John Lloyd trained with Bruce Luckhurst and gained a City & Guilds silver medal in Furniture Advanced Crafts. He now has his own workshop on Ditchling Common, Sussex, where he restores and copies mainly traditional furniture. John is a full member of the British Antique Furniture Restorers' Association

Screen test PART 2

John Lloyd didn't exactly stick to the script when he started his repro oak television cabinet, but it turned into quite a production!

In last month's episode, I looked at making the frames for the framed and panelled parts of this oak cabinet. The actual panels for the sides and the doors could be made from oak in the solid, but in this case I used some 6mm oak-veneered MDF, partly to save a little time, but mainly to avoid any embarrassing shrinkage. After all, this cabinet was going to share its space with a rather scary-looking wood burning stove, and some rather proficient-looking radiators.

The two framed and panelled sides are linked by the base and mid shelf, and once again shrinkage is an important consideration. One of the main features of framed and panelled construction is that the frames don't change dimension due to shrinkage, so it is rather critical that the bits the frames are fixed to don't try to shrink. If they do, a degree of self-destruction is likely to ensue. The easiest way of dealing with this conflict is to use veneered MDF, this time 18mm and veneered by my own fair hand!

Having last month espoused the virtues of using proper mortice and tenon joints for making the frames, to joint the sides to the 18mm MDF I opted for biscuits, a little radical I know, but modern technology does have its uses occasionally.

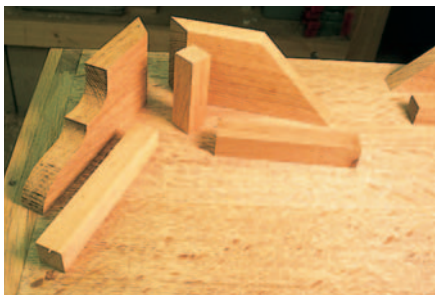
Gluing up is straightforward enough, apart from the challenge of getting some cramping pressure across the middle of the shelf, which can't be reached by anything other than very large long-reach cramps. An easy solution is to make a pair of cambered battens, and these are just a couple of lengths of wood, each with one convex face. The battens are placed with the convex faces along the line of the joints, and cramping pressure applied to the ends with ordinary sash cramps. The cambering on the battens initially just applies pressure to the middle of the joints, but as the cramps are tightened, the pressure extends along the whole length of the battens, resulting in nicely closed joints. Two pairs of hands make this cramping operation much simpler – the combination of heavy sash cramps and hilly battens can all get a bit animated!

Woody hari-kari

The top of the cabinet is made from solid oak and has a thumb moulding run around three edges. To prevent it from committing the woody equivalent of hari-kari, it is fixed to the sides, using screw pockets in the middle, and metal expansion plates at the front and back. These plates do not rate very highly in my list of 'things I like to use to join bits of wood

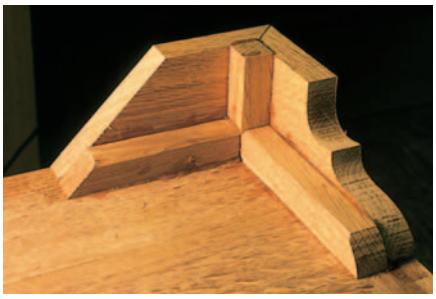
Screw pockets used to secure top to sides – formed using a scribing pattern or 'incannelled' gouge, which has the bevel ground on the inside of the curve

Finished screw pocket, with screw fitted



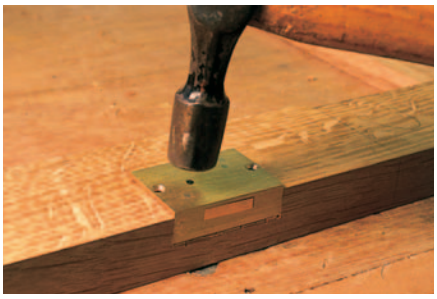
Component parts for bracket feet, no metalwork required, only some Scotch glue

