



# Crosscut

Newsletter of the Witwatersrand Woodworkers' Association  
PO Box 411346, Craighall, 2024

< Lie-Nielsen replacement plane blade in A2 steel

Secretary: Ken Mutch ([Ken.woodman AT gmail.com](mailto:Ken.woodman AT gmail.com) or 083 276 2351 - replace AT with @ to email)  
Editor: Trevor Pope ([tpope AT iafrica.com](mailto:tpope AT iafrica.com)). All written content and opinions are those of the editor, unless stated. © Copyright reserved.  
Go to [www.wwa.org.za](http://www.wwa.org.za) for back issues of *Crosscut*.

**Next General Club Meeting on Wednesday, the 12th October 2011** from 18h00 at the WWA clubhouse at REEA. Heraldry shields by Ian Patterson.

**Next Turner's monthly meeting is on Monday, the 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2011** at 18h00 at the WWA clubhouse at REEA. Turning platters by Rick Florence.

## News

### Turner's Meeting

John Speedy and Peter Middleton demonstrated two ways to make wooden wheels for toys. John used a hole saw on a drill press to cut out the blanks. Then he showed how to clean up and shape them on a belt sander. Peter turned the wheels on the lathe, and showed how to mount them on a mandrel to trim and embellish them.

**Wood of month** – Chris van Heeswijk presented Dalbergia Retusa – Cocobolo. It originates in Central America and is classified as a vulnerable species. It is a dense (0.99 to 1.2 specific gravity), oily wood that is very expensive (of the order of R100,000- per m<sup>3</sup>) It can also cause allergic reactions, so care is needed when making sawdust.

### Main Club Meeting

Jan Groenewald from Stilbaai demonstrated "The Router" and his jigs. Some members will be familiar with Jan who has demonstrated at the club before, when we were still at Helpmekaar. You may have seen him at the East Rand and Pretoria club shows. Jan explained how jigs can help with repetitive work. Then he showed how to make a mortise and tenon joint, dovetail joint and a hinge and lock recess using his jigs. Jan's jigs are made from 3CR12 that is laser cut, so they are highly stable and accurate.

### Club Notices:

Alistair reminded members that we have set a target of 10 toys per member for the end of the year braai.

**Introductory Turning Course.** To assist beginners, a short introductory turner's course will be given, starting in September, when the weather is warmer. It will last one to two hours. Contact the committee to show your interest, so times can be arranged.

**Turner's spring challenge** - Saturday, 29<sup>th</sup> October 2011, starting at 9h45 at the WWA clubhouse. This will include a 10 minute challenge - to turn a wooden object of any design on a lathe in 10 minutes, with the best awarded a Builder's Warehouse voucher. We will use the three club lathes, over a period of two hours from 10h00 till 12h00, so we can accommodate about 30 entries. There will also be an instant gallery of toys that contain a turned part, so bring your toys to show off – a bottle of wine to the best on the day. A bring-and-braai will bring proceedings to a close.

**Melville Koppies Tree walks.** Intense Tree Identification course with Landscape artist/gardener Tim Conradie. Three sections of Melville Koppies Central reserve will be visited and the trees in each area identified. This is a chance to really get to know your trees as a limited number will be studied each session. Each session is a stand alone one but to get the full benefit of the range of trees - and some revision - all three sessions are recommended. R75 per session or R200 if you book for all three sessions. Booking now open.

Dates: 8<sup>th</sup> Oct - Trees 1 - Arboretum area - two hours; 22<sup>nd</sup> Oct - Trees 2 - Lecture Hut area - two hours; 29<sup>th</sup> Oct - Trees 3 - Reception hut area - two hours

Contact Wendy Carstens for booking - prepayment essential to confirm - on 011 482 4797. See [www.mk.org.za](http://www.mk.org.za) – you are responsible for booking and paying for these courses as individuals

**Special General Meeting.** There were just sufficient members to constitute a quorum. The amendments to the WWA constitution were approved by a unanimous vote of the members. The updated constitution was distributed by the secretary by email. For those members who do not receive email, copies are available from the secretary on request. Essentially, it is now possible for the association to comply with the requirements of a non-profit organisation, should we need to register as one. The additional requirements for a non-profit are apparently quite onerous (such as audited statements), so it unlikely that the association will register at this stage.

