

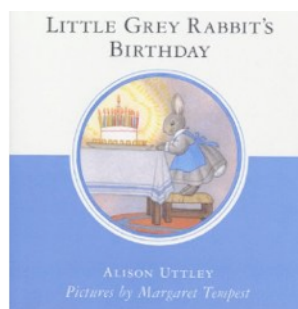


Rocking chair
in yew.

Recent Work

If you live in the southern states of America, or your house is otherwise equipped with a shady verandah accessed by a creaking screen door, you will of course own a rocking chair, the better to enjoy the afternoon breeze as you chat, with narrowed eye, the roving of your grandchildren or the careless incursions of your neighbour's chickens.

My client has none of these, but had started reading Little Grey Rabbit to his two year old son (my godson) and was inspired by LGR's rocker in Margaret Tempest's illustrations (readers of a certain age will remember...) to commission one.



It was to be made in yew, the rockers should be properly long, and there must be an inscribed 'T', for the family name. Otherwise the design was up to me.

For furniture makers it is hard to think of rocking chairs without thinking of Sam Maloof, a Californian of Lebanese origin, whose glowing, sinuously sculpted rockers symbolised the prolific output of a 60 year

career. Maloof was self-taught and some of his techniques raise orthodox eyebrows, but his organic forms are alluring and I thought this would be a great opportunity to try something a bit different. It called for a new arsenal of rasps, files and other shaping tools, and a complete prototype made in softwood to experiment with techniques, proportions and balance.

I was lucky with the yew. It is hard to imagine a less commercially viable timber: invariably standing alone, famously slow to grow into a tree, rarely felled, riven with splits and defects.

continued ...

Recent Work continued

But I found a man in Dorset with some gorgeous boards from a local tree and converted them, in roughly equal proportions, into rocking chair and firewood: the waste was horrendous, but yew burns brilliantly. The magazine cover featured on page 3 shows them before I started.

I won't dwell on the making: it took several weeks and I learnt a lot about designing and shaping curves. Fluid shapes like this can't be planned in detail on paper: you have to explore as you go along, which is both liberating and terrifying. But the effort paid off: the lines and proportions work. It is not - nor was intended to be - a Maloof, though it owes something to him. It is comfortable, rocks smoothly, and the balance is spot on. The colours and texture of the yew are even better than I had hoped. My client loves it and I hope that Little Grey Rabbit would have approved.

I enjoyed making this and, after so much time developing it, I'd love to make more. They won't be cheap - at least not if you think of them as just chairs. As sculpture they're a bargain, and they'll look good indoors as well as on verandahs.



Rosemoor Exhibition

As forecast in previous newsletters, I will be exhibiting, along with a dozen or so fellow members of the Devon Furniture Makers, at our Summer selling exhibition at RHS Rosemoor, near Great Torrington in North Devon. The exhibition runs from 16 - 31 July, 11.00 - 5.00 daily. One of us will be manning the show throughout and I will be there all day on 21 and 26 July. I am borrowing back the Rocking Chair (above) to exhibit, together with another substantial piece that I am currently finishing.

Unless you are an RHS member you will need to pay Rosemoor's normal admission charge, but there is no additional charge for the exhibition and the fabulous gardens are well worth a visit. For more information about the exhibition please go to the RHS web site (click [here](#)).





On the cover of the March edition of *Good Woodworking* magazine. The yew boards for the rocking chair are stacked up behind me.

Media Coverage

In these days of super-injunctions, if the press are beating a path to your door, you probably don't want them there, but I was more than happy to spend a day in February talking to a team from *Good Woodworking* who called to ask if they could write a profile of me. I didn't admit that I'd never read their magazine (now of course I recommend it to everyone) and the only alarming thing was discovering how enjoyable it was having someone with a notepad keenly recording my every opinion as though it was worth something: you begin to understand how celebrities can become so insufferable.

A PDF of the article can be downloaded from the News page on my web site (to view, please click [here](#)).

As if that wasn't enough fame, one of my dining tables stars as the Centrefold in the July edition of *Good Woodworking*. This edition also profiles Ben Law, the woodsman who featured in the most popular episode of *Grand Designs* and can be found on well stocked magazine racks now, so look out for a copy.

Navigation

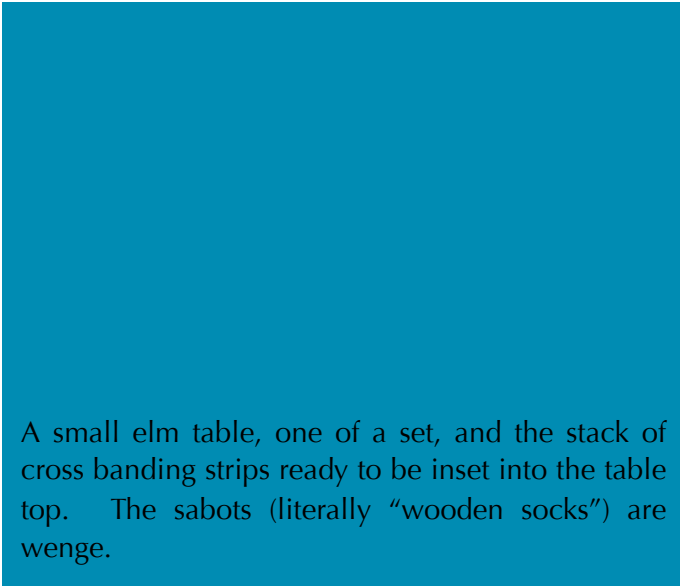
For those of you who use iPads, iPhones and similar technology to view my web site but have found that scrolling through the [Gallery](#) doesn't work, a solution is at hand. The trick is to use two fingers rather than one when stroking the screen.

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A small elm table, one of a set, and the stack of cross banding strips ready to be inset into the table top. The sabots (literally "wooden socks") are wenge.