Bracket foot – gluing sequence using rub joints



Bracket foot, finished

Fitting lock. Scribe edges of lock plate on short side and remove waste



Fitting lock. Mark position of pin by striking outside end of pin with hammer

Fitting lock. Drill hole for pin, just bigger than diameter of key barrel

Fitting lock – scribe long side of lock plate

together', but in this instance they are necessary to allow movement, without affecting the operation of the pocket slide mechanism. The Hafële pocket slide mechanism is the cunning device used widely on TV cabinets to make doors disappear, but they can also work their magic on dummy drawer fronts.

The dummy drawer front, like the top, is made from a piece of solid oak, and to make it look like two drawers it has two lengths of cock beading run across its middle to give the impression of a drawer rail. The cock beading itself is made from 3mm strips of oak with one edge rounded over using a scratch-stock. Using a scratch-stock in its usual fashion, with the wood in the vice and scratch-stock in the hand, is a bit tricky with small, skinny, bits of wood, so I reverse everything, putting the scratch-stock in the vice and pulling the wood over the cutter, which works surprisingly well.

Suitable rebates are cut around the edges of the drawer front, and two grooves across the middle, to make the dummy drawer rail. Fitting the cock beading just requires some carefully cut mitres at the corners of the beading, some glue and some masking tape to hold it all in place while the glue hardens. But before actually gluing the cock beading, it's a good idea to fit the escutcheons, more of which, later.

Stumpy

A moulding is fixed around three sides of the bottom edge of the cabinet, then it's time for the bracket feet. Firstly, a nice shape is required; I know beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but there are an awful lot of ghastly, blobby feet fitted to repro furniture. The feet that I made for this cabinet are, in my opinion, a little bit stumpy, but the client had specified a maximum height for the cabinet, so taller feet were not an option. A template on a piece of card or hardboard is a good idea for marking out the shape of the feet, remembering that the grain of the feet runs horizontally to give an effective glue joint between them and the underside of the cabinet.

To give the feet some extra strength there is one fairly chunky corner block, which is fitted vertically, joining the two halves of the foot together behind the mitres, and two smaller glue-blocks, running horizontally between the foot and the underside of the cabinet. Not a very challenging joint, the rub joint, but incredibly useful! The only requirements for

guaranteed mastery of the rub-joint are nice flat gluing surfaces, the ability to move your hand backwards and forwards in a relatively controlled manner, and hot Scotch glue. Apply the glue to both halves of the joint, put the two sticky faces together and rub them backwards and forwards against each other, while applying some pressure. As the glue cools it will begin to grab and at this point the joint should be lined up in its required final position, and then left alone for a while

The sequence for gluing the feet is to rub the shaped 'brackets', with their mitred corners, onto the underside of the cabinet first. Then, while giving these parts a little support, perhaps with some masking tape around the outside of the mitre, rub the corner block into the right angle behind the mitre. The final two glue blocks are then added between the feet and the underside of the cabinet. Easy and quick, no screws or nails, but leave the glue to set overnight before giving the feet any abuse!