**For Sale:**

- Kettle braai – Cadac 57cm R500-
- Metal Bandsaw. 7” with coolant R5500-
- Flymo lawnmower R500-
- Brushcutter – 2 stroke (FS36 – R1500 new) R500-
- Light table, Rule-up – 710x510 Table-top with vertical and horizontal rules R500-
- Oxy-acetylene bottles, mini, full
- Triton Work-center – complete with Triton 9 ¼” saw, 45° fences, extension arms and out-rigger table 2m 150mm and clip-on planer attachment (no planer) R8000-

Phone Tony on 073-762-4439

**Please Note:**

**Toymakers.** The toymakers meet on the first and third Mondays of every month, at 09h00 till 12h00 at the clubhouse. Contact Eddie Marchio on 011-678-8062 or [renato AT pixie.co.za](mailto:renato@pixie.co.za) for more information.

**Wednesday Workshop.** The Wednesday evening workshops are on the first and third Wednesdays of every month, from 18h00 till 20h00. Contact Winston Klein on 011-674-1513 for more information.

I'M AT HOME MOST SATURDAY MORNINGS  
FROM 9-00AM TO 12-00 NOON  
COME ALONG - BY ARRANGEMENT

- ❖ For coffee, biscuits and a chat
- ❖ No obligation to buy
- ❖ Creates good fellowship
- ❖ Word of mouth promotes sales

I have in stock a full range of Record Irwin Lathe accessories,  
Record Irwin wood turning tools, Record Irwin hand tools,  
Record metal/wood band saw blades  
AND MY OWN WELL KNOWN JIGS

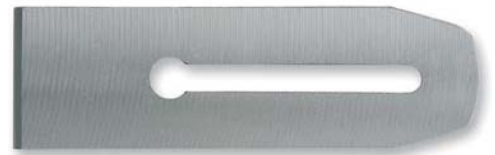
**I CAN MACHINE TOOLING ACCORDING TO CLIENTS IDEAS, NEEDS AND DRAWINGS**

Lionel Soekoe 60 Darwin Street CNR Bowling avenue Wendywood  
Tel (011) 802 3046 or 072 989 6310

## Better Plane Blades?

Having recently been through of bout of repeated resharpener of a standard Stanley blade in my Bailey #4 plane while planing end grain Saligna, I was frustrated enough to seek an alternative. There are a number of aftermarket blades available, so clearly there is widespread dissatisfaction with the standard offerings.

I own a **Samurai** brand laminated blade, which is installed in my Record #5, and this seems to be significantly more durable than the standard Stanley. The Samurai blade is made from a lamination of high carbon steel on the back (probably made to the Blue steel spec in the table below) and low carbon steel for the rest of the blade. You can actually see the difference in the two layers. As the back is the part that forms the cutting edge, it is the part where hardness counts. The rest of the blade just provides mechanical support. Sharpening is easier, as only a small part of the blade is really hard (claimed 68 HRC). These blades are very good, but they do have two disadvantages, price and thinness. They are £40- from Axminster, ([www.axminster.co.uk](http://www.axminster.co.uk)) and they are the standard thickness, which in a standard Bailey pattern plane can lead to some chatter.



I was curious to see if I could do better. There are several suppliers of improved blades, and some of the blades are also thicker too.



**Ron Hock** started making blades for the wooden smoothers that the students of James Krenov at the College of the Redwoods made as part of their course (see left). He then expanded from there and makes a variety of replacement blades in O1 and A2, 3/32” = 2.4mm thick. They are priced around \$40- to \$50-. He also sells chip-breakers that are thicker than normal. (3mm) (See <http://www.hocktools.com/BP.htm>) If you want to make a Krenov style wooden smoother, then Ron Hock sells the irons, plans and kits you need.



