

SOUTH OZ SCROLLERS

In the mid 1990's Neil Schulz, who had been using the scroll saw for a number of years had a vision to form a scroll saw group in South Australia. As he had found it addictive and was impressed by the versatility and adeptness of the saw he was convinced that the craft itself could be a popular one and that many people would be interested.

Having searched unsuccessfully, over a lengthy period, through different avenues to find other people interested in the craft he realised that if it was to happen then he needed to lay the foundations of a nucleus of people around which a group could grow.

He started by organising and running training workshops for Woodgroup members. This found a couple of interested people. He then began promoting the scroll saw and its associated crafts through public demonstrations within Woodgroup promotions and with MIK International.

Gradually the interest gathered momentum, two or three interested people, up to six and then to nine or ten, until at the Timber & Working With Wood Show in 2000 he felt the timing was right to make an all out attack on forming the club.



Members of South Oz Scrollers putting the finishing touches to gifts for their Caring Gifts project.

At this event he gathered more names and from a list of interested people a meeting was held at Thebarton Senior College and the first workshop of the newly formed South Oz Scrollers was held on 30th September 2000. Many of those joining the newly formed SIG were new to the scroll saw. Monthly workshops provided the means for many to learn a range of techniques including preparation, cutting, finishing then onto more specialised techniques like three dimensional and inlaying. Where at first there were only one or two who could be classified as having advanced skills during the first twelve months of operation others' skills quickly improved and by the TWWWS 2001, where the Woodgroup managed its own Exhibition, more than 80% of scrollers exhibited their work in the Gallery. This was quite an achievement such was the enthusiasm amongst the members.

Demonstrating in public was high on the agenda. South Oz Scrollers developed a promotional flyer that was used during the five public demonstrations the group did each year. More and more interest grew in these public demonstrations and more and more people became aware of the decorative woodwork that could come off the scroll saw. Soon there were many requests from people wanting to join but were hampered by the fact that the group was meeting on a Tuesday. In 2002 following the TWWWS a Saturday group was formed and this expanded the group to more than 30 participants.

Today the group meets on the fourth Tuesday and fourth Saturday each month at Thebarton Senior College. In its first three years it has acquired two Hegner scroll saws and various other equipment all of which helps to introduce new participants to the craft or existing members to a new or different technique. It operates in an environment of fostering others into the craft and providing them with network support to help them quickly develop their skills. Les Miller, Associate Editor of the Australian Woodworker has described Adelaide as the "Scroll Saw Capital of Australia". The group mainly produces fretwork and intarsia of high quality and has women as well as men amongst its membership. It can boast some very talented scrollers amongst its membership and is strongly represented at National Scroll Saw Festivals.

The group has launched into a new project, "Caring Gifts", that aims to produce gifts for the aged particularly those who live at home alone or in aged care without family support. It is grateful for the financial assistance provided by Community Benefits SA in helping purchase a saw and consumables to get the project off the ground. It has made in excess of 100 gifts in its first year and Meals on wheels in the North Eastern Region and The Pines Aged Care facility at Plympton will distribute the gifts its first year. It is their

way of supporting the ageing community after all, as one of the members said in initially supporting the project, we reckon "we're all heading there pretty quickly".

The growth of the craft has been very significant over the past three years and is becoming more and more popular as the public become more aware of the diversity of decorative woodwork and fit that is produced on the scroll saw. The SIG's commitment to the aims and objectives of Woodgroup SA, its enthusiasm to promote the scroll saw and the craft and the professionalism with which it conducts its activities will keep it in good stead in future years. South Oz Scrollers is doing their bit toward maintaining traditional skills amongst woodworkers today.



Currently Neil Schulz and Theo Kampes, seen here demonstrating at the Timber & Working With Wood Show, co-ordinate South Oz Scrollers.