

Table lamp

Walter Hall sheds light on a classic form



Not all projects go according to plan and wood is not always as compliant as you might wish. My intention for this article was to remake a lamp that I made many years ago to improve the design and shape and also to make a new one with a heavy, square base and a classic form. Because the oak I used to make the new lamp contained some cracks, the extent of which did not become apparent until part-way through the turning, I had to rethink the project on the fly and the new lamp ended up taking up the whole article. The remake

will have to wait for now, but may be the subject of a future article.

When things go wrong, and especially when you are working to a deadline, it is a good test of your ability to think of ways of putting them right. As the old adage goes: woodworking is one-third planning, one-third execution and one-third finding ways to correct the things that went wrong during execution. That was certainly the case with this project.

In this case the cracks in the oak meant I could not turn the beads, coves and lands

that I wanted for the top of the lamp without pieces splintering away. I did not have another oak blank large enough to start over, so I had to devise a way of making the top part from a separate piece of oak in a way that there would be no visible join and a means of disguising the remaining cracks.

The design of this lamp is drawn from classic Roman and Greek forms and has a deliberately heavy base to make it resistant to being knocked over by our cats. The heavy base could be omitted to make a smaller lamp.

TOOLS AND MATERIALS

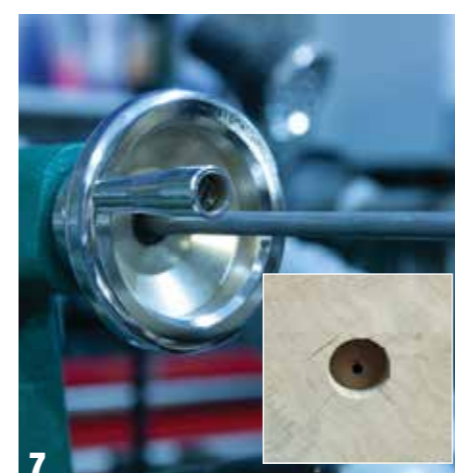
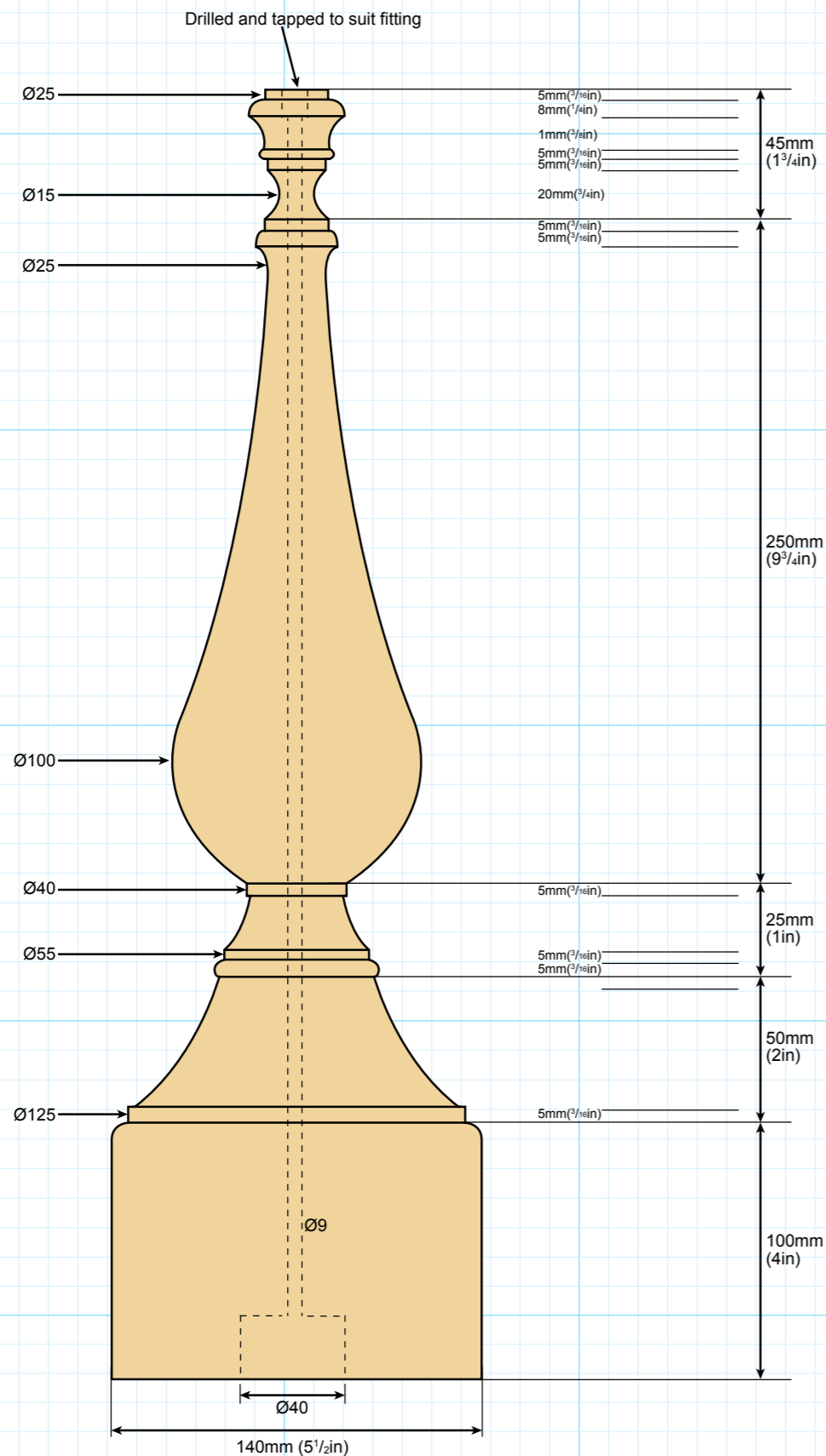
- Personal & respiratory protective equipment (PPE & RPE)
- Spindle roughing gouge
- Spindle gouge
- Skew chisel
- Beading and parting tool
- Hollow revolving centre
- Long hole boring shell auger
- Tailstock chuck and Forstner bits
- Taps and tap wrench to suit components
- Cordless drill and bits

