

# West Riding Woodcarvers' Association



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Lord Lieutenant of  
West Yorkshire

Life members  
Anne Hobson  
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## Derek Adams - How to build a cabin cruiser - 9th February 2013

### Buoyant Derek and what floats his boat...

The good ship Kerri Francis was a well-travelled vessel, long before her bows sliced through the water.

That's because the Kerri Francis was 12 years in the making and her one-ton frame was shifted from place to place while woodcarver Derek Adams endeavoured to make her sea-worthy.

A few years in a half-built garage, then a difficult transition to a friend's barn, was followed by an undignified resting place in a pub car park at Meltham. Then the Kerri Francis was dumped in a Yorkshire field, where the resident horses were partial to a bit of boat for an after-grass snack.

And the final indignity was being shut in a local mill.

At this point, when the Kerri Francis was really still only a hull, Derek found himself with two options: burn it or finish it. And so she came to rest in his front garden so that Derek and his undoubted skill could craft her into the cabin cruiser of the original plans.

Derek, a well-known member of the Brooksbank class, told his salty tale of boat-building at the February meeting of the club at Shepley.

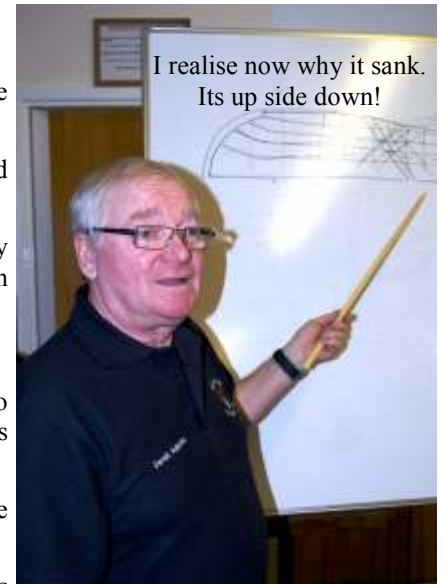
The build-a-boat adventure set sail with rather small plans for his idea of a 26 footer. This involved scaling up and skilfully enlarging the plans using a grid. Derek described in detail the painstaking way he built the cold-moulded hull using marine ply, mahogany stringers and spruce.

Once her wandering days were over, Derek was determined to finish her. A floor area, births and a galley were built, as well as a stunning piece of craftsmanship that was the ship's wheel. Then a 3cwt BMC Goldseal six-cylinder engine was fitted.

It wasn't long before the Kerri Francis started her life on the ocean wave with a rather novice Captain Derek piloting her out to sea.

Maybe it's better to gloss over the moment when, sailing through the mouth of the Humber he was asked for his permit number, which of course he hadn't applied for. But as the official seemed happy with the digits in Derek's telephone number, he was allowed to sail through.

The talk was illustrated by some fine pictures of the boat in various stages – with the help of David Holt – showing how the Kerri Francis grew from the incredible hull(k) to a fine sea-going vessel.



**Speaker: March 9th Shepley Meeting:** We try to stay topical in the club and following on from the excellent BBC4 series on woodworking this month we have booked a gentleman called A Powell ( I still don't know what the A stands for) who is a specialist on the work and life of **Grinling Gibbons**.

**Annual General Meeting: April 13th 2013:** Please don't plan to go and see your granny on this day. Come to think of it, if any of our members has a granny alive, she must be pushing 150 years old. But anyway just make sure you keep the morning of this day free as your views and input are important to the smooth running of the club. My wife has just brought me a cup of coffee and, nosing over my shoulder, said '*as long as your views don't contravene his*'. I think that statement is grounds for divorce - and only slightly true!

