Nautical Clock and Weather Station

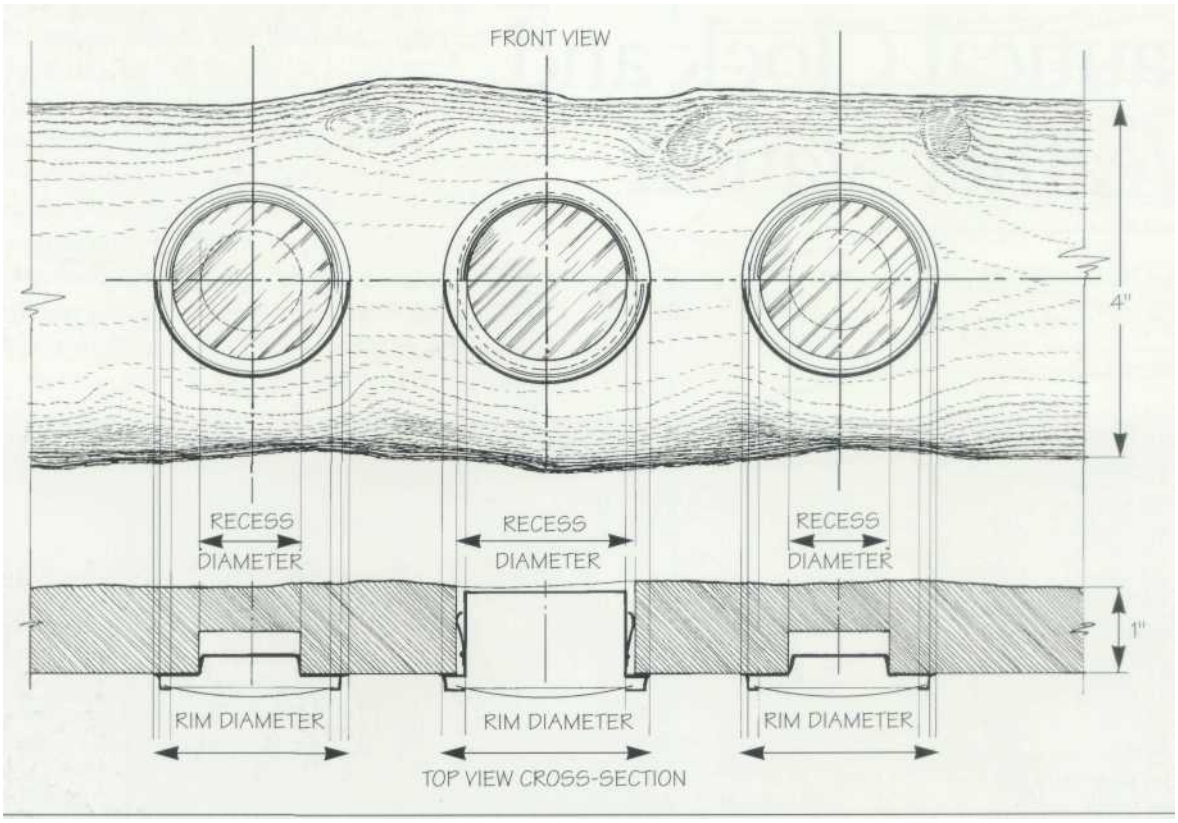
When we decided to move from a wild and windy part of the coast to a relatively mild hills-and-dales part of the country, we felt that we wanted to take a lasting memento with us. As we both love the sea, we felt that we wanted a reminder of our wonderful walks along the rugged cliffs, of the picnics on the lonely beaches, and of the exciting times we had with our many boats. After a great deal of thought that took in such notions as collecting sea shells and the like, it suddenly came to us. Why not take a piece of driftwood—perhaps part of an old boat—and turn it into a nautical clock and weather station? To our way of thinking, the whole project would be a lasting memento . . . of the beaches, the storms that smashed up the boats, and the constant need to keep one eye on the time, tide and weather.

So if you, too, want to make a memento gift that uses a piece of found wood, then this is a great project.

The wonderful thing about a design of this size, type and character is its flexibility. There are any number of amazingly exciting options. I say this because, as soon as I had made the sculpted and weathered board, Gill came up with the beautiful idea of using one of our old moulding planes to create a classic moulded board. Her thinking was that there must be thousands of woodworkers out there who own an old plane and are just looking for an excuse to tune it up and get started! She also had the bright idea that with a more formal board, the various instruments could be arranged so that the board could be mounted vertically or horizontally.

