



S. L. Hardwoods

QUALITY TIMBER STOCKIST

TRADITIONAL
Woodworking

Build this Three Legged Stool

By M. Ninham



I usually make three legged stools on the lathe, but this time I decided to try one using hand tools only, I fancied something rustic which looked handmade and not too precise, which also meant no fine saw dust and shavings flying through the air and no noisy machines.

The Legs

I would normally make the legs from oak or ash as it cleaves quite easily and could be quickly roughed with a sharp axe, but I had some 50mm-100mm wide logs of Yew in the woodshed which had been cut about four years. It being my favourite wood I selected and cut three lengths at 360mm, and soon discovered it was impossible to split cleanly due to the wild grain. I therefore had to resort to the bandsaw and ripped them down to a 45mm x 45mm square (Pic. 1). I then tapered them down to 30mm at one end and 40mm at the foot using my bench plane (Pic. 2) which I had to keep razor sharp due to the wild grain (Pic. 3). Even so I still had some tear outs which I had to clean up using a scraper.

I next had to work out how to hold the legs, this I did using my jig which is for holding round stock when cutting on the band saw, this is just a piece of 50mm x 50mm at 300mm long which is cut diagonally and nailed together as in the diagram and Pic 4. I have a



Cutting the leg blank



Planing the four sides



Keeping the blades sharp



Holding jig for planing



Planing in the jig



Dowel forming the old way

piece of metal bar in the vice which I use for a bench stop and so it is an easy job to finish off the legs making sure to keep all the tapers equal (Pic. 5).

The next job is to shape the round tenons on the legs. Before I had a lathe I used to spokeshave the end roughly round then knock it through a 25mm hole in a steel plate, which is an old faceplate I had. It is basically a large dowel maker (Pic. 6). If you have a lathe the ends can be turned and made ready (Pic. 7). I next sorted the legs out so the best side of each was facing the right way and marked them for the saw cut to take the wedges. These have to be cut at right angles to the seat grain so that the seat will not split when driven in.

The Top

I had a nice piece of olive ash which was just right for a stool top it being 35mm thick so I cut it down to a 230mm x 300mm boards. I began to shape the top using a 32mm gouge with a slight curve (Pic. 8) which was the largest one I had. I was trying to get a rippled finish on the top as would have been left by using an adze but my chisel was not wide enough so I just left a tooled finish (Pic. 9)

I began by marking the centre line which would be left at full height and cut away each side to a depth of



Dowel forming on the lathe



The seat and chisel



Using the chisel across the grain



Bottom edge



Drilling jig



Wedges and slots

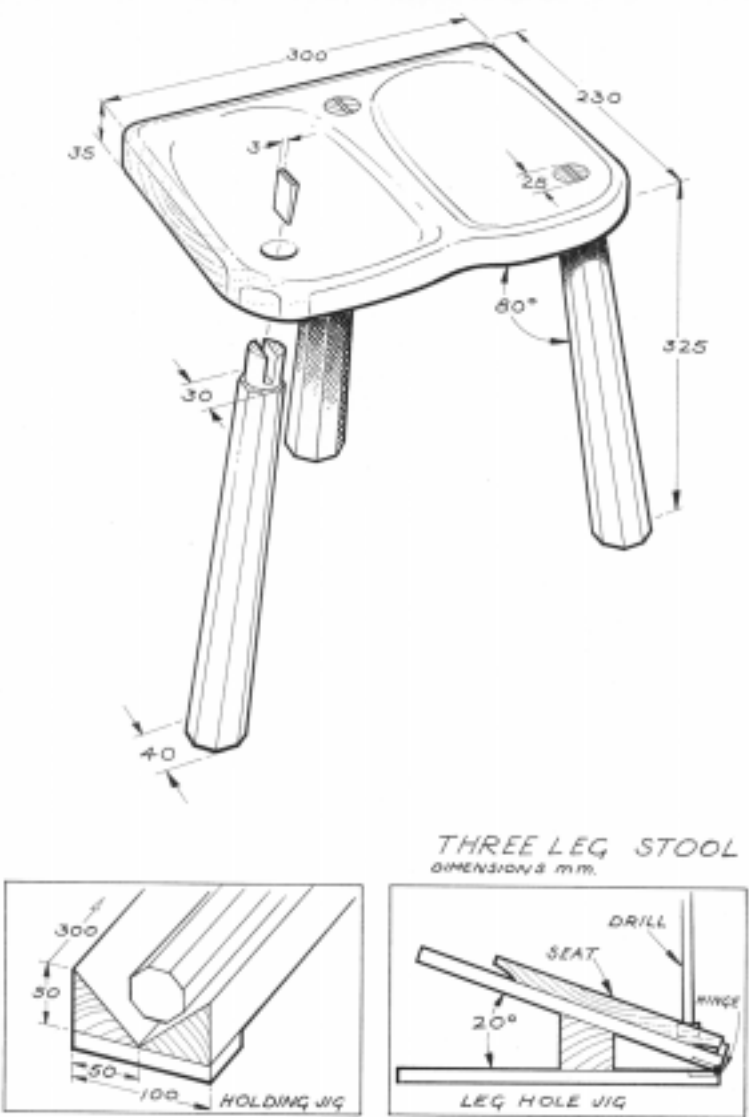
about 6mm leaving a comfortable curve on the bottom tapering up to the back, this could of course be done in minutes with a powered cutter if you don't mind the dust, shavings or noise, but I was not in a hurry.

I also took off about 7mm from the bottom edges leaving the full thickness in the centre for the legs (Pic. 10), this improved it giving it a lighter look. I then cut the sharp corners off, gave it a light sand and begun on the legs.

Attaching the Legs

The next job was to drill for the legs. This was where I had thoughts of adding another leg to balance it up or maybe cut the rear corners off and make it more triangular but I decided to stick to the original plan - at least it looks different. I then needed my seat drilling jig (see illustration) which I made for round seats after being turned on the lathe. This is just two pieces of 200mm x 15mm contiboard joined together with a hinge, a block of wood is placed inbetween and moved until the correct angle is obtained which in my case was 20 degrees. This gives the correct leg angle which is 80 degrees.

Once the seat is cramped in position the hole is drilled through making sure to keep the drill vertical (Pic. 11). By using a square or - better still - an



THREE LEG STOOL
DIMENSIONS mm.

assistant. The 25mm holes were marked 50mm from the top edge and drilled. When I tried them in I had to adjust the angles a little by using a round surform. The wedges were cut from ebony offcuts saved from broken furniture. These were 3mm wide tapering down (Pic 12). I could have used laburnum otherwise as it is nice and dark.

The legs were then glued and tapped in with all the slots in line and the wedges also glued and knocked in quite firmly. When everything had dried the leg tops were cut off level and lightly sanded to leave a tooled finish which was then given two applications of clear wax and buffed up to a soft finish.

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CUTTING LIST in metric

Component	No.	Finished length/width/thickness	Material
Seat Top	1	230mm x 300mm x 35mm	Ash
Legs	3	360mm x 45mm x 45mm	Yew
Wedges	3	25mm x 25mm x 3mm	Ebony

