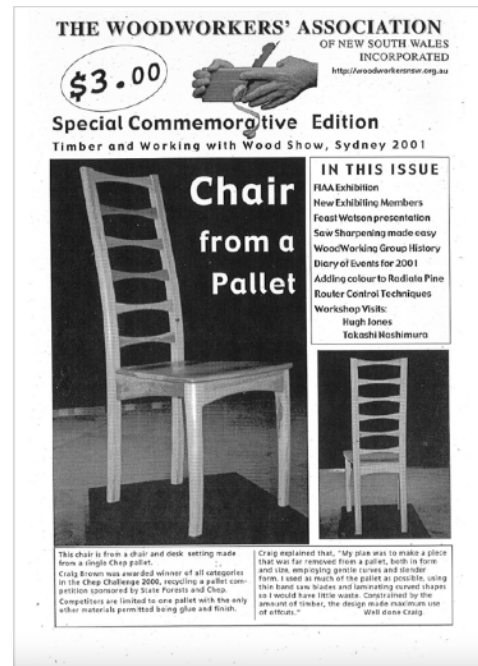
The answer lies in an article in one of our newsletters written by one of our founders, Leon Sadubin.

Leon's article titled The Early Development of the Woodworkers Group of NSW 1977 – 1985 was published in a 2001 newsletter.

Initially we were called the Woodworkers Group of NSW. During the late 1980s it was decided the Group should be incorporated in accordance with NSW legislation and renamed The Woodworkers Association of NSW Inc. The Association was incorporated on 13 March 1989.

Leon's informative 2001 newsletter article reads as follows:

(Editor's Note: The Association maintains an archive of past newsletters that go back to June of 1983. The archive can be accessed from the Newsletter Tab on the Association's website which can be accessed by clicking [here](#).)



The Early Development of the WoodWorkers Group of NSW 1977 - 1985

On Saturday 17th of December 1977, a colourful collection of woodworkers assembled at 199 Pennant Hills Road, Thornleigh to discuss the potential of a woodworkers exhibition. I moved into the new workshop a few days earlier and had taken about 12 months to organise this meeting.

Present were: Ian Mawby, Peter Otto, Harry Amall, Tom Arkins, Don Morris, Arnold Giordano, Hans Westerman, Les Miller and myself, give or take one, or two. I had failed to interest two furniture makers who I felt would have been very relevant to the concept: Norman Stocks and Alan Wale.

Additional participants rolled in as time went by though, including Brendon Lunney, Erhardt Sickinger, David Dickes, Robin Ireland, Mike Darlow and, after some arm twisting, Alan Wale.

The initial inspiration to assemble a group of woodworkers came to me during 1976, in my last year of industrial arts teaching. In January 1977 I set up a temporary workshop at the Haymarket for the first Sydney Festival and met a number of fellow enthusiasts. At the time woodworking was either a trade with strong trade attitudes or a hobby. As a member of the Craft Association of NSW I was familiar with the developments in other crafts and was very concerned that wood was not represented as a contemporary, living and breathing craft. I knew Alan Wale was very aware of the dynamics of current craftwork, but tentative about the prospect of a group. I was also a close associate of Les Miller, who was more influenced by woodwork as a trade - railway carriage building in his case - and of course his work as an Industrial Arts teacher, of which he was a consummate practitioner.

After numerous general meetings, planning meetings, the first exhibition "Woodcraft '78" was organised. Despite awful weather the crowds flocked in and were most enthusiastic. The exhibition was a strange mix of timber artefacts, lovingly made and enthusiastically promoted, but we had a long way to go. Product design, exhibition design, effective promotion and funding were all challenges. When the dust settled participants and some new faces came together to form the Woodworkers Group of NSW. Les Miller, Alan Wale and I were voted in as coordinators. The "group" met bimonthly in various members' workshops.

The time was just pre Krenov, Fine Woodworking Magazine and all those influences which started to have an effect in the late '70s. Influences on my own work came from my study of Denmark, where wood furniture design was mature and effective and Japanese craftwork with its attention to detail and reverence for natural materials, as well as an interest in early Australian bushcraft.

The appropriate use of Australian timbers was canvassed widely by the group. Evan Williams gave us impressive timber displays for exhibitions and we had discussions with the Forestry Commission and wood suppliers on conservation and use of many species.

I felt very strongly that a group which would develop an Australian design in wood should exist. I wanted to associate with other creative and professional woodworkers and I was all for a contemporary aesthetic. I had little time for traditional reproduction furniture apart from an historical appreciation of its style and the techniques used.

These were the years prior to the establishment of the major wood schools when an opportunity to influence an emerging Australian style was possible. This was a period of true serendipity as far as wood design was concerned.

Bush furniture was, in my opinion, probably the most dynamic local style to run with. Particularly if tempered by simple, elegant forms. If we look at the work of Clive Warner and Rob Parker or study the Tasmanian Kevin Perkins' work, we see an emergent design which had a local flavour and a sophisticated use of wood.