For those with access to a computer Frank Adams has sent me this web site of interesting carvings.  
<http://www.zuzafun.com/denise-nielsen-and-george-worthington-wood-art>

**John Farrar** has written this piece about Lime timber and the differences and difficulties carving it.

I have been concerned that a number of our group have come across problems with the pieces we have been carving for the Forget-Me-Not Trust, problems not with the interpretation of subject matter but more with the nature and quality of the wood under our chisels and gouges. Words like “crumbly”, “grainy” and “splintery” come to mind. Indeed a number of pieces have had to be renewed so that progress can be made with the deadline of the end of March in mind. These problems, with this batch of timber, seem not to have been so marked when we attacked the War Panels a couple of years ago and one of the possible reasons is not hard to fathom. Having said that, such problems can occur at any time and with any piece of wood.

Timber suppliers order in from various sources and these can be hundreds of miles apart. There is not an abundance of sizeable limes in this country and what there is exists more in the south of England. Lime is far more abundant on the continent. But wherever it comes from it will have gone through a seasoning process where a particular level of moisture content is sought before the wood is offered for sale.

There is a subtle difference between the modern method of kiln drying as opposed to the more natural air drying process and it may well be that in this difference lies the key. Kiln drying is quicker and whilst there are businesses using the natural process, e.g. “Mousey” Thompson at Kilburn with his oak, these places seem to be few and far between.

As a rule of thumb, timber dries out naturally at the rate of one inch a year. I am not convinced that kiln drying, because of its speed, does not affect the cell structure of the timber. My son, who is in the joinery trade, says that in his experience, timber from the kiln is harder and whilst this may cut better under the saw, it does not cut so well under the chisel. Indeed, information on Wikipedia indicates that air drying often produces more easily workable wood than with kiln drying.

The nature of lime, as with other species, is affected by its speed of growth and the conditions in which it matures. Wide and prominent growth rings, which have been evident in some of our pieces recently and which indicate rapid growth, are not the ideal but lime does have a uniform cell structure when viewed under the microscope and this lends its appeal to the carver. The very best lime wood, if you can get it, is that where the growth rings are barely discernible, indicating slow growth. Mike Hadfield points out that it is possible to have marked variations of quality within the same tree!

This brings me to the subject of sharpening since we all crave the keenness of a blade that cuts through the wood with consummate ease. We should think of slicing through the wood and not abuse it by pushing and shoving. ( It is no accident that “Monsieur le Guillotine” had a blade angled at 45 degrees.) The old adage that a good workman never blames his tools seems to be appropriate in this context. We should not complain if our tools are not up to the job, irrespective of timber quality. Being adept in sharpening and honing may well help us to overcome some of our problems.

I think the snow must be keeping **John** in as he has also sent me these two limericks for the newsletter.

A carver called “Cyril the Knife”  
Decided he needed a life  
So he gave up on prudes  
Converted to nudes  
And was happy the rest of his life

An animal carver called Sid  
Carved an owl and a sheep and a squid  
When challenged to do  
The bear from the zoo  
He said that he already did

I have to sadly report that our good friend Colin Pratley recently saw the passing of his wife Rita. Colin has unstintingly looked after Rita through a long illness.

Her funeral was on the 13 February and the club was well represented with the Reverend Mary Stott taking the service.

Our thoughts and best wishes are with Colin and his family.

**Andy Thornton of Elland** contacted us via our web-site to ask if any of our members could help out with some carving work while their resident carver is away ill. They sent some photos through that I passed on to a few of our members but everybody



took one look and ran a mile. I think the thought of going back to paid full time employment induced a few heart murmurs.

A sample of their work.

Just been informed that Mike Chambers is going to help out for a couple of days.



A photograph of Marshall Roscoe with Malcolm Cooper’s stick hanging on Marshall’s study wall.

#### Visits To Ashley Iles factory:

The carvers at the Queen Elizabeth Grammar School Monday night class are organising a trip down to Ashley Iles towards the end of April and are inviting anybody interested to join the party.

**Anybody who wants to go please contact Adrian on 01484-861452.**

Next progress meeting at Lindley Bowling Club for the Forget-Me-Not panel will be on the 7th March 2013 at 7:00pm. A pie and pea supper will be put on by the ladies. The last meeting made a profit, after we paid for the hire of the room, of £39.