**Victor** (Clico in Sheffield) offer replacement blades at £34- to £38- from Axminster. (See above) Claimed 60 - 62 HRC. Standard thickness and sizes. (See [www.axminster.co.uk](http://www.axminster.co.uk))

**Lee Valley / Veritas** offer replacement O1 and A2 blades in 0.1” (2.54mm), also with thicker cap-irons (1/8” = 3.175 mm) if required. Blades are \$33 to \$38 in both O1 and A2, in a variety of sizes. Combination blades and cap-irons are \$52 to \$62 each. See [www.leevalley.com](http://www.leevalley.com)



**Lie Nielsen** offer replacement blades in cryogenically treated A2 steel. Thickness is 0.095” = 2.4mm and 1/8” = 3.175mm, prices range \$40 to \$60 depending on size. They also offer 1/8” chip breakers in various sizes. See [www.lie-nielsen.com](http://www.lie-nielsen.com)

It helps to have some understanding of the metallurgy of steels, so you know what you are buying when looking for a better blade. The table below is reproduced from <http://www3.telus.net/BrentBeach/Sharpen/jig%20faq%2006.html> where you will find more detailed discussion on steels.

Many of the earlier plane and chisel blades were made from plain carbon steel – called W-1 these days. This is a plain carbon steel that was freely available one to two centuries ago, probably as so-called “cast steel”. This is steel with a carbon content ranging from 0.6% to 1.3% and is quenched in water, hence the W label. At the lower end (0.6% C), the steel once properly treated, is not exceptionally hard, but is quite tough. At the top end (1.3% C) it can be made exceptionally hard, but is also brittle. There is a trade-off between hardness and toughness. Harder will wear better, but may chip out more. Most of the older plane blades probably have about 1.0% carbon, which is a good compromise. Hardness after quenching of up to 65 HRC is possible, although to avoid chipping of the edge, it is usually tempered back to about 62 HRC.

Good quality, modern high-carbon steel plane blades are often made from O-1, which has about 0.95% carbon, as well as 1.0–1.4% manganese, 0.50% chromium, 0.50% nickel, and 0.50% tungsten. The additional elements improve the toughness and hardenability. The “O” means that it is designed to be quenched in oil, which is not as brutal as water, due to the lower thermal conductivity. Oil quenching has lower risks of cracking and distortion. O-1 is sold locally by Böhler as K460, and is available as gauge plate in various thicknesses, which is ideal for making plane blades.

Record plane blades claim to be Tungsten Vanadium steel, which should improve the properties somewhat, but this will depend on the quantities – the description is vague – looking at the table below, even O1 could qualify.

Class	Code	Carbon	Manganese	Silicon	Chrome	Vanadium	Tungsten	Molybdenum
High Carbon	O1	0.95	1.20	0.3	0.5	0.2	0.5	
	W1	1.0	0.35	0.35				
	L6	0.75	0.70	0.25	0.80			0.30
	Blue	1.15	0.25	0.15	0.35		1.25	
	A2	1.0	0.6	0.3	5.2	0.3		1.1
	D2	1.5	0.4	0.4	12.0	0.95		0.9
Stainless	F2	1.3	0.25	0.25	0.3	0.25	3.5	0.3
	440A	0.75	1.00	1.00	17.0			0.75
High Speed	M2	0.83	0.275	0.325	4.125	1.85	6.4	5.0
	S390	1.60			4.80	5.0	10.5	2.0
	CPM3V	0.8			7.5	2.75		1.3
	T15	1.55	0.4	0.3	4.5	4.75	12.5	1.

[L6 -- used in band saw blades and user make carving knives -- includes 1.5% Nickel.]

[Blue - the steel in the Tsunesaburo blades, which it turns out is made by Hitachi specifically to be "forge-welded to a wrought iron base to make high-quality tool blades and knives".]

[440A - commonly used Stainless Steel for knives, includes up to 0.5% Nickel.]