MAKING THE FOUND WOOD BOARD

This project is slightly unusual in that your found wood needs the minimum of preparation. Okay, it needs to be clean and the like, but that's about it—no jointing, no



extensive marking out, just three drilled holes and a small amount of planing and sanding. And, of course, there's no reason why your piece of found wood can't be a branch from a special tree, a part of an old house, a piece of wood found in the desert or mountains, or by a river, as long as it has some particular significance.

When you have found your piece of wood, set it down on the bench and consider how the instruments might best be placed. Are you going to settle for the clock, the thermometer and the hygrometer, (see page 73), or are you going to go for additional instruments like a tube barometer or maybe a special tide-time clock? Of course, much depends on the size of your piece of found wood.

Though I wanted three matching brass dials, with a clock having Arabic numerals, I found it impossible to get a good matchup. As you can see, I had to settle for a slightly nasty white-face clock with Roman numerals. Make sure that the instruments you choose are designed to fit into a shallow recess or hole, with the brass surround or rim overlapping the edge of the hole.

When you have decided where the instruments are going to be placed, use a wire brush to scour the grit and grime from the workpiece. If you see some part of the found wood that could be modified in some way, then so much the better. For example, 1 knocked out two rusty old nails and wire brushed the resultant iron-stained holes so that they were big enough to take a piece of found rigging cordage, so that the clock and weather station could be hung on the wall.

Use the wire brush to sculpt the form, to extend and exaggerate the actions of nature. You can make contours that are rounded and rippled, much the same way as the wind, rain, sand and sea scour out the soft part of the grain, so that the hard gram and knots are left standing in relief.

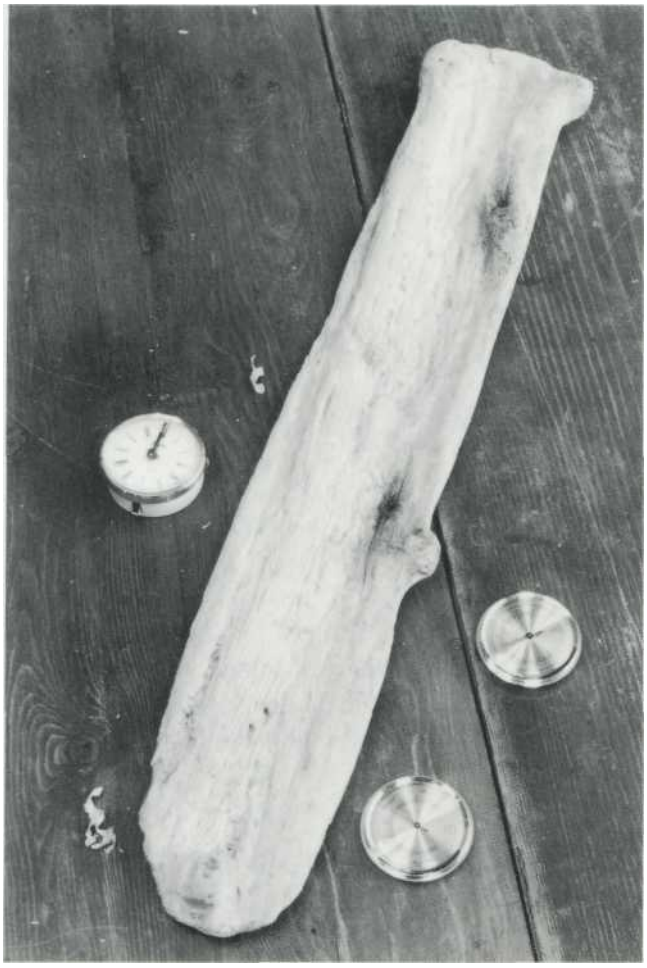
When you have achieved what you consider is a good form, use a plane and sandpaper to prepare a level seating big enough for the instruments. Aim for a flat smooth surface that is slightly bigger than the instruments. Make sure that there are no nails, grit or other matter in the areas that are going to be drilled.

Having cleaned up the seating for the instruments so that it resembles a level plateau, bore the recess holes out with the Forstner bits. Then seal with a coat of varnish and use beeswax to burnish the whole works to a rich sheen finish. Finally, push fit the instruments in the holes, fit the rope or chain, and the project is finished and ready for hanging.