MATERIALS

- Oak (*Quercus robur*) or other hardwood blank, 140mm square minimum 500mm long
- Abrasives down to 320 grit
- Cyanoacrylate adhesive (CA)
- Acrylic lacquer spray (or finish of choice)
- Lamp fittings and cable

WIRING SAFETY

When making a table lamp that requires electrical wiring, be mindful that there are numerous regulations regarding the manufacture and sale of electrical items that you must comply with. The regulation requirements vary from country to country and possibly even regions within a country. The onus of responsibility is on you to make sure you are complying with your area's/country's regulations.



1 If you are making a lamp with a square base you need to start with a square blank. This may seem obvious but any minor inaccuracy will be magnified when you turn the pommel to transition from square to round and it will never look right. A planer thicknesser will do the job best but I finished off by hand planing.

2 The next stage is to square the ends. The bandsaw is the best way to do this and, as with squaring the sides, accuracy at this stage will pay dividends later as it will greatly facilitate getting the work mounted square on the lathe.

3 Now mark the centre of both ends. Once again, be as accurate as possible. In this photograph you can see some of the cracks. I deliberately chose this end as the bottom of the piece where it would be less of a problem, but needless to say, the other end, which showed no outward evidence of cracks, proved to be just as bad.

4 To mount the work on the lathe and to create access for the power cable you need to drill a mounting hole in the base. If you have a floor-standing pillar drill you can use this or, alternatively, you could use a cordless drill with the work held in a bench vice.

5 The hole should be a suitable size and deep enough for the chuck jaws you intend to use. In my case this was 40mm diameter by a minimum of 20mm deep to fit a set of Record Power Mini Spigot Jaws. A Forstner bit is ideal for this.