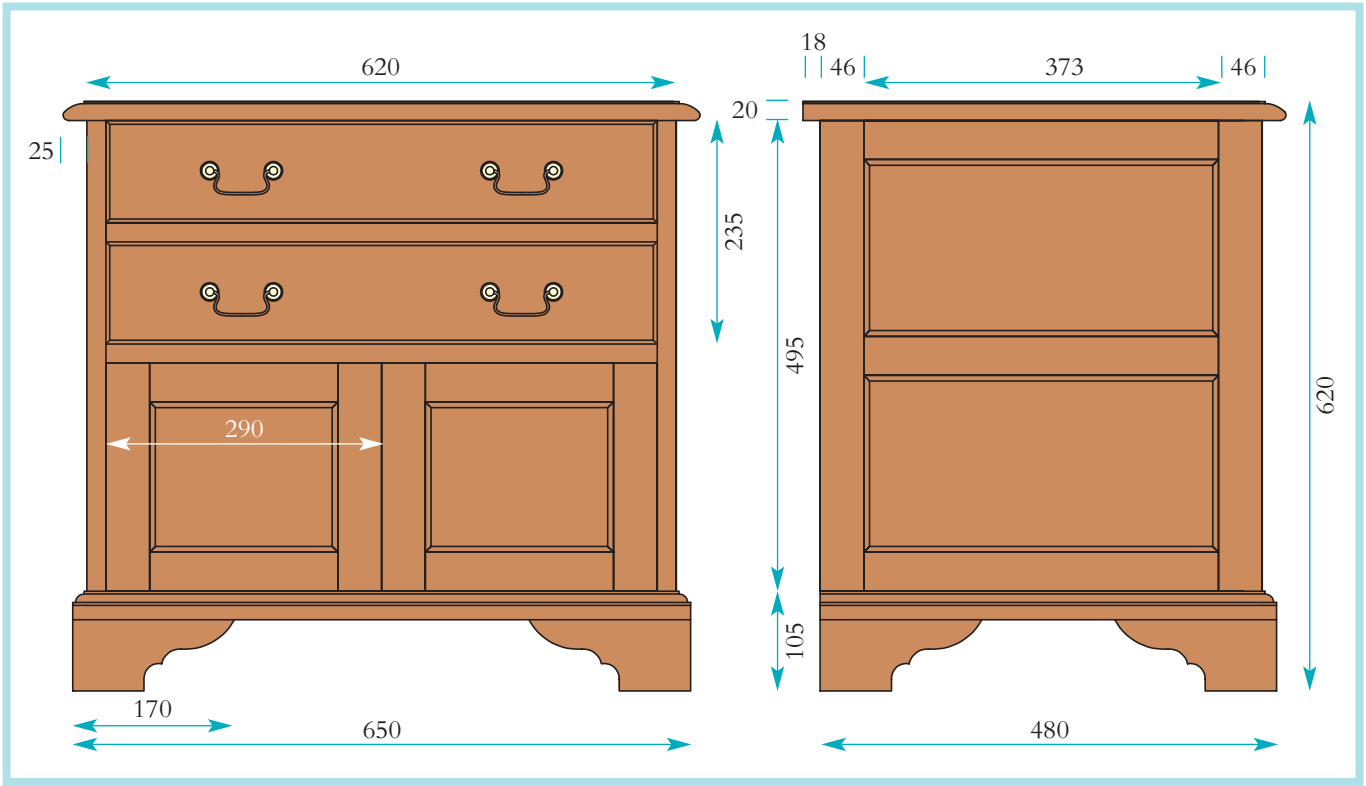
Locks and escutcheons

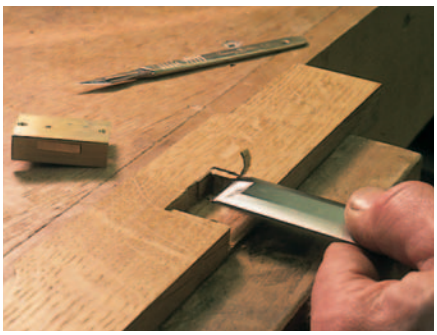
When fitting locks, remember to position them according to the position of the pin, because the pin is usually offset from the centre of the lock. Having positioned the lock, a rebate is chopped out to house the lock's workings. The lock plate is then scribed around and rebates created so that the lock plate is flush with the surrounding wood. To achieve this, the marking and chopping has to be done in several stages to establish the final position of the lock's edges. To establish the position for drilling the key-hole, rub a pencil over the end of the pin, put the lock into position and tap the outer end of the pin with a hammer; this will give an indentation and a black mark. A hole is drilled that is slightly bigger than the barrel of the key, and the shape of the keyhole completed with a piercing saw.

