

St John the Baptist Church, Beeston



One-fifth scale model of altar table

I have just completed a major commission for St John the Baptist Church in Beeston, Nottingham. The church, which was rebuilt by Sir George Gilbert Scott - architect of St Pancras Station Hotel - in 1843, has been subject to major internal refurbishment. I was recommended to the church authorities by architects Lathams of Derby as the reordering included a large altar table and three chairs (subsequently extended to include a lectern).

Site visits to the church and discussions with the vicar ascertained the relevant spatial scale and detail information to formulate a design brief from which I worked to produce drawings and scale models. Following approval from Southwell and Nottingham DAC, work commenced on selecting and preparing timber stocks and in refining the designs. The altar table itself presented two major interlinked challenges. One was to incorporate (hidden) wheels and keep the weight of the structure to a minimum to allow its relative ease of movement.

The second was to create a five arched structure based on three radii, the dual function of this being to spread the load of the moving altar, and an aesthetic attempt to capture the perspective of the roofing arches. My usual themes of tapers, multiples, ledges, solid and space, tactile elements, etc have all been utilized to create individual pieces bound by abstract visual keys. All outer and forward facing edges likely to be handled during a service have been softened with a radius.

To date, only workshop images of work in progress exist; see me at events during the year for full professional images of the furniture in situ.

Alnwick Parish Church, Northumberland

A private commission from an existing customer for a cross and a pair of candlesticks was completed in January. Constructed in oak and carved with a memorial inscription, the work now resides in Alnwick Parish Church in Northumberland.

Holy Family RC Church, Slough, Berks

And...later this year I shall be working on a sanctuary lamp holder and a cabinet for holy oils for the recently refurbished Holy Family RC Church, Slough, Berkshire.

Arts and Crafts Exhibition

A major Arts and Crafts Exhibition is being planned for the New Walk Museum in Leicester from 8 November 2008 to March 2009. The exhibition, curated by Mary Greensted, will show Leicester's collections relating to Ernest Gimson and the A and C Movement for the first time in over twenty years. Furniture, metal work, embroideries and architectural drawings by Gimson, Ernest and Sidney Barnsley and Peter Waals will be on display. Loans have been requested from the Musee d'Orsay, Paris and the V&A, London as well as from private collections. Mid 20th century pieces influenced by Arts and Crafts traditions will include work by Edward Barnsley, Gordon Russell and US architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Having grown up 'under the influence', so to speak, of the Arts and Crafts via both school and Loughborough College, and being one of a small number of craftsmen working within this tradition, I have been invited to participate in this exhibition. More on this anon.

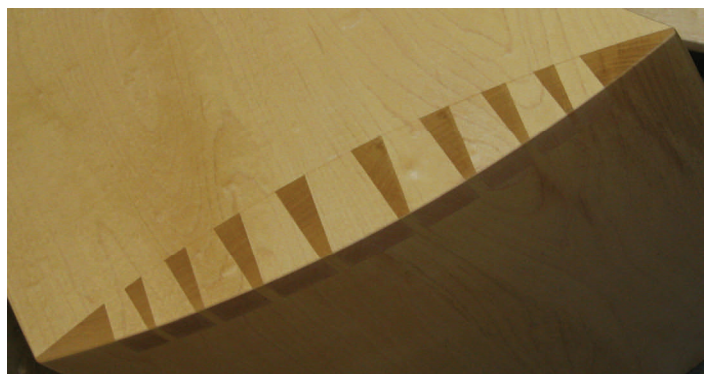
Sideboard

A seven foot long oak and walnut sideboard with fulcrum feet and doors without frames, built and exhibited last year.



Library steps

Illustrated here is the dovetail joint work which forms an integral part of a set of library steps made last year. Commissioned as a 21st birthday present, sailing and travel were the themes incorporated to reflect the interests of the recipient. A full set of images showing the making of this piece are available and can be seen at exhibitions I attend.



Oak supply

During the course of the year I have sourced a supply of English oak from a managed estate in northern Cumbria. Lord Inglewood of Hutton in the Forest, just north of Penrith, has a keen interest in trees and grows more than 400 varieties both commercial and ornamental on the estate. My oak supplies are selected for quality of grain and seasoned to my requirements, producing stock of superior working qualities. I'm hoping that over a period of time I can extend supplies to cover most British hardwoods, including some of the fruitwoods.

Quilted Mahogany

Always on the look out for top quality wood when I visit timber yards to select materials for commission, I was fortunate this year to come across two matching pieces of quilted mahogany. This luxurious and visually stunning material is rare: the quantity I have is sufficient to make one large jewellery box and then only when combined with other materials such as satinwood, ebony and silk. Another equally stunning timber I have in stock is quilted maple. This is less rare and will be used for inlay work and jewellery boxes. If you are visiting the workshop, do request to see the samples - you may be tempted!

Commissions

The previous twelve months have seen me complete a very diverse range of commissions, including one which involved searching a firewood pile for suitable stock! Commissions included a small, technically demanding table in walnut and maple to be used for the sole display of a rather wonderfully engraved Orrefors glass bowl, a double bed and ottoman in walnut and waxed leather to blend with existing Gordon Russell furniture, and a portable display stand for a respected potter of international renown. This latter piece made its debut at the Royal College of Art earlier this year. The wood pile provided spalted beech from a much loved tree which was then turned into four large salad bowls.

Workshop and Gallery - Derbyshire Open Arts Event 24, 25, 26 May

Visitors to my annual open workshop weekend over the Spring Bank Holiday weekend will see the wildlife sculptures of Eddie Hallam. A naturalist all of his life, Eddie was formerly a director and owner of the Riber Wildlife Park and has since established a new career sculpting exquisite bronze studies of bird life from around the shores of Britain. The weekend also sees the Wirksworth Well Dressings and the town is host to a number of other artists opening their studios.



Pair of chairs made to measure in cherry

Oak chest - Good news, temporarily!

Very shortly after printing and distribution of last year's newsletter announcing news of the 'retirement' of the blanket chest, I received a phone call which has enabled its continued availability at least in the short term. The phone call, from a retired member of a family of respected timber merchants, led me to view and acquire stocks of timber which had been stored undisturbed for the last thirty years. Included in this purchase was a quantity of English oak boards, very broad and with the highest quality figure, all suitable for the main panel work on the oak chest. I have not seen figured oak stock of this quality and dimension available since before establishing the business and perhaps never will again as trees are now harvested before reaching maturity. Also included in these stocks were Burmese plantation teak and Brazilian mahogany of similar vintage. So, the oak chest is available again, but only whilst stocks last. I don't expect another phone call!



Calendar of events 2008

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| 25, 26, 27 April | British Crafts
Town Hall, Chiswick, London
www.britishcrafts.co.uk |
| 17, 18 May | Derbyshire Food and Drink Fair
Bolsover Castle, Derbyshire |
| 24, 25, 26 May | Open Workshop
With guest exhibitor Eddie Hallam
As part of Derbyshire Open Arts event
www.derbyshireopenarts.co.uk |
| 26, 27 July | The Great Dome Art Fair
Devonshire Dome, Buxton, Derbyshire |
| 16 August | Ashbourne Show
Osmaston Polo Ground, Derbyshire |
| 22-25 August | Chilterns Craft Show
Stonor Park, Henley on Thames |
| 13, 14 September | Art Trail
Melbourne, Derbyshire |
| 8 November-
March 2009 | Arts and Crafts Exhibition
New Walk museum, Leicester |

Opening times for most events are 10am to 5pm. Should you require more details about specific events, please email me via the website or phone.

Visitors are always welcome at the workshop - but please phone first to check I'll be there.