

## The 'Zoë Gertner' Range of Carving Gouges

In my early days of teaching woodcarving, I noticed how some of the students found it difficult to control their cuts when using a gouge with a mallet for 'bosting in', the initial shaping of a 'carving in the round' or sculpture – modern gouges seemed too long, heavy and difficult to guide around the desired shape of the carving. Then, on reaching the more delicate hand carving and detail stage where many tiny accurate cuts are made and the gouge has to be held close to its cutting edge for accuracy, again, the standard carving tools seemed too long and heavy - the handles would waver about, making it hard to control the cutting edge, fingers were often made sore from gripping the blades firmly, and they were very tiring to use all day especially for the older students and those with smaller hands.

As an experiment I cut a short length off the end of the handle of a duplicate 1in no 9 gouge I had, and found that the reduced length of the tool made it much easier to use. Having tried out my experimental gouge, some of my students also shortened the handles of their larger gouges to good effect; however, the problem of excessive length and weight of the blades of the smaller gouges when using them for hand carving still remained. There was not much I could do about this for my students – though happily for me, my own personal carving gouges are old, light in section, well balanced and very easy to use for detail and finishing.

The problem remained in abeyance until in the mid '90's, then when demonstrating

woodcarving at Yandles Woodworking Show, I met Barry and Tony Iles who had their tool stand nearby, and I was able to talk to them about the difficulties experienced with modern carving tools. Barry and Tony listened, took measurements from my own carving tools, and a few weeks later, sent a sample set of 'Zoe Gertner Specials' of the most commonly used sweeps and sizes, honed and razor sharp. When used by my students, they meet with universal approval, appreciation for their appearance, quality and ease of use, sales of them being consistent since they were introduced because they address all of the aforementioned difficulties.

I continue to use these gouges with my students and at Shows when demonstrating woodcarving and they always arouse much interest and admiration.

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