I used a diamond-shaped escutcheon on the door lock and another two on the dummy drawer front, just as decorative detail. This sort of escutcheon can be made from any material that takes your fancy, but traditionally would have been made from ivory or bone for a white escutcheon, or ebony for a sexy black look. On this cabinet I went for white, and being a politically correct soul, used a substitute ivory, which is essentially expensive plastic. A template ensures that all the escutcheons are the same shape and this is transferred to the sheet of 'ivory' and roughly cut to shape with a saw.

To achieve a nice crisp joint when the escutcheon is let into the wood, I like to put a slight angle on its edges so that they are undercut. To achieve this angle and trim the edges to the final shape in one easy step, I use a little MDF jig and the disc sander. The jig just consists of a small piece of MDF with a little strip run along the underside of one edge to kick it up slightly from horizontal. The escutcheon can then be placed onto the top of the jig and trimmed to shape with the disc sander, while simultaneously giving that slight undercut and trimming your fingernails!

Having shaped the escutcheon, the hole for the key can be cut. It can be placed in its final position on the door or drawer, and scribed around with a scalpel, making sure that the undercut is on the underside. This is another opportunity to trim the ends of fingers, but a piece of double-sided sticky tape is a useful addition to finger pressure to stop escutcheons moving during scribing. I use a small router with a tiny parallel bit to remove the bulk of the waste, and then trim to the scribed lines with a sharp

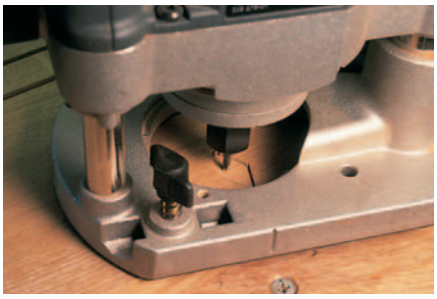




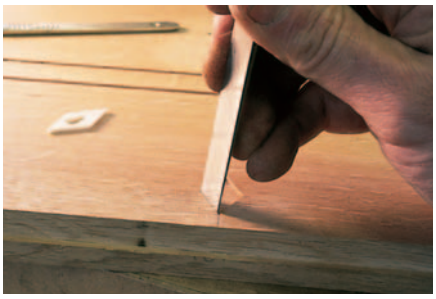
Fitting lock – remove waste with chisel

Creating diamond escutcheon using disc sander and angled jig to give slight angle to edges in an attempt to create a perfect fit with no glue lines

Scribing around edges of escutcheon without removing fingertips!



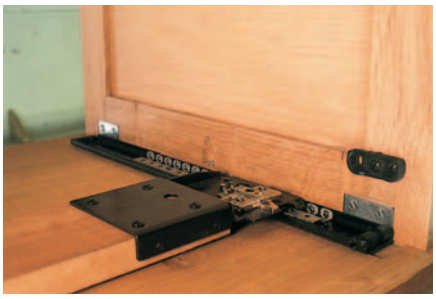
Removing most of the waste from escutcheon freehand with router and very small flat bit



Clean up edges of escutcheon with chisel and scalpel

Escutcheon is fitted and looking gorgeous!

Creating the rounded edge of the cock beading using a scratch-stock and cutter, held in a vice



Hafële pocket slide mechanism to make the dummy drawer front 'disappear'

Dummy drawer front inside cabinet

chisel, and a scalpel to get at the tricky bits in the acute angles. The escutcheons are then glued into position using a block of MDF and a cramp, not forgetting to insert some release paper between the block and the escutcheon!

Castors?

Finishing on this piece involved colouring with water stains to blend with the client's existing pieces of furniture, then a few brushed coats of shellac sanding sealer, cut back with 320 Lubrasil, pulled over with a polishing rubber, and finally a dark wax and a bit of a buff.

Having delivered the piece, I wait with baited breath to see if castors are going to be required, so that cabinet and television can be easily trundled into the alcove, out of sight. Or whether it is to be considered worthy of staying on view at all times. The phone hasn't rung yet!