

Creating a “Burl Tree”

20th
Anniversary
Year

by Terry Scott



Fig 1. Setting up to turn the first burl - an extra pair of hands would help



Fig 2. Showing counterweight and sled mounted on backing plate



Fig 3. First turned bowl, yet to be sanded

I think the burl branch is red beech, but I am not sure. The plan was simple - make each of the eight burrs into a small bowl and leave them still attached to the tree. The operation was not so simple.

The work is mounted onto what I call the slide and this is moved around on the MDF flywheel which is attached to a 150mm face plate. I levelled and secured the wood into the position I required with the aid of wedges and hot melt glue. The straps are an extra precaution. The whole device is then balanced with strategically placed lumps of lead securely attached.

For each of the eight bowls the log was re-attached and re-balanced. On occasions I had difficulty getting the chisel down between two burls and changes of shape were needed. When I came to do the burl on the bottom end I didn't have enough swing and had to cut 100mm off the other end.

The ninth bowl on the very top was turned last between centres. Some carving was then needed to blend the cuts between bowls and restore shape to the slimmed down branch. Airbrushing highlighted the texture on the tree.

The burl which serves as the base was scribed around the base of the burl tree. As this piece stands 600mm high it needed something to give it stability.

Please note that attempting a piece like this can be rather daunting unless you understand how to balance the work. My lathe weighs 650kg and is bolted to the floor. This helps, but if any vibration is felt, you haven't spent enough time getting it balanced.

Oh, by the way, on the Monday I had to go and buy some more trailer tie-downs as they were a bit short after this exercise. I am proud to say this piece now sits alongside 250 others in a private collection in Hong.



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