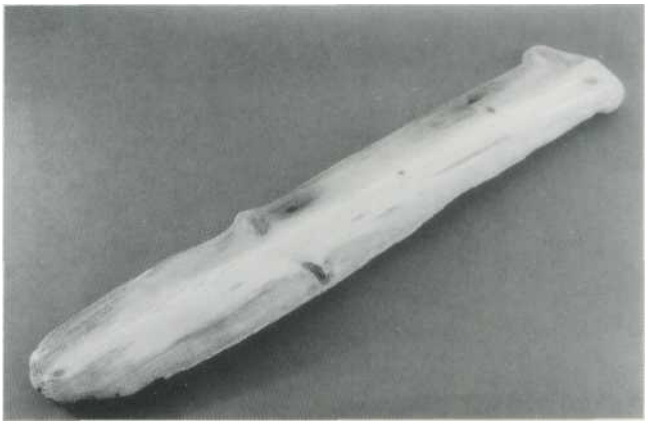
MATERIALS LIST

A Board (1)	A piece of found wood of a size and thickness to suit your instruments.

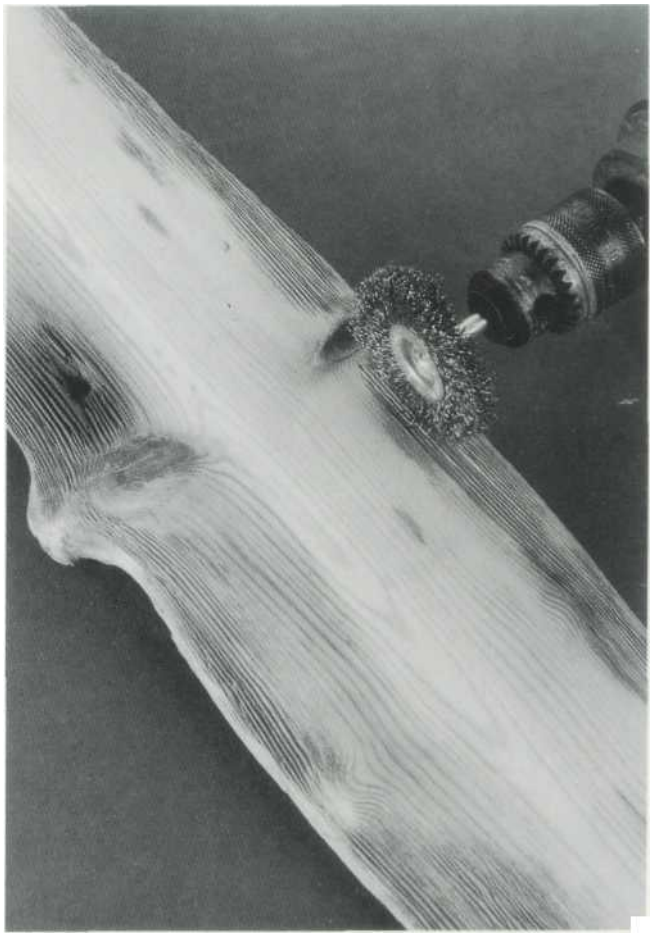
STEP-BY-STEP STAGES



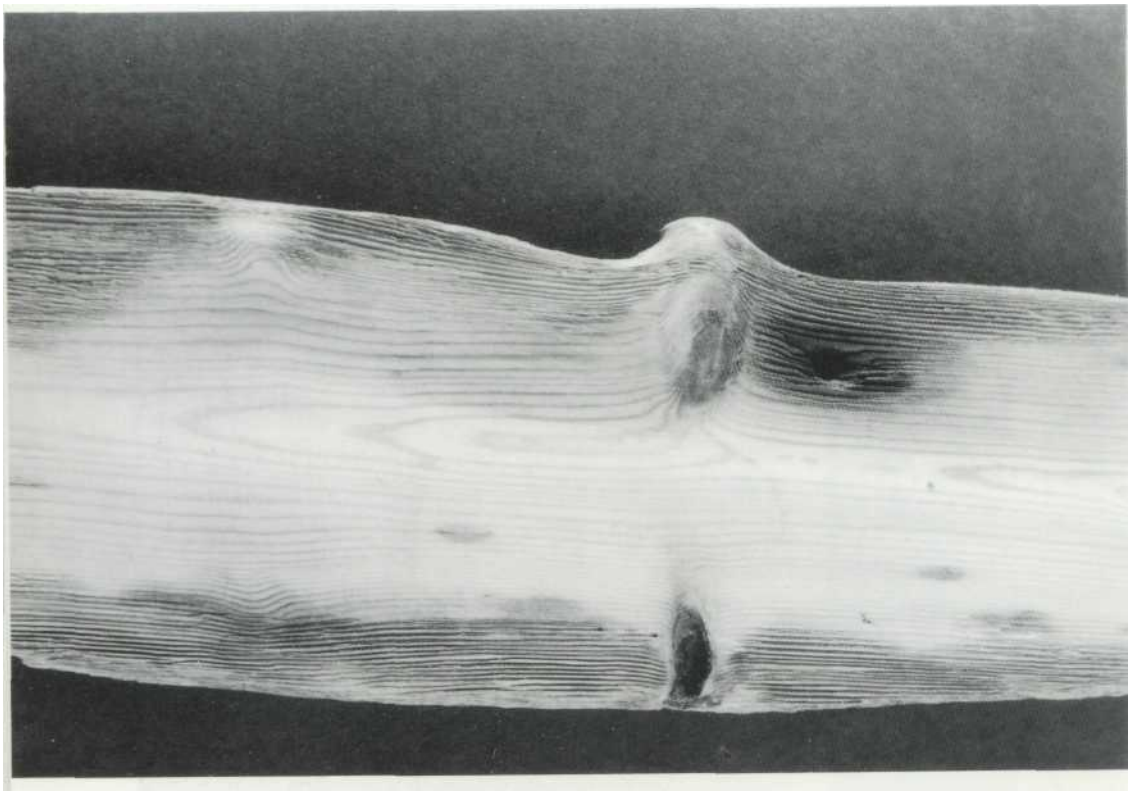
1 Having found your piece of wood, select a set of instruments to fit.



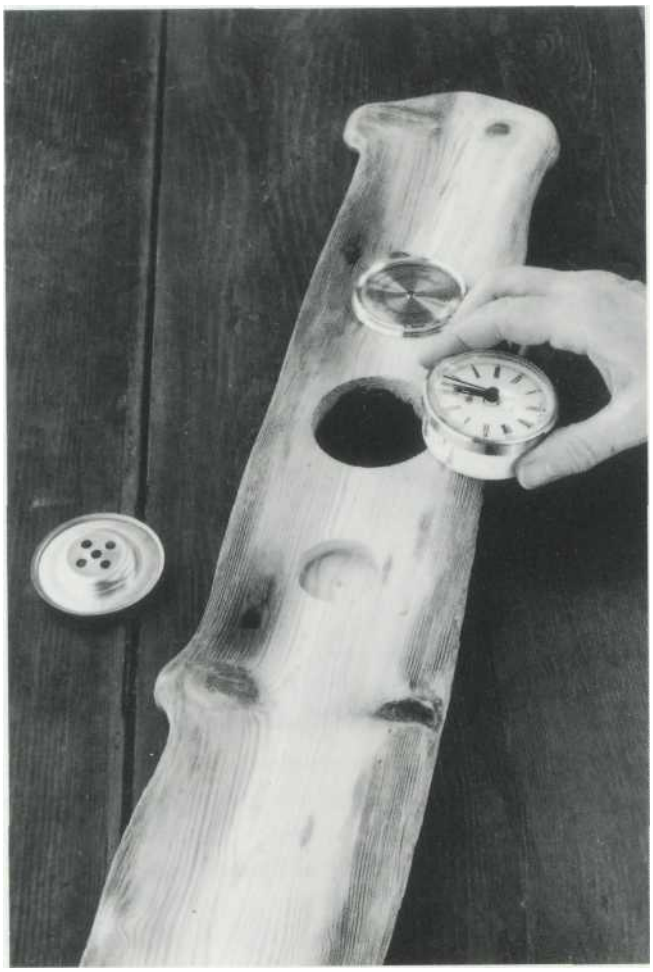
2 Remove the more obvious bits of rubbish—old nails, bits of tar, embedded grit and such. Wipe the wood with a damp cloth and leave it until it is good and dry.



3 Not forgetting to wear gloves and goggles, use a power drill fitted with a wire brush attachment to scour out the loose grain. The safest procedure is to have the workpiece either screwed or clamped to the bench.



4 A close-up showing how I have concentrated use of the wire brush along the edges and around the knots, so that there is a smooth, level central area.



