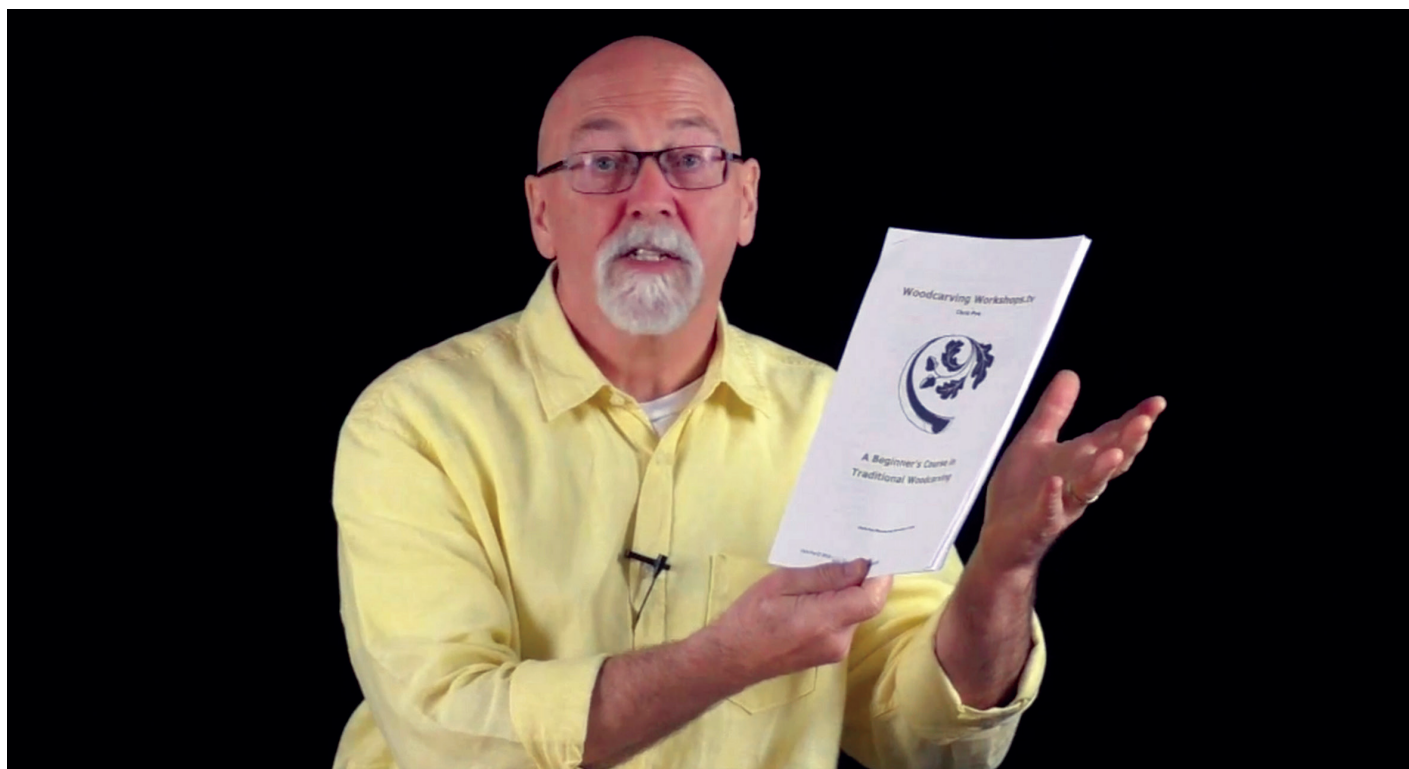


Woodcarving Workshops

Guest editor Kevin Alviti, reviews master carver Chris Pye's woodcarving tutorials

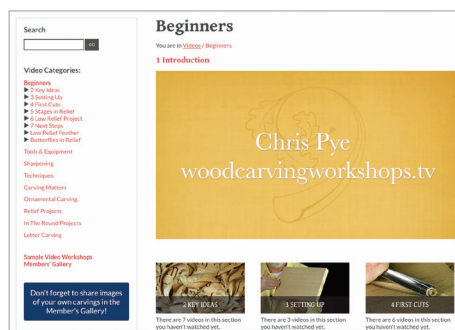


Tuition is sometimes difficult to find in woodcarving. I know when I've looked it's either been at inconvenient times for classes (often in the daytime at a local college) or out of my price range or distance for one-to-one tuition for more than a few sessions.

So, a few years ago I turned to the internet to further my carving education, initially using YouTube but the quality isn't there. Fortunately I found Chris Pye's Woodcarving Workshops (www.woodcarvingworkshops.tv). I signed up for just three months to begin with but ended up using the website for well over a year, so I feel I can give a fair review of how useful I felt it was.

Woodcarving Workshops is billed as a comprehensive online resource for woodcarvers, and I have to agree. I could carve but I was desperate to improve in certain areas, I wanted to find that easy, methodical approach I'd seen that some have when tackling a workpiece. So the first thing I did was to start on the beginner section and work my way through the projects there, using mainly just three tools.

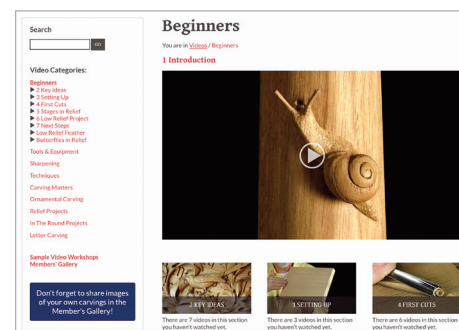
Chris has a great way on camera – if woodcarving was more universally popular, he would easily be like Monty Don with hoards of people tuning in on a Friday night to watch him. He explains everything in a calm and thought-out way. The camera,



operated by Chris' wife and partner in Woodcarving Workshops, Carrie Camann, is always where it needs to be, showing what the tool should be doing and how you should hold it. There are other videos breaking down the more complex aspects.

I found myself carving on an evening, tools and workpiece spread before me with my laptop out, videos playing while I carved. If you have any questions, you can comment on the video – Chris responds to these really quickly and often a question and response will already be in the comments section.

The section on sharpening is brilliant. It's always a subject that makes a lot of woodworkers twitch as they all have their own way to go about things. I went straight to the Sharpen Your V Tool section, the tool that possibly causes the most hassle with woodcarvers. Split into eight sections, it methodically explains how to go about



setting up this tool so you can get the most from it.

I remember tentatively uploading a few pictures of an early carving project to the member's gallery. You can allow people to contact you (if you choose), which I did, and I received some lovely, encouraging feedback almost straight away, it's such a nice little community.

As well as more than 900 videos and 90 projects on the website, there is a monthly email and a blog (which is free to read even if you're not a member) where Chris will talk about techniques, projects and tools. I still receive the emails and find it inspiring to get out to the workshop and carry on carving.

I've had a number of people ask me how to begin learning to carve and I've suggested this website as a good starting point, and also great to develop skills for those with more experience. ●