6 Mount the work on the chuck and support the other end with a hollow ring centre with a centre point. After marking the end of the work with the centre, back off the tailstock quill, remove the centre point and then retighten the quill, ensuring the ring centre aligns with the mark.

7 Drill out the hole for the cable with a long hole boring shell auger. This passes through the hollow tailstock quill and revolving centre into the work. Drill only a few centimetres at a time and regularly withdraw the auger fully to remove the waste otherwise it is all too easy to clog the single flute and jam the auger in the work or the tailstock. The conventional method of drilling would be to drill approximately halfway, then turn the work around, mount it between centres and complete the drilling from the other end to avoid excessive run out. As the work was securely mounted in the chuck and the auger long enough to pass right through I drilled in one pass. The end result is not quite on centre but near enough.

8 With the hole bored, the main upper part body of the lamp can be turned to a cylinder ready to be shaped into your chosen form, leaving the square section at the base. A large spindle roughing gouge is the ideal tool for this.

◀ **9** Using a spindle gouge, form a classic Roman ogee pommel to transition between the square and round sections of the work. Begin with the flute facing up and, working from the headstock end, gradually roll the tool over to the right in a scooping action with the bevel following the line of the cut.



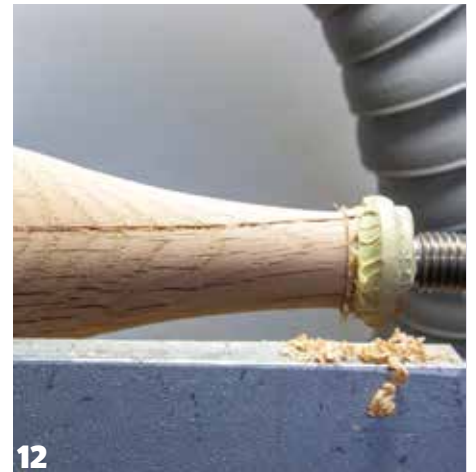
10 You should aim to create a sweeping curve. Delineate the junction with the upper section with a parting tool and you can then begin to form the first cove. If you have trouble mastering the ogee pommel the late Allan Batty's Youtube video 'The skew chisel with Allan Batty' shows it much better than I can explain in words.



11 Form the lower coves and bead using a spindle gouge and skew chisel or beading and parting tool, then rough out the general shape of the upper part of the lamp with the spindle roughing gouge.



12 It was at this stage that things started to go wrong for me as the cracks appeared and it became evident that I was not going to be able to cut the detailed beads and coves for the top of the lamp without pieces splintering away or breaking out. It was time for plan B, so I formed a simple cove, bead and land, and even this needed a bit of gluing to hold it together.



13 I then formed a new top for the piece from a separate piece of oak using a spindle gouge for the coves and a beading and parting tool for the beads and cut a 20mm spigot below the bottom cove to attach the top to the main body. Of course, if your wood is free from cracks you would form the top directly on the end of the work.



14 To attach the top to the main body, drill a 20mm hole for the spigot. This time I was in luck as the bed of the midi lathe I have been using for these projects was only just long enough to accommodate the work, tailstock, chuck and bit.



15 I glued the two components together with PVA wood glue and clamped them using pressure from the tailstock. The join is not visible as it is at the junction of cove and land. I filled the remaining cracks with a mix of CA and sawdust. The photograph shows this partly completed, it took several iterations before I was happy with the appearance.



16 Sand and finish the lamp on the lathe. Hand sand along the grain with the lathe turned off to avoid any annular ring marks and finish with sprayed acrylic satin lacquer over sanding sealer. Drill out the top to the correct size for your lamp fitting and cut a suitable thread. Mine was $\frac{7}{16}$ in NC14 but check your fittings for size.



17 Now drill the hole for the cable access, fit the lamp components and flex in accordance with local regulations. I could have done the drilling on the pillar drill earlier when the blank was still square but with the completed work it was done by holding the base in a vice and drilling with a drill. ●