5 If you have a drill bit size that fits the instrument, then so much the better; otherwise, you have to drill the nearest size hole. After drilling the hole, painstakingly file it to fit. I needed to remove an all-round strip about 1/8" wide.

Note—as I said earlier in the project, I don't much like the clock as shown. On consideration, I would much prefer the little watch-clock as shown in the miniature mantle clock case project.

MAKING A TRADITIONAL BEAD-MOULDED BOARD

Having measured and marked out the board and cut it to size, use the bench plane to bring it to a smooth finish. When you are happy that the board is square and true, secure it to the bench so that one long side is hanging over the edge.

Set your moulding plane up with 3/8"-wide beading iron. If like me, you are using a single-bead cutter to plane two beads side by side—a double reed—then adjust the fence to the position for the bead that is furthest in from the edge. The procedure is: First cut the bead that is furthest in from the edge. Then reset the fence and cut the bead nearest the edge. You repeat the procedure for the other edge of the board.

Finally, having used a block plane to chamfer the ends of the board, drill out the three large-diameter holes as already described in step 5.

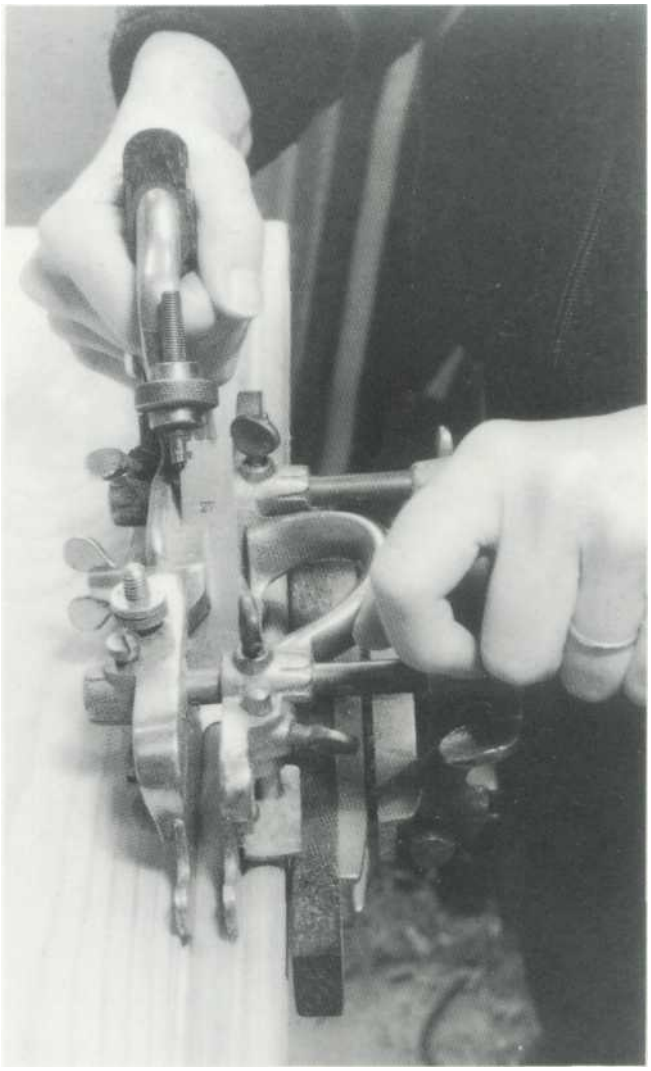
SPECIAL **TIP**

If you are looking to bore out clean-sided, flat-bottomed holes—relatively shallow holes as in this project—then you can't do better than using Forstner drill bits in conjunction with a drill press. We use a large Delta bench drill press. It doesn't wobble, or make odd noises, or require a great deal of attention. It just gets on with the job. As for the drill bits, we have a set of Forstner bits made by Freud. They do a beautiful job every single time. They bore down through end grain and hard knots, and just about anything we care to throw at them. Best of all, we like the fact that we can use them to bore out overlapping holes. Yes, they do cost about twice as much as most bits, but they last longer, stay sharp and are a pleasure to use.

MATERIALS LIST: OPTION

Board (1)	¾"×5¼"×15"—cherry

STEP-BY-STEP STAGES



1 When you have used the plane to cut the two beads side by side, reset the blade to the very finest of skimming cuts and burnish the surface of the wood to a sheen finish. Be careful not to force the pace. Just let the weight of the plane do the work.