



The “Timber frame from Scratch” series ~ Frequently asked Questions ~

The Oak Timber framing and Square Rule framing workshops

- **How often do the workshops run?**
- Please see the website for current availability.

- **Where do the workshops take place?**
- The practical work takes place in the award winning Downland Gridshell, an inspiring and excellent educational and working area. The hands-on work is supplemented by a number of “site tours” around the Museum Collection of buildings, looking at features that relate to the workshop.

- **What will I learn on these workshops**
- The aim of **all** the workshops is to introduce the students to the specific problems facing the historic carpenter framing with un-square, crooked and mostly “wet” or “green” timbers; followed by an historic solution to framing the timbers together to ensure the correct lengths, bevels and allowances. Every workshop uses the same basic tool kit that is supplemented by other tools as required for that particular workshop.
- The difference between the workshops is that they all use a **different scribing technique** to achieve the same result – correctly fitted joints with tight shoulders. All the different scribing techniques have their own “pros and cons”, and a knowledge of each enables you to choose the best option for any given situation.
- The various workshops can be taken as “one-offs” or in combination in any order.
- An outline of the four practical workshops is as follows;

- **Oak timber framing - Jowl Posts and Double Cut scribing**, this workshop is concerned with a tried and tested historic scribing technique. It concentrates mainly on the mortice and tenon joint and its use at the junction of the bay post to the wall plate, tie beam and cills. A good introduction to the basic concepts. All hand tools and no tape measures or spirit levels.

- **Oak timber framing - Braces and Plumb Bob scribing**, introduces students to some of the tools and techniques used in contemporary framing companies today. These methods are applied to the joints of the studs and braces found in wall frames. Covers a lot of the basic concepts and with demonstrations of power tools and techniques. All hand tools including tape measures and spirit levels and chalk lines.
- **Oak timber framing - Rafters and Line Transfer scribing**, acts as an introduction for working on both new build and repair work. The tools and techniques covered enable you to frame up a new

gable roof and a new hip roof, or to repair rafters in an old roof. A historic roof frame specially erected in the gridshell is closely studied to inform us of the joints and tips and tricks of the craft. This workshop applies the basic concepts and tool techniques to the roof, an essential part of all buildings.

- **Square Rule framing**, produces a very contemporary looking frame, using timbers other than oak such as sweet chestnut, larch, Douglas fir etc. The concept underpinning this technique enables all the dimensions and angles to be calculated before cutting any timbers. It is essentially the development in carpentry that came after the scribing techniques, introduced in the Oak framing workshops.

- **Do I need previous experience?**

- No, we welcome all students regardless of age and gender. Students have ranged from 16 to 70ish. All that is required is a passion for timber frame buildings and desire to learn more about them.

- **Are these historic techniques still useful today?**

Yes, timbers and the hand tools used to cut it have not changed much the centuries. So this knowledge is still applicable today particularly when irregular shapes are concerned, for example when fitting timbers to walls that are not straight or when the timbers are bowed or out-of-square.

Specifically we cover

1. The advantages and disadvantages of using wet, semi seasoned and air dry timbers.
2. The uses of the tools provided in the toolkit.
3. The processes of preparing, lining, cutting, numbering and checking the timbers. (Oak framing and Square Rule workshops)
4. Setting out the timbers on the framing ground and orientating them correctly prior to the scribing process. (Oak framing workshops)
5. The scribing process. (Oak framing workshops)
6. The sequence of the layout of the frames that constitute a basic timber frame building. (Oak framing workshops)
7. How to rear a single storey timber frame up to tie beam level, (Oak framing workshops).
8. How to rear up a single storey frame including rafters (Square Rule workshop)
9. On completing the course you will never look at a timber frame building in the same way again!

Are there other related courses available?

- The “Wattle and Daub” workshop covers the use and repair of a tried and tested panel infill system to timber framed buildings.
- “The Roofing Square” is all about softwood rafters and applying the carpenters square to line out and cut the timbers for both a gable and a hip roof. It is related to the Square Rule framing workshop, and has enabled students to go on and cut and pitch their own softwood roof today.

Is there a reading list for these workshops?

Discovering Timber-Framed Buildings
*The best overview of the development
and detailing of timber frame buildings*

by Richard Harris
Shire Publications

English Historic Carpentry
*A wonderful illustrated book
Showing the stylistic dating of buildings based on the development of their joints.*

by Cecil A Hewitt
Philimore

The Village Carpenter
*A superbly written account of the life
and craftsmanship of a Victorian carpenter.*

by Walter Rose
AC Black

The Wheelwright's Shop
*Full of insights into the working life
of a hand tool worker and the craft of the wheelwright and blacksmith.*

by George Sturt
Cambridge

Dictionary of Woodworking Tools
The authoritative source of information for historic hand tools.

by R.A Salaman
Unwin Hyman

Recording Timber Framed Buildings: an illustrated glossary.
The best jargon buster.

By Alcock, Barley, Dixon and Meeson.
CBA

Available through the Weald and Downland Living Museum shop