[S390 - powered metallurgy, includes 8% Cobalt.]

[T15 is a microfine powder **super** high speed steel and includes 5% Cobalt. It would probably not be used for hand tools.]

You can see that the principal additive that distinguishes A2 is 5% Chrome, which greatly increases the wear resistance. D2 has even more Chrome at 12% - it also has 1.5% Carbon, which is about the maximum that is effective. A2 and D2 can be made extremely hard, but there is a disadvantage in both these – they are heat sensitive, like O1 and W1. If you overheat the edge, which is very easy to do with high-speed grinding, the hardness is reduced. D2 gauge plate is sold locally as K110 by Bohler.

If A2 is good, perhaps D2 is better? So why are blades not offered in D2? Perhaps because the additional hardness offered by D2 makes the blade very difficult to sharpen by hand. (Don't ask me how I know this.)

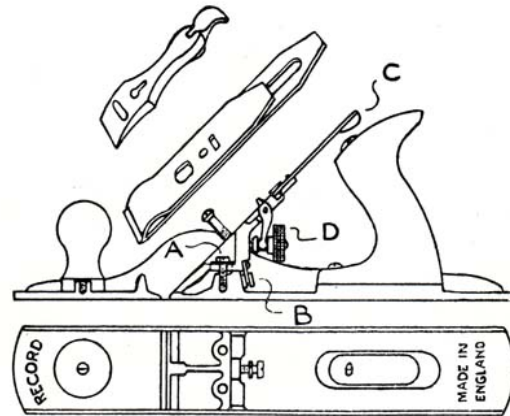
M2 is also recommended for plane blades, being hard and wear resistant. It has an additional property of being heat resistant, which means that less care is required with high-speed grinding. I haven't seen plane blades offered in M2. Some people say that the grain sizes in A2, D2, and M2 are coarser than that found in O1, so a coarser edge results. Perhaps for a razor blade, this is important, but for everyday usage, the very fine edge is lost quite quickly, so it may not be significant.

What is not apparent from reading the specifications above is the importance of the manufacturing process to make best use of inherent properties of the steel. The metallurgical processes and the final hardening and tempering process are crucial to achieve the best results. This is perhaps what you are paying for when you buy a premium blade.

Since thicker is better for plane blades, why don't they all just make thicker blades? Well they won't all fit into the plane. Apparently, most 3mm thick blades will fit – the adjuster will reach the chip-breaker and the frog can be adjusted far enough backwards to accommodate the thicker blade (Refer to the diagram - by loosening the clamping screws at [A] and turning the setting screw at [B]).

Also, for blades up to 3mm thickness the screw that holds the blade to the chip-breaker is usually long enough to reach. The depth setting yoke that is moved by the adjustment wheel [D], may also be too short for blades over 4mm. Over 3mm thickness, you need a modified chip-breaker (They are offered by Woodcraft in the USA).

Also, the plane body may not accommodate the required rearward movement of the frog. The user will have to modify the body of his plane, and not all users have the inclination or ability to do this successfully. Like all production items, planes are subject to design variations and tolerances, so thicker blades may not fit in all cases and the after-market blade sellers tend to be conservative to avoid come-backs.



It is also important to note that your plane must be set up properly. If the frog is not properly seated or the blade does not bed properly onto the frog, you may not get the performance you need. The blade must be supported underneath as close to the sole as the geometry of the plane allows. This is to reduce the leverage of the forces on the cutting edge and hence flexing of the blade. This is one reason why the bevel-up planes have an advantage in rigidity – the blade is supported all the way down the back, as close as possible to the sole.

O1 (K460) gauge plate is offered in 3mm thickness by Bohler, which is an ideal thickness for a replacement iron. D2 (K110) is only offered down to 4mm thickness, because they have difficulty meeting the gauge plate tolerances in thinner. Unfortunately, 4mm blades are not likely to be a direct fit into a standard Bailey pattern plane. I have made a 4mm blade to fit into my Stanley Bailey #4, but some modifications are required. If you are interested, I can show you what is required.