The reality of the Woodworkers Group was encouraging but not entirely successful, to my lofty ideals. Most of us evolved and were nourished by the collective enthusiasm and good will of the early days. As the group developed it became apparent that a diversity of styles were to be represented. The ensuing exhibitions were well received, but really lacked a cohesion of style and design intent. It seemed that enthusiasm was the main ingredient of the group. In many ways I suppose this was so. Nevertheless, many of us sold well at the exhibitions and we were rewarded with commissions from new clients. Workshops were busy.

We were very fortunate to attract practitioners from a variety of the woodcrafts. Special mention should be made of the late Nick Masterman, who gave our second exhibition at OTC House such a vibrant display with the construction of the Butcher Boat in the front window and the wonderful meetings in his Birchgrove workshop. Musical instrument makers such as Peter Biffin, Ian Watchom and Arnold Black gave our exhibitions music. Paul Freeland gave us an extraordinary body of work in his unusual sculptures, while Peter Kolasinski and Ian Percival gave us small objects of highly refined craftsmanship. Hans Westerman gave us those impeccable spoons and spatulas and Grant Vaughan that bloody bowl . . . Michael Gill must also take special credit for a highly decorative and creative design style, as well as a mastery of words, which made our newsletter, during his editorship, the envy of the woodworking world.

The early exhibitions took place at the following venues and each was responsible for reaching out and grabbing important new members.

WoodCraft '78 - Australian Design Centre, Margaret St

WoodCraft '79 - OTC House, Martin Place

WoodCraft '80 - OTC House

WoodCraft Afloat - Maritime Museum, Birkenhead Point

WoodCraft Goes to the Opera, 1985 - Opera House

The first WoodCraft Goes to the Opera exhibition was a fulfilment of many years' work. It represented both the finest work and the finest political organisation of the group to that date. Skill in design and technique had arrived at that critical stage where the work on display had all those important ingredients: authority, enthusiasm and a sense of good fun, expressed in the making of truly beautiful objects, which sold!

The exhibition and the Group were organised by the "Junta" which ran everything with an iron will. Most of its members were bearded: Richard Crosland, Michael Gill, Henry Black, Gerard Gilet, Alan Wale, Les Miller, Paul Freeland and Leon Sadubin. The determined Richard Crosland took the master organiser role at that exhibition and let us not forget Mike Jefferys, lighting master at the Opera House, who stripped the joint of every possible light to make our exhibition such a glowing Aladin's Cave.

[Post scrip. The Woodworkers Group of NSW was formally established after the WoodCraft '78 exhibition. Two people named in Leon's article are still members, namely Life Members Leon Sadubin and Richard Crosland.]

www.woodworkersnsw.org.au

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Additional participants rolled in a little later by the way, including Brenden Lunney, Edward Skidinger, David Dicks, Robin Ureid, Mike DeWoolf and, after some arm twisting, Alan Wale.

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Desk and article by Leon Sadubin

<http://woodworkersnsw.org.au>

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Many thanks to...

David Palmer, our **Secretary** who takes on much of the administration of the Association. In addition to looking after the committee business he is the **Workshop Supervisor Organiser**. He has managed the fluctuating government rules that have affected access to the Spring Street workshop. When lockdown is over he will be the person to approach if you would like a time slot on the Wednesday or Sunday workshop open days. To book a place please email David at secretary.woodworkersNSW@gmail.com.

Our **Workshop Supervisors**, **David Palmer**, **Gordon Joseph**, **Peter Harris**, **Richard Leniston**, **Tim Major**, **Peter Dunn** and **Peter Munro** will be central to the safe operation of the workshop when we are again allowed to gather to use the resources in that space.

Peter Harris as he continues the manifold and sometimes complex task of maintaining the workshop machines and ensuring our safe working environment.

Oliver Addis, our **Treasurer** for keeping watch on our financial health and **Gordon Joseph**, our **Membership Secretary** for keeping track of the people who are collectively the Association.

Clare O'Reilly and **Phil Nanlohy**, **Course organisers**, and the course presenters **Peter Munro**, **Kevin Wallace**, **David Palmer**, **Peter Harris**, **Carol Faulkner**, **Peter Dunn**, **Brian Dawson**, **Steve Townsend**, **Matt Dwight**, **Nik Teply** and **Shane Weichnik** on whose expertise we rely to mount the courses program.

Phil Nanlohy for editing this newsletter though he would be happily pass this task on to a member who might like to take it on.

The **Committee members** - **David Palmer**, **Frank Duff**, **Peter Harris**, **Richard Leniston**, **Phil Nanlohy**, **Clare O'Reilly** and **Steve Townsend** - for their constant support, energy and ideas.

And finally, **Phil Greenwood** our chairperson for maintaining the association's momentum as we move on from the lockdown days.



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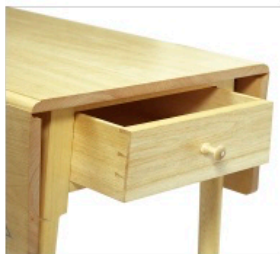
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