

Woodcarving success

A recent win of a silver medal at the Axminster show, held for woodcarvers across the country, prompted an interview with winner Mr Jeff Hawksworth.

Mr Hawksworth of Main Street, started woodcarving 4 years ago, after a birthday gift of some gouges from his wife. After his first 'small' (small carving) of what he laughingly refers to as "the square penguin", he met his now tutor, Michael Painter, a top UK carver who worked on the carvings at Windsor Castle after the fire, and started lessons. His next piece was a beautifully realised bear, which took him 20 hours, and of which he is justly proud.

Since then, he has carved many brilliantly realistic 'smalls', including shells, an umbrella, a flat cap, a fantastic miserichord and other animals including a pigeon. Each of the 'smalls' take about 10-40 hours from start to finish.

His subject for the silver medal was a photograph of a fox in the snow, leaping into the air to jump down onto its prey.

As with all of his subjects, Mr Hawksworth started out with a clay moquette of 1/5 or 1/4 scale of the finished piece. He then went on to the block of wood, which he cut into basic shape with a saw, and then used hammer and gouges. While doing this, he also studied the anatomy, texture, bone structure and muscle tone of foxes, visiting a fox sanctuary and taking many photos, as well as studying them on his dog! The coat alone took hours, working with several different sizes of gouge to create the right texture. Finally, 300 hours and 18 months later, the fox was finished, and exhibited in the show, ending up on the front cover of "Wood Carving". Inside were comments from the judges including: "A stunning, dramatic scene"; "produced the greatest emotional response [amongst the public]" and "one of my favourite carvings in recent years".

His next project, he says, will be of young bears around a tree- just to give you an idea of the scale, this will be 6-7 feet high, and the whole thing will take about 2 years. This will be his next exhibition piece, and we wish him every success with this in the future. He will also be taking commissions of work, and can be contacted on 01